



## Cochran: Win or else

More on the economic forum on Page 10.

Trade, taxes, sick days for the poor, wage inequity growing over decades -- the economy is now crucial in the presidential campaign, but who will work hardest keep it on the front burner and insist on essential economic change? Will it be union families?

They'd better, noted moderator Sheila Cochran in a frank warning at the close of the economic forum July 2. If change doesn't happen in this election, unions may find themselves a relic of the past.

Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, described a recent talk she attended by one of the highly regarded writers in the county, the noted progressive David Sirota (author of "The Uprising"), but it was not a labor talk. The room was full of the high-rollers of Milwaukee's foundations and power structure.

She was pleasantly shocked when Sirota flatly offered organized labor as the main solution, "the only vehicle for organized, sustained action on the economic front."

To hear it phrased this bluntly in that setting was unusual, Cochran said. It contrasted painfully with union self-delusion. For instance, the Labor 2008 walk of June 21, the one that started at state AFL-CIO headquarters, was much ballyhooed by the national union press as the largest such neighborhood walk in the country.

"It was 46 people," she noted, rolling her eyes to indicate that that should actually be "pret-

**Cochran**, continued Page 2

**DEEPENING UNION ISSUES** - Below: Hopefuls and members of the state legislature answered the urgent MALC call to attend an information session at Plumbers Hall July 14 on prevailing wage, lien laws, EFCA and similar issues. At this table (from left) are incumbents Leon Young, Spencer Coggs, Jon Richards and Peggy Krusik.



Hundreds cheer President Toni Higgins as she speaks to TV cameras during the July 8 night vigil and rally outside the Midwest Airlines Center. Other officers of the flight attendants' Midwest council hold the banner. From left, Secretary Treasurer Joey Krajewski and Vice-President Catherine (Cat) Reed.

## Best Care disfigured Airlines (more than fuel prices) collude to decimate Midwest's workforce

By Dominique Paul Noth  
(c) Milwaukee Labor Press

Midwest's 12 MD-80s are heading for the desert pasture by summer's end. The pride of its national fleet, 25 Boeing 717s, will be cut by a fifth.

The Air Line Pilots Association started the year with 400 pilots in its Midwest unit and enters the fall with half that, most of the rest "furloughed" - a polite way to say canned. One of those being furloughed is a long-time ALPA delegate to the labor council, Greg Uselmann, whose 10 years at Midwest don't make the seniority list when you halve the workforce.



CHAOS T-shirts from 6 years ago came out of the closet at the vigil, to reflect the community's anger at Midwest.

By September, Midwest Air Group will slash its entire workforce almost in half, dropping nearly 1,600 employees. Several captains would be demoted to first officers and would drop from \$120,000 a year to \$32,000 under management's adamant proposals.

The flight attendants are being furloughed in similar numbers, 217 out of 425 by first count. Those remaining are asked, in effect, to give up any hope of supporting families and paying mortgages.

Flight attendants who stay away from home four nights a week now must ask their families to live off the fumes of devotion to company. Five years ago (after 9/11) they agreed to debilitating pay and benefit cuts based

**How Midwest** played the city for a fool - and then **destroyed** the only thing it had to sell. **Stories Page 8**

on promises of a better future. "I think the new cuts are deliberate," said one departing worker. "They want to hire replacements at minimum wage."

Milwaukeeans helped create a better future for the workers, which the company did not reward. Remember how recent all that was?

So committed was the public to Midwest's image of independence, and (at least in Milwaukee) the status of a corporate powerhouse, that they fought against a takeover by AirTran, helping 2006 to become Midwest's only profitable year after 9/11.

But Midwest did merge in August of 2007, not with AirTran but through TPG with Northwest as a supposedly "passive" minority partner. The Midwest executives walked away with \$15 million for making the deal.

**Midwest**, continued Page 9

## Trumka on racism

Serb Hall sure ain't Las Vegas but the two places had much in common July 2 when the labor council held its economic forum.

The opening video, available to locals through the Milwaukee Area Labor Council office, summarized many of the slides and economic issues explored in person by an expert panel. *Related story Page 10.* It was narrated and largely written by the national AFL-CIO's secretary-treasurer, Richard Trumka, one of organized labor's outspoken experts.

Even as delegates watched his video image, Trumka was topping his reputation for fluent "from the heart" speechmaking in Las Vegas at the national United Steelworkers convention.

It was speech of such candor and passion that John Nichols, the columnist for the Nation and associate editor of Wisconsin's Capital Times, said it ranked as one of the most important speeches of the 2008 campaign.

Trumka was doing more than nailing the causes of America's failing middle class. He was even doing more than ridiculing John McCain's newly found concern for the worker. He addressed head-on racism within union ranks and urged unions to be at the forefront of fighting the bigotry that demeans their own best interests.

Nichols reprinted the talk in a column at <http://www.madison.com/tct/opinion/294460>.

Below are some key excerpts.

We've all heard that phrase that the middle-class is being squeezed. Well, I disagree with

**Trumka** continued Page 7



Trumka at USW convention

# Backrooms of today's China

By Steve Watrous

Special to the Labor Press

I returned from a two-week political tour of China in June and can report that the status of workers is, well, contradictory.

Some are doing fine with a higher standard of living, three kinds of insurance, a degree of self-management, free meals and new protections that began in January.

Others are stuck in factories, such as one that has made uniforms for the City of Milwaukee police, with child labor, poverty wages, and general abuse of workers.

We visited a wire factory that has supplied two of China's proudest accomplishments: The Maglev fastest train in the world, and the Three Gorges, the biggest dam in the world.

The minimum wage is 960 Yuan per month in Shanghai (one Yuan = 15 cents US, which translates roughly into \$140 a month), but these workers make two to three times more, according to management, which also said they elect middle management in this private corporation and evaluate all management. The company also touts free use of a dormitory, 90 days paid maternity leave, double pay after the usual 40-hour work week, and the "thirteenth month" pay.



Workers in a garment factory near Shanghai.

— Photo by Steve Watrous

We visited another factory that doesn't pay as well but makes "super capacitors" for an electric bus that Milwaukee ought to buy: no emissions and no heavy batteries that take hours to charge.

Several Wisconsin-known companies have operations in China, such as big plants by A.O. Smith and Mercury Marine. The S.C. Johnson factory has a 20-foot high can of "Raid" in its front yard, with lots of other words in Chinese.

As economic changes push people off the land in China, millions have streamed to the cities looking for work, but they lack proper papers and are not covered by health insurance. Construction

companies and many factories take advantage of this desperate pool of workers.

Consider the Charming Garments factory near Hong Kong. A recent investigative report by SweatFree Communities, a US group, found this company violating several Chinese laws with 15-hour shifts, 58-cents-per-hour pay, and 14-year-old child laborers.

This factory also violates Milwaukee law. Five years ago the Blauer company disclosed that it would make police uniforms at Charming, in a bid for a contract with the City of Milwaukee.

They had to tell where because of the anti-sweatshop purchasing ordinance passed in Milwaukee at the urging of local fair trade activists. Among other requirements, the ordinance insists on a non-poverty wage much higher than Blauer disclosed or that Charming now pays.

Blauer needs to work with its foreign suppliers to treat workers right, and Milwaukee needs to join a proposed purchasing consortium that can monitor distant factories.

The author teaches at MATC and is a pioneer and continuing leader of Milwaukee's fair trade and sweatfree movements.



Standing on a truck bed outside Midwest Airlines Center, Sheila Cochran addressed the large night vigil July 8. See Pages 8 and 9 for stories on the Midwest crisis. See Page 7 for more on the MALC economic forum.

## Cochran From Page 1

ty depressing" in a city that prides itself on union strength.

"Turn around and look at the back of this room," she urged the 100 delegates and guests at the forum.

That half of the hall was dark and empty. She recalled decades ago one of the first labor delegate meetings she attended in a larger room at Serb Hall, so crowded there was hardly room to sit.

But unions have shrunk nationally from 26% of the workforce to about 13% today. Wisconsin is better off. Milwaukee is a Union City because 17.5% of the workforce is listed as union.

"We may outpull our size at the polls," Cochran noted, "but we have dwindled, and opponents of progressive reform would like to see us dwindle to nothing."

It was her call to work hard for the political candidates chosen by labor (with Barack Obama at the top of the list) and

"whatever you do, whoever you back, make sure they support the Employee Free Choice Act."

"If Sirota is right, the country -- not just the unions -- desperately needs it," she said.

## Official notice

On Wednesday August 13, 2008, from noon until 7 p.m. at the union's Referral Hall 1300 S. Lincoln Memorial Drive, members will have the opportunity to vote for the following candidates as officers of the ILA (Longshoremen) Local 815 ACD, GLDC AFL-CIO:

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Trustees: Joe Smith, Tom Schwark, Wesley Miller.

The following officers are running unopposed:

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# Sept. 9 voters play 'What's My Party Line?'

Constituents in his Waukesha-Milwaukee district 2002-2006 thought his first name was "Eccentric." Or "Quirky." Or just plain "Weird."

Those were the inevitable adjectives used by newspaper columnists to introduce Tom Reynolds. Whether posing with his wife as the Holy Family on his Christmas cards, quizzing staff interviewers about their sex lives, pushing for his own Autobahn next to I-94 after being ticketed for speeding, blasting black families for their child-rearing while describing some pretty bizarre tactics of his own, or attending the International Conference on Homo-Fascism, his antics always made good copy.

When Jim Sullivan beat him in 2006 (with union help), even GOP stalwarts confessed they were willing to pass up a right-wing vote in the state senate to be spared the headline embarrassments. All thought Reynolds would fade into an Internet footnote.

Now he's back, as an Internet footnote with a touch of scam.

Reynolds may not be able to win in person but he remembered how he won in the first place. Most members of the GOP in District 5 were pretending to be Dems for a day in 2002 to participate in an exciting primary for governor, from which Jim Doyle emerged victorious. But that had left the Republican primary bereft of balance. Reynolds conservatives helped him beat the respected Peggy Rosenzweig



Delegates got a July 2 heads-up from Rep. Fred Kessler.

(later a member of the UW board of regents).

Reynolds had seen a similar pattern emerging for this year's Sept. 9 primary in the Milwaukee area. No one on either side was looking for much turnout, nothing was shaking in the GOP, and everyone was focused on Nov. 4. That was the perfect occasion to attack mainly urban Assembly veterans on the Democratic side (even as the Dems see a real opportunity for taking the Assembly from the Republicans and padding their margin in the Senate).

So Reynolds created a Clean Sweep Wisconsin website, recruiting largely unknowns from his right wing Christian connections. The idea was to pretend to be Democrats and use a ready-made Political Action Committee (PAC) and a completely prepared platform that is actually to the right of the

Republican platform.

Clean Sweep pledges capping tuition costs, parental control of K-12, opposing immigrants, a moratorium on taxes, and it would all seem to be stemming from Democrats. Down in the trenches, voters won't know the exact same literature was being fobbed off in other districts.

These faux Democrats turned out to be hard to find. Reynolds badly missed his mark of forcing primary contests in 12 to 15 Milwaukee Assembly and Senate districts, but he found enough to make trouble Sept. 9, even though some of his picks have privately told friends they may not believe in what they're passing out at the doors.

His intended opponent for Rep. Tamara Grigsby (District 18) couldn't get the needed 200 signatures. to be on the ballot. Nor did Deon Price who intended to oppose Jason Fields (District 11) - and in the end there were not enough signatures for Nicholas Cosey to oppose State Sen. Spencer Coggs. Nor could he lock in an opponent for Fred Kessler (District 12).

But he seemed to have found primary opponents for Annette (Polly) Williams and Barbara Toles (Districts 10 and

17), both deeply respected members of the Assembly. Pedro Colon's supporters in District 8 believe that one of his two opponents, Jose Guzman, also has Reynolds connections.

So does one of three Democratic opponents faced by Leon Young in District 16. That's David King, who ran at the back of the pack in the aldermanic District 6 race won by Milele Coggs, and Young is her cousin.

Mischief maker fever is also hitting incumbent Tony Stakunas in District 15 (that's Josh Hoisington, a high-decibel blogger). Of the two Democrats facing veteran Christine Sinicki (District 20), the Reynolds clone is identified as Phil Landowski.

What worries the established Democrats is that there is no contest to keep Republicans in their own lane, a situation that brought the GOP Reynolds in the first place.

Wisconsin voters have a bad habit of staying home in routine primaries and this is a "winner take all" event. In a district field of four Democrats, for instance, 26% of the vote could literally win.

Forewarned is forearmed against this silly exercise in duplicity, as Rep. Fred Kessler told MALC delegates July 2. A number of Democrats who escaped such victimization are lining up to work for the attacked candidates. So are unions.

-- D.P.N.



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# About paid sick days and sniffing editorials

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

## Comment

A slippery Journal Sentinel editorial July 5 agreed that the Paid Sick Day effort was both morally and economically correct -- and then balked at the city approving it.

The editorial cited national statistics that 43% of US workers don't have any paid time off for a sick kid, a meeting at school or even an illness of their own. (Actually it's more people than that -- some estimate three out of four workers, since the Bureau of Labor Standards misses a lot of parents juggling several part time

jobs, etc.)

A remarkable Milwaukee coalition of community, religious, educational and labor groups, led by 9to5, had roused the conscience of the community - and apparently forced the editorial, which certainly handed businesses that advertise with the newspaper reasons to resist what was morally correct.

Within a few weeks, the coalition gathered more than 40,000 signatures when its petitions needed only 26,500 city

residents. Through rarely used "direct legislation" the coalition brought the city a proposal requiring all private employers, big and small, to provide at least a minimum of paid sick days (in sum, one hour for every 30 hours worked).

The Common Council must consider the language and either pass the ordinance or put it on the Nov. 4 ballot, where a majority vote makes it city law.

Long overdue, agreed the editorial, but can't you be more patient? This should be a state or at best a federal law, not a city one.

Sort of like waiting for Utopia, the ideal world of universal health care, emission controls, green technology, carbon trade-offs, money for special needs kids, mental health priorities, education loans and care of the elderly - in fact, all those things where local governments across the country are now leading the charge because of failures in D.C.

Patience? Whatever snailed-forward on these fronts in the Clinton era was certainly slapped into oblivion in the Bush years. To suggest patience after decades of indifference to basic humanity dooms more families to not having enough money to live on.

And what will goad even a new Congress and White House into stepping to the plate?

Fervor and action from municipal and state governments, certainly with issues as clear-cut as basic paid sick days. Patience should be replaced with pressure.

The editorial also says the ordinance should at least be



Working parents brought their children who suffer the most from the lack of paid sick days to help deliver the boxes of petitions to the Common Council chambers at City Hall.

extended to public as well as private employers. The newspaper is not that naïve. It knows full well that in Milwaukee, public workers are heavily unionized and their contracts embody far more than the ordinance minimum on sick days. Those contracts are hard fought and pretty sophisticated in vacations and sick days, or earned time off - all those things the newspaper has sometimes railed against.

The editorial does quote and support Amy Stear, Wisconsin 9to5 director, on how the majority of those without sick leave are low wage workers, so the intent is to help the "most vulnerable among us." Which inadvertently points out that union support for the ordinance is another case of fighting for non-unionized workers.

Another concern of the editorial (quoting the JS rabbi of economic caution, Tim Sheehy

of the MMAC) was that this is not the time to put conditions on businesses. Apparently they might flee the city if they were required to behave with a conscience.

Now aside from being an insult to the ethically concerned employers among us, this is the tired argument that has been used forever against every equity for employees - living wage, overtime pay, unemployment compensation, Medicare, Social Security. All were greeted with predictions of doom by business groups, which later relied on them. All were dismissed as preventing a "level playing field" for regions or the nation, while in effect ordinances such as this one level the playing field for all businesses in Milwaukee.

In total, these ideas for workers represent landmark improvement in our society and usually benefits for our economy. It may be the loss of such rules of common decency that has helped caused our current economic pickle.

Rather than putting Milwaukee at a competitive disadvantage, as the editorial argues, it is high time to shout to the world of a city that truly cares for its people and wants businesses committed to retaining good workers.

Yet even recognizing that a sick worker "shouldn't have to work, and co-workers shouldn't have to be exposed to contagious illnesses," the editorial continues a familiar pattern in corporate media, where full-throated support would be ethical and obvious but rocking the boat is too dangerous. Though that once was the point of writing editorials.

1,500 jobs for young Aided by 300 additional positions through MPS, Mayor Tom Barrett cited 1,500 teens employed in a city internship, a community job or the private sector in the Earn & Learn Summer Youth Jobs program.

Launched in 2005, Earn & Learn is now administered by the WIB (Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board).

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Visitors to the Wisconsin State Fair July 31 to August 10 will once again find free union-made products at the Union Label Booth, staffed by union volunteers in the busy indoor Expo Center.

They will get a sneak peek at the Harley motorcycle to be raffled off at the end of Laborfest on Sept. 1 and they can actually

buy the tickets for the bike raffle (one for \$3, two for \$5) from the workers at the booth, who donate shifts every day of the fair from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

But if they time it right, they may also run into a walking cow.

The mascot of the Got Healthcare? Campaign will be one of the strolling visitors to the booth, which is paid for and staffed by unions that have signed up through the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Organized labor pays the cost of operating the booth and seeks donations to defray the \$5,500 in expenses. Donations are tax deductible under the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's 501(c)3 entity, LaborCommunity@Work, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53214, or (414) 771-7070.

To donate check or items, or to help sign up for a shift at the booth, contact Willie D. Ellis, president of the MALC and chair

of the Union Label Committee of both the MALC and the state AFL-CIO.

## WRTP big part of federal grant

In late June, the Regional Workforce Alliance of Southeastern Wisconsin awarded \$490,944 in federal money to 10 area partnerships devoted to job training projects for the Milwaukee 7 region -- part of \$2.5 million to be awarded around the nation through the program known as WIRED.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/Big Step, which holds classes at the Center of Excellence at 38th and Wisconsin, will receive a fifth of the half million in Wisconsin funding -- \$97,209 -- to partner with high schools to help student retention, advance manufacturing skills and provide tutoring to juniors and seniors.

## Trapshooting

After 14 weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council league, here are results by team, reflecting wins, losses and ties:

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Roger Schmidt

Submitted by  
Ron Wahl, League Secretary

# Calendar

For updated master list of events, visit [www.milwaukeeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeeelabor.org)

## Thursday, July 24

### Voter Protection Summit

Free films, panel discussion 5:30 to 8 p.m.  
Times Theater, 5906 W. Vliet St.

## Wednesday, July 30

### Labor 2008 Walk

4:30-8 p.m., IAMAW Local Lodge 1377  
1726 S. West Avenue, Waukesha

## Thursday, July 31-Sunday, August 10

### Union Label Booth

State Fair, 9 a.m.-10 p.m.

Wisconsin Expo Center

## Monday, August 4

### Laborfest Planning Meeting

All invited to help plan, coordinate  
Sept. 1 Laborfest.

5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

## Tuesday, August 5

### Faith Community for Worker Justice

Labor in the Pulpits Speakers Training

Cookout 5:30 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

## Wednesday, August 6

### MALC Delegate Meeting

6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

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# Trumka

From Page 1

that: We're not being squeezed: we are being crushed.

If you're a trade unionist, you don't need to hear a bunch of statistics to know what's happening in this country. We see the casualties every single day.

**G**o to Birmingham, Alabama. Or Gary, Indiana. Or Milwaukee, Cleveland. L.A. Or my hometown of Nemaconlin, Pennsylvania.

We see high school grads who can't afford to move out of their parents' houses and can't afford community college. They're working dead-end jobs at Circuit City and breaking their backs working minimum wage jobs at nursing homes.

They're not statistics -- these are people we know.

We see men and women who've spent their entire working lives doing exactly what they were supposed to. Working hard. Bringing home a paycheck. Trying to put a little aside for their kids. Paying their mortgage. Hoping that, maybe someday, they could retire and move to Florida.

These aren't statistics -- these are people we know. People we grew up with!

And we listen to what's happening to them and we think: But for the grace of God that could be me.

**D**oes everyone here remember how all those people piled on Barack Obama after he said that a lot of working people in this country are angry?

Remember the reaction? "The nerve of him to say that working people are angry!"

Well, brothers and sisters, I don't know about you, but I happen to think that was one of the most honest things I've heard a presidential candidate say in a long time.

Working people angry? Hell, yes we are -- and, you know something? We ought to be.

None of it -- none of it had to happen. And the only reason it did is because we've had leaders in this country -- Republicans and Democrats -- whose economic agendas are based on the same assumption. It's the disproven, discredited notion that policies that generate corporate



Modeling union-style intensity of organizing, Obama election staffers used the union's Yatchak Hall for all-week all-day training of hundreds of Milwaukee volunteers flooding to his campaign.

profits somehow translate into shared prosperity.

**T**he truth is they don't. Just think of it: We're living in a country with more than \$13 trillion a year in income. American workers have never been more productive. Corporate profits are surging. Last year, Exxon Mobil posted sales of \$404 billion dollars. They made almost \$1,300 in profit every second!

But even though our productivity has surged by almost 20% from 2000 through 2006, even though Americans are working longer hours than workers in any other developed country, our wages have been flat -- or even falling -- since 2003.

How many folks here know that the Federal Reserve Board, by law, is supposed to work for a full-employment economy? Don't feel bad if you don't know, because not many in Congress seem to either.

If you think America ought to keep going in the same direction George Bush and Dick Cheney have been taking us, stand up.

Now, stand up if you think it's time we had a president who's going to fight for national health care, sign the Employee Free Choice Act, strengthen OSHA, defend Social Security, end the war, and protect American jobs?

**W**ell, congratulations -- you just answered the question that's stumped all the commentators and columnists and consultants in Washington, D.C., who are asking how Barack Obama is going to win the votes of workers in states like Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

How can he do it? You've just said how -- by speaking out about the issues that matter to

working people.

Of course, some folks have said that he needs a special strategy to reach out to blue collar workers. That he's got to talk more about God because a lot of us care about religion -- and more about hunting because, for some of us, hunting is a religion.

And there's something to that: it shouldn't be any secret that he's a Christian and that he's for the 2nd Amendment.

But, at the end of the day, what people are going to need to hear is that when it comes to protecting jobs, when it comes to protecting pensions, when it comes to health care, child care, pay equity for women, Social Security, Medicare, seeing to it that people can afford to go to college and buy a home -- and restoring the right to collective bargaining -- Barack Obama has always, always been on our side.

Now, contrast that with John McCain.

On one side you have Barack: a man who worked full-time helping laid off steelworkers in Chicago.

On the other side you have John McCain who helped pass the trade laws that resulted in laid-off steelworkers in Chicago.

**B**rothers and sisters, there's not a single good reason for any worker -- especially any union member -- to vote against Barack Obama.

There's only one really bad reason to vote against him: because he's not white.

And I want to talk about that. Because I saw that for myself during the Pennsylvania primary [relating a story of a Democratic woman he'd known all his life in his hometown who wouldn't vote for Obama because he's black].

I said (to her), "And here's a man, Barack Obama, who's going to fight for people like us

and you won't vote for him because of the color of his skin!"

Brothers and sisters, we can't tap dance around the fact that there are a lot of folks out there just like that woman.

**A** lot of them are good union people; they just can't get past this idea that there's something wrong with voting for a black man. Well, those of us who know better can't afford to look the other way.

I'm not one for quoting dead philosophers, but back in the 1700s, Edmund Burke said: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." Well, there's no evil that's inflicted more pain and more suffering than racism -- and it's something we in the labor movement have a special responsibility to challenge.

It's our special responsibility because we know, better than anyone else, how racism is used to divide working people.

We've seen how companies set worker against worker -- how they throw whites a few extra crumbs off the table and how we all end up losing.

But we've seen something else, too. We've seen that when we cross that color line and stand

together no one can keep us down.

That's why industrial unions were the first to stand up against lynching and segregation. People need to know that it was the Steel Workers Organizing Committee -- this union -- that was founded on the principle of organizing all workers without regard to race. That's why the labor movement -- imperfect as we are -- is the most integrated institution in American life.

I don't think we should be out there pointing fingers in peoples' faces and calling them racist; instead we need to educate them that if they care about holding on to their jobs, their health care, their pensions, and their homes -- if they care about creating good jobs with clean energy, child care, pay equity for women workers -- there's only going to be one candidate on the ballot this fall who's on their side... only one candidate who's going to stand up for their families... only one candidate who's earned their votes... and his name is Barack Obama!

And come November we are going to elect him president.

**Robert C. Angermeier**  
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# Dreams destroyed along with airline

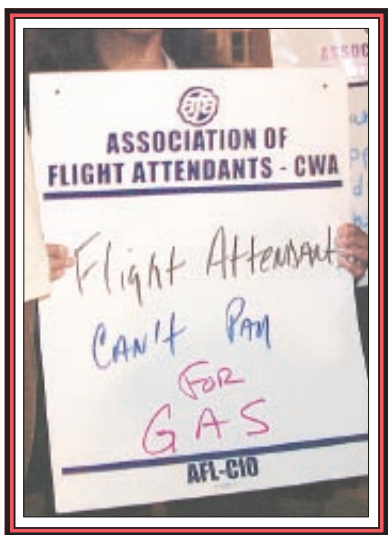
The dumping of its own workers and the trashing of its own service model reveal the narrow thinking that has taken Midwest to the precipice. It doesn't seem to see in its workers what the rest of the community knows.

The Midwest image is not built only on direct flights (many gone or going), leg room (the 717s are going up from 88 seats to close to 100, and they could go to 123 to make money) or the leather seats (Midwest is trying to keep some of them). It was the image of midwestern values, concern for passenger comfort, deep training and work ethics.

The image of individual comfort remains though it's been years since Midwest made lobster thermidor in flight. (But you can still buy tasty meals and you still get those cookies!)

But in an era of Internet ticket purchases and baggage checkers who only worry about the liquid makeup in your purse, the human face has been the Midwest pilots and flight attendants. They are the direct contact and key value to the public.

These Midwest pilots,



whose remarkable skills were recently chronicled in a book about 9/11, offer a welcoming demeanor and solid competence on every flight. The flight attendants are deep in ability, experience, safety insistence and friendly manner. They are a tiny sliver of the AFA, but they are highly regarded and "deserve our protection," said one union official.

You can't put a price on what Midwest is slicing off its own body. But neither can you pretend the surgery isn't happening.

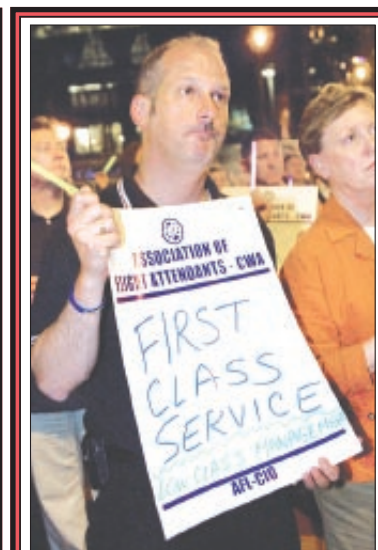
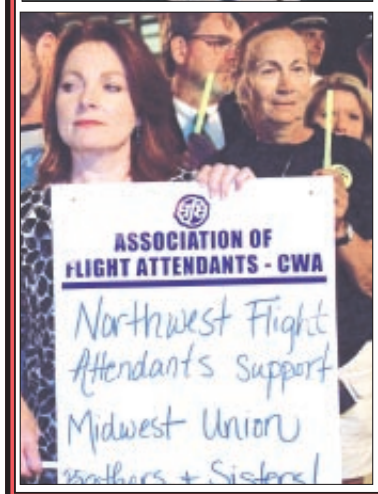


"I'd cheerfully pay more to fly Midwest," said a business traveler, echoing the remarks of everyone interviewed over several weeks. But the airline hasn't even tried to raise the ticket prices to absorb the real cost of fuel. They've gone after the workers' wages.

The airline fears a cheaper fare competitor would steal the customers away even while absorbing a loss. That has happened before (Northwest). But these, of course, would be the same competitors who want to take Midwest over or want Midwest gone.

"The executives may be right," said another traveler. "But it looks like I care more about their service than they do."

# Deck was stacked in Midwest collapse



"If the price point is all that matters to Milwaukee," said one pilot during the vigil outside the Midwest Airlines Center. "they'd better get ready to rename this place the Sardines Airlines Center."

A few elected officials may sense what is going on. Sen. Herb Kohl, a noted businessman, has already told the Department of Justice that he has considerable skepticism that the Delta-Northwest merger provides any cost savings and fears its impact on Midwest, rural routes or real competition.

Another consultant noted that successful Southwest Airlines is heavily unionized, has a compatible interchangeable fleet and also anticipated the fuel spikes with bulk buying.

"I actually hope the unions do fight this," he said. "But they're really the only ones who will. Don't expect much from the public officials."

The pilots and flight attendants will not go quietly. ALPA and AFA represent professionals across America's carriers. No one is talking work stoppage, but the threat is there because the job issue has stirred everyone up.

The AFA has 9,000 unionized flight attendants at Northwest and doesn't want them vaporized in Delta's clearly non-union push toward the wage bottom. And AFA is also fighting Delta management to give that company's 15,000 attendants what they seem to want - a union.

-- D.P.N.

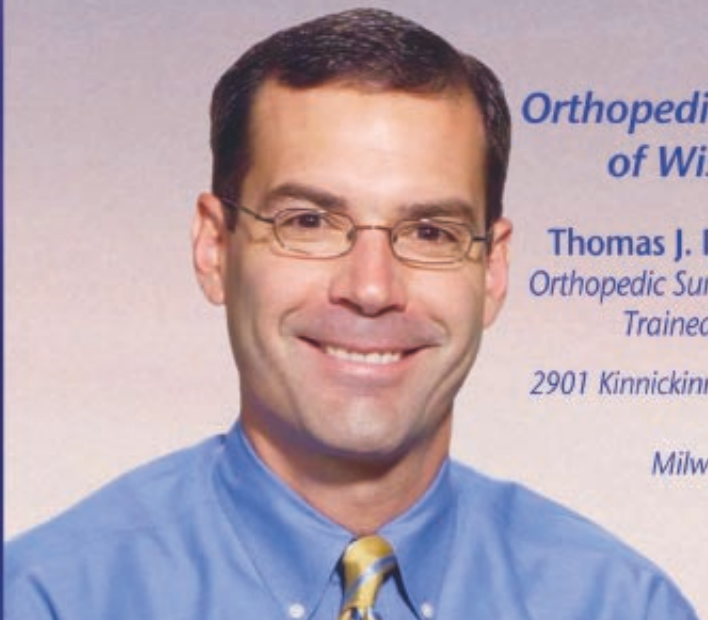
One thing the consultants all seem to agree on (but not for the record):

Milwaukee has been played for a fool.

"People here think Midwest is a big deal, but it's barely a hair on the puppy," said one.

Recalling Midwest's profitable days before 9/11, city residents and leaders did lead the fight against an AirTran takeover, fearing the loss of its hub and the death of the "Best Care in the Air" reputation. But when Midwest gave majority interest to TPG and announced Northwest as a "passive" partner, "that was the end of any independent airline and the city didn't even notice," said a consultant.

Nor are TPG and Northwest (no longer a "passive" partner if it ever was) the biggest players in the game. That would be Delta, which in April announced a merger with Northwest and an insider strategy to reduce the nation's commercial fleets by 15% and consolidate services. Its two-step seems to be reassuring cities that it won't change or diminish service, and then do exactly that.



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FROM LEFT: Picking up pilots, union members and unhappy citizens along the way, leaders of the flight attendants led the vigil from the Hyatt: International Vice-President Veda Shook and Midwest officers Toni Higgins, Joey Krajewski and Catherine Reed.

## Midwest From Page 1

Now Midwest wants the salary range for flight attendants to start at \$13,000 (full time) from the hard-fought but still low \$19,000.

Some think this offer is a management ploy to get concessions.

How seriously the attendants are taking this crisis is evident in the recently elected Council 44 leadership: Veterans who led the successful CHAOS charge against Midwest six years ago. President Toni Higgins (then Phillips) politely tears the company's excuses apart on TV. Vice-President Catherine (Cat) Reed backs down to no one: "They had better know we don't quit, we have the data, we have the public's support and they're in for a hell of a fight."

Citizens are indeed furious. They feel had. Several asked me, "Who owns this airline?" The stockholders, after all, have taken a profit and largely disappeared into the maneuvers of TPG, a private equity group. The passengers, as well as the workers, thought they had a stake. The airline, it now turns out, didn't care.

"The people who created the wealth are now being asked to pay for the mistakes of management," noted David Newby, president of the state AFL-CIO.

The cuts are not just Draconian, they are Winchester aimed at the

workers' heads: Decide this month. Don't ask for details.

Negotiations? The unions describe no such thing as we went to press, as if the company sees an advantage under current federal labor law to be able to pretend there's an impasse, usually as a prelude to bankruptcy proceedings that allow the dumping of contractual obligations.

"Why are we surprised?" asked Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the MALC who has seen such pretenses before.

In 2002 after multiple service awards, Midwest Express changed its name to Midwest Airlines because it didn't want to be associated with the regional carriers that bore the "express" label.

Today, Midwest tries to justify its pay cuts by describing Midwest as less than a regional carrier. It is offering pay rates that are deliberately 15% below even its regional partners.

Midwest Airlines executives sit mum in union dealings while Seabury consulting firm, hired from outside sources for apparently more than \$10 million for a few months' work, lays out the predetermined future.

Midwest CEO Timothy E. Hoeksema is the palace eunuch in all this.

That's the opinion of an aviation consultant, demanding anonymity in these comments because "I will still have to work with Midwest whatever name it winds up with."

In his view, Hoeksema has

no influence and will cheerfully give up 40% of his current salary (rumored at half a million) to look like a fellow sufferer in the cutbacks -- while preserving the millions he earned over the years and in the TPG deal.

(Perhaps this anticipation of emasculation is why Midwest's No. 2 executive, Joseph Kolshak, bolted in June just months after being hired and now turns up as a United Airlines executive. Curious timing indeed.)

The unions are more circumspect in their comments because they truly are offering counter-deals. About the only table they can complain at is congressional hearings, suggested Patricia Friend. She is the highly respected international president of the 55,000-member Association of Flight Attendants - CWA, which held its enormous board of directors gathering in Milwaukee. Airline workers from around the country joined the candlelight (glow stick) walk/vigil from the Hyatt Regency to Midwest Airlines Center, accompanied by news cameras and hundreds of Milwaukee sympathizers on July 8.

The flight attendants do understand the larger dog-eat-dog game that most outsiders haven't noticed. This, more than Midwest, may control their future. Two of the six national legacy airlines are merging in America's most desperate and ruthless industry. Just as the Bush administration did little to counter the panic after 9/11, driving airlines into billions in losses, so few in today's media are discussing how this Delta-Northwest takeover could be the first step in homogenized skim milk mediocrity at the nation's airports.

And like its treatment of world events, the media has easily accepted the corporate line that unexpected forces left them with no choice, in this case to destroy American workers over the \$140 a barrel price of oil. In other words, Saudi Arabia owns Mitchell Field.

The executives had, and still have, plenty of choices, the unions say, even after glaringly underestimating the price of oil for the year at \$84 a barrel. Observers also suggest that the Delta scheme may have more to do with Midwest's demands than fuel prices alone. "It just allowed



## Is this also Aloha?

Video memories, sustained applause and hugs and tears greeted representatives of the departing flight attendants of Aloha and ATA at the Hyatt event (above). Both airlines had been shuttered by a series of bankruptcies, fuel crises and take-overs.

There was poignancy and a point to the AFA tribute.

Sighed one observer, "I don't want to be doing this next year for Midwest. But I think we will."

them to move faster," said one consultant.

Aside from fuel price, Midwest itself made big mistakes and ignored warnings while fighting for its executives to earn top dollar from any take-over: Inefficiency in an aging fleet, lack of financial and marketing nimbleness, not paying enough attention to vendors and bulk buying.

"It wasn't the only airline that ignored the impact of world demand, market speculation and bloated management," said one consultant. "But Midwest had more to lose by not listening. The MD-80s guzzle fuel. The 717s

are nine years old. Here was a company that was undercapitalized and needed to separate itself from the big boys. What it did offer was a great service model."

And the first thing it did at signs of trouble? Trash that model - "mainly because no one in the industry cares about service," said another consultant, frankly more a friend of hedge funds than unions. "You can always advertise you have a good service. What the industry wants is a price edge, reducing planes in the air by 15-20% and dumping the routes that don't pay. They want to merge, merge, merge."

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# Forum puts laser light on the US economy

Almost by definition, workers want businesses to succeed in creating careers that support family and community. How else can the country survive?

Businesses would want the same, you'd think, since their own survival depends on workers. But survival is not the same as short-term profits, which have long dominated corporate thinking.

Just how long and how deep was outlined July 2 by the experts at the labor council's economic forum. A sophisticated array of video and slides, along

with corporate examples and frank talk, detailed how and why the workers' push for mutual gain has turned into a one-sided belief in democratic capitalism.

Without the majority of big business on board to think long-term rather than scheme how to get their own slice of ownership and disappear, the US has been driven back to pre-Great Depression realities and a frightening gap between the very rich and the rest of us.

American workers have soldiered on despite pain to create productivity levels "second to none" in the world,

said Michael Rosen, economics expert at MATC and president of the AFT Local 212. But corporations still engage in a winner take all attitude where "the name of the game is inequality."

On the workers' side, Rosen noted, the "solution" you hear all the time from the conservative ilk to "grow the economy" has actually occurred -- even as jobs have been cut and outsourced. Workers are doing their job through effort and sweat while corporate America ran their companies onto reefs -- and foreign reefs at that -- and "couldn't care less whether their workers share in the rewards."

The six-decade pattern downward that Rosen described -- so far in 2008 alone the US has shed half a million jobs -- was reinforced by Jack Norman, research director of the Institute for Wisconsin's Future, who asked the simple question, "Whose taxes are you paying?"

Aside from your own, his charts demonstrate the slice that corporations are taking out of you through such gimmicks as "the Las Vegas loophole" or the "Cayman Islands loophole." Recently Wisconsin legislation closed the Delaware "rent" loophole, but the games continue through legislation driven under GOP control and through related tax policies.

That, as Norman's simplest chart underlines, has allowed dozens of brand-name corporations like General Electric and Microsoft to not pay a penny in Wisconsin corporate taxes while using the same public services the rest of us pay for and rely on for everything from infrastructure to toilets. Norman's arguments for a fair tax policy offer some long needed correction as well as



Sangita Nayak (left) and Michael Rosen (below) during the forum.



rebutting some misconceptions about what taxes do and who pays for them - for instance, the property tax burden has shifted from businesses to homeowners, who now have mortgage collapse to worry about.

Another panel speaker, Sangita Nayak, an organizer for 9to5, should have been basking in the success of her coalition. Two days earlier at City Hall it presented Milwaukee more than 40,000 signatures (it only needed 26,500) to force the Common Council to act or place on the Nov. 4 ballot an ordinance that would require a minimum of paid sick days from every private employer in the city.

But that accomplishment faces a hard road to success. See Page 4.

By some polls, nearly 70% of America's workers don't have paid sick days, though most union workers assuredly do. Sangita spoke passionately how the main sufferers are families with children -- and businesses that want to retain dedicated workers.

"Most jobs today just don't pay the bills," she pointed out. She reminded delegates that even the borderline haves bear a

responsibility to the have-nots. If corporations can't see that, fellow workers should: "Mothers and fathers should not be put into the choice of caring for a sick child or losing their job."

For his part, Sachin Chheda recalled the not so distant days when one income was enough to support a family. Today the normal expectation -- except for that top 1% of income -- is that both parents must work.

Chheda noted that his point was not far removed from the global trade issues he was speaking about as leader of Wisconsin's fair trade coalition and former administrator for Gov. Doyle. Pressures from supporters of fair trade led to the temporary tabling of the US trade deal with Colombia. But the issues of trade go deeper than that, as Chheda's slideshow revealed. Current practice "doesn't even make sense for the rich."

Despite the current recession - which, as Rosen pointed out, is a reality for workers even if economists can't quite bring themselves to say it -- the US economy generates over \$13 trillion a year in income. So why, asked Chheda, is it so difficult for so many workers to make a good living in the richest country in history?

Echoing Rosen and Norman's point that these are "the rules of the game" Chheda said American voters allowed multinational corporations to establish those rules, with the connivance of the White House, "This isn't happening by accident," he said, quoting CEOs about the deliberate downsizing policies being pursued in trade deals and reminding the delegates of John McCain's famous admission: "If I were president, I would negotiate a free trade agreement with almost any country."

Americans may know better than to let that happen, Chheda noted, signaling the new Pew Research Center polling that finds a majority of Americans now oppose the free trade models of NAFTA and want a fairer balance in trade policy.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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In a month of intense focus on the economy, one of the guiding lights for panelists in the economic forum gave a breakfast talk at Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center near Riverside Park. Jared Bernstein, author of "Crunched" and senior policy advisor for the Economic Policy Institute (at right above) shared research and then flew back East for book tours and TV commentary.

## Judges now decide who is most Zeidleresque

Nominations closed in June and judges will spend July weighing who best emulates the community commitment of late Mayor Frank Zeidler.

The first ever Frank Zeidler Public Service Award will likely be presented in a ceremony at a September meeting of the

Milwaukee Common Council. The judges (including Ald. Robert Bauman and historian John Gurda) choose among: Katherine Keller, publisher of the Bay View Compass. Charlotte John-Gomez, executive director of the Layton Boulevard West Neighbors and a

volunteer for the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative.

Robert Graf, social justice activist (conscientious objector to the Vietnam War); advocate for the homeless, active in organic central city gardening.

William Lynch, community activist (fair housing; parks; desegregation; civil liberties).

Gretchen Schuldt Doege, community activist (Story Hill Neighborhood Assn.).

Kathie Stolpman, Sojourner Truth House; working with domestic abuse families.

Jack and Lucia Murtaugh, Community Meal program at St. Benedict's; United Nations Assn.; Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee.



New faces and helping hands will be around the Milwaukee Area Labor Council offices well into August. Sandra Marquez (left) is one of the students hired through the WIB summer program for students. Heather Robinson is the summer intern helping Faith Community for Worker Justice plan such events as Labor in the Pulpits.

## Brave yes, White House no

Is bravery in combat sufficient qualification for president? If it were, Vietnam war veteran and AFL-CIO mobilizer Mike Balistriere reminded a Channel 4 interviewer (below right), the most decorated soldier of World War II, Audie Murphy, would have occupied the White House.

Balistriere and other vets were talking out at the first gathering in Milwaukee of the newly formed AFL-CIO Union Veterans Council, held at the construction and building trades offices. Participants (Vietnam, Iraq, even Korea) have the experience to say directly what the media is tiptoeing around. They deeply respect John McCain's military service but



they are deeply troubled by his record in the Senate. They were also able to draw laughter among themselves thinking of some of the truly brave airmen and soldiers they had served with whom they would never want near the Oval Office.

The union veterans group intends to make the common sense case for what America needs in terms of economy and protection long after the 2008 race. They are starting off in six states, one Wisconsin, focusing on mainly rural areas. But fact sheets are available in the Take Action section of [www.milwaukeeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeeelabor.org).

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# Brats, buns rain down on St. Ben's

MALC President Willie D. Ellis (left) monitored the tray handouts after grilling hundreds of brats. Children joined their union parents (right) to serve the homeless and hungry at St. Ben's. Dancing between raindrops, Milwaukee Network for Social Change offered something new – free clothing (center). Fresh fruit and more all bought at union stores were served up by dozens of volunteers (bottom) in another major success for the church's community meal program and the labor council's annual reaching out with a cookout.



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