



One of the national AFL-CIO's key leaders, Linda Chavez-Thompson, was a surprise and animated guest speaker at the June delegate meeting. See NLRB story below and more on Page 5.



HABITAT HELPERS: Friendly rivalry between union and non-union workers blitzed 10 homes in Metcalfe Park in a week for Habitat for Humanity. Crews from IBEW Local 494 not only did the electrical work but helped solicit material from their contractors.



RIGHT: MPS children joined unions in carrying the day – and the boxes – for the AFL-CIO health and hygiene campaign. See Page 8.

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Thursday, June 22, 2006



(USPS 350-360)

Unions blast NLRB for its tone-deaf act

It doesn't take an act of Congress to dismantle basic rights. That can be done – and has – by changed regulations and unpublished bureaucratic decisions.

Determined not to let this happen again, the national AFL-CIO has called for a National Day of Action centered around July 10 to draw broad attention to three cases in front of the Bush-controlled National Labor Relations Board.

The cases, scheduled to be decided separately in late summer, all deal in principle with the term "supervisor."

The local day of action will take place about 4 p.m. Thursday, July 13, at a place where workers died defending basic rights, the state marker remembrance of the Bay View Massacre.

The new cause may not seem like massacre, but the consequences are decimation of union ranks.

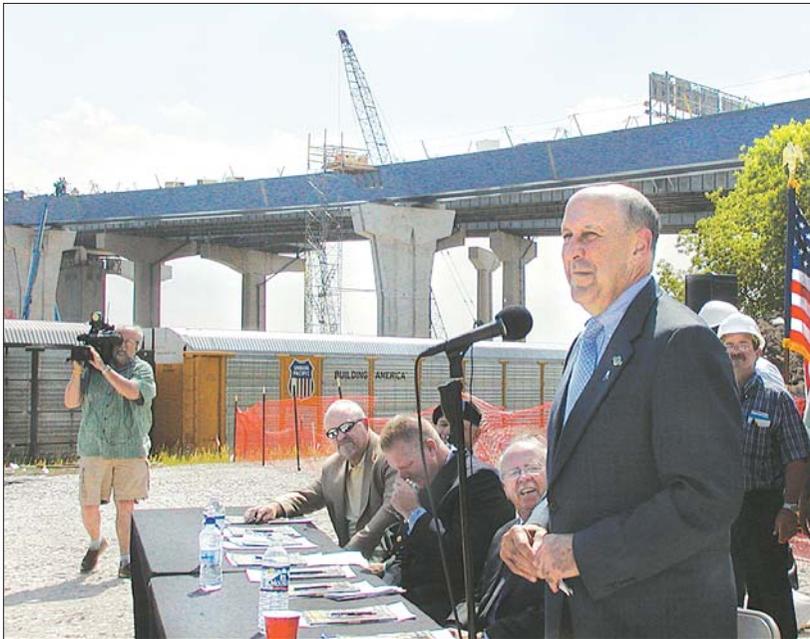
Hanging in the balance of the NRLB decisions are hundreds of thousands of workers who could find themselves categorized out of overtime, shift and hour pay, and collective wage negotiations.

Pushing against them are well-heeled corporations not content with runaway tax breaks but eager to boost profits further by shrinking the ability of employees to have input on their own lives and fortunes.

First weirdness – companies have benefited mightily from the union team approach where experienced workers help direct

Action continued Page 3

Snapping into action for our vets



By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Major General Matthew Caulfield had just flown in from Hawaii. "And while I don't play favorites among the states, this is the setting I'm going to remember most," the retired Marine told Gov. Jim Doyle and assembled leaders of the military, the government and the construction trades unions at a Milwaukee signing ceremony June 8.

The executive director of Helmets to Hardhats spoke from the corner of a lumpy makeshift parking lot with highway graders and earth movers busy on his left, electrical connections being laid behind him, a freight train roaring past on his right and mas-

sive aligning ribbons of the new Marquette Interchange circling the sky above him.

Waving his hand at the tiny distant figures confidently traversing those high open spans, Caulfield noted that "this is the most dangerous job in the world, outside Iraq and Afghanistan."

"It requires tight precision, teamwork, understood commands and trust that the folks you're with are equally well trained."

He was elaborating on comments Doyle had made as Wisconsin became the 21st state to welcome Helmets to Hardhats, which speedily connects returning soldiers to jobs in the unionized construction trades. The

program is free, uses educational benefits for veterans and cuts the transition into union apprentice programs from months to days.

Doyle proudly pointed out that Wisconsin was the best of all the states in providing veteran benefits and just recently made tuition in the University of Wisconsin system free for returning veterans.

He also recalled that he first learned about Helmets to Hardhats shortly after it was

LEFT: Flanked by trains, cranes and camera crews at the Marquette Interchange project, Gov. Jim Doyle welcomed the Helmets to Hardhats program to Wisconsin and streamlined its direct access for returning military seeking union construction trades jobs.

BELOW: Labor, government and military leaders joined Doyle in signing the accord.



formed in 2003 from Terrance McGowan, business manager of Operating Engineers Local 139. The governor promptly added the program to his Grow Wisconsin initiative.

The signing ceremony formalizes rapid direct entry and streamlines active participation by construction trades locals and Wisconsin contractors posting jobs.

Helmets continued Page 6

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Action

From Page 1

the activities of newer workers, without any authority to hire or fire. That hardly makes them supervisors, but that's what the NLRB is looking to do.

Second weirdness — the first fight facing the labor unions is just to talk to the NLRB about the impact of these "supervisor" decisions.

Legal briefs have been filed in the cases over the past three years, but the NLRB has resisted hearing actual people speak right to board members.

This is quite a change. From 1980 to 2000 under both GOP and Democratic control, the NLRB agreed to oral arguments in 23 significant cases. From 2001 to 2005, the NLRB did not allow oral arguments in any cases before it. It's resisting now.

The three cases before the NLRB are known as the Kentucky River decisions because they address issues left open in the 2001 Supreme Court "Kentucky River" decision.

Two of the cases involve nurses (one a hospital, the other a long-term care facility) and the third is in the trades (boilermakers). Businesses want to reclassify as supervisors the registered nurses who instruct people, such as nurse's aides, and the "leadmen" or veteran journeymen who direct workers in a crew.

Unlike other employees, supervisors do not have protected rights to form or join unions under the National Labor Relations Act. For decades, employers have tried to reclassify workers with occasional instruction authority as supervisors, which would deny them union representation or a voice at work.



June delegates were called to action on the potentially devastating NLRB decisions by an unannounced guest speaker — AFL-CIO national leader Linda Chavez-Thompson. See Page 5.

Yet such companies rely on the ability of experienced workers to mentor newcomers or monitor work flow. Now corporations want to retain the advantage but eliminate the workers' rights. In other words, have their cake and eat it, too.

In the trades, unions insist on a strong ratio of journeymen to apprentices precisely to make sure the new workers learn well and have people to turn to. Unionized nurses have also been a leader in safer patient-staff ratios and smoother service.

Working closely with the Milwaukee County Labor Council is the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals, AFT.

Already planned for July 13 is a kangaroo court theatrical event, sponsored by the MCLC. This mock NLRB Bushie Court will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday, July 13, at the marker for the Bay View Massacre, which is on the corner of S. Superior St. and E. Russell Ave. After the dramatics and the speeches, participants will adjourn to nearby Puddler's Hall for refreshments and talk.

Facing many common battles and anticipating this one, the nurses banded together a few months ago as the first AFL-CIO Industry Coordinating Committee, called RNs Working Together.

These eight AFL-CIO unions represent more than 200,000 registered nurses and in May joined in a Statue of Liberty rally opposing the business interpretation of supervisory status. These nurse unions alone estimate that thousands of their members could lose rights if the NLRB votes against them.

But a lot more than nurses are at risk, notes Stewart Acuff, the AFL-CIO chief of organizing. A broad interpretation of "supervisor" by the NLRB would allow employers to reclassify and strip federal protec-

tion from hundreds of thousands of nonunion workers while wiping out bargaining rights for current union members.

In fact, cases at the NLRB are on hold awaiting the supervi-

tor decisions. -- including 60 involving union elections.

Particularly at risk are "team leaders" who direct or assign the work of others. The AFL-CIO sees sweeping impact in such fields as healthcare, building trades and port shipping, but local union leaders also point out manufacturing and service companies.

Union members don't have to wait for July events to take action.

Members of Congress are being urged by letters and emails to encourage the NLRB to hold oral arguments to be fully and humanly informed.

Concerned citizens are also being urged to send their letters directly to the chairman of the NLRB board, Robert J. Battista, 1099 14th St., NW, Washington, DC 20570.

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Social issues will center at UWM

Once known as Radfest, this event has expanded in name and progressive reach. It is now the Midwest Social Forum and this summer takes root July 6-9 in Milwaukee.

The Midwest Social Forum will be centered at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Student Union with more than 100 workshops along with cultural events, panels and a march for social justice.

For registration, meals, even housing for those who need it, the sponsors have arranged a sliding scale of costs to put participation in everyone's range. There is also still room to add groups as well as individuals and there is online sign up at www.mwsocialforum.org (or call the Madison area 608-262-1420).

There are also children's activities and child-care, plus a film festival, table displays, art work, spoken-word performances, music and strategy sessions for further community action.

The forum closes with a 2 p.m. march and rally Sunday, July 9, calling for "Social Justice in the Streets and in the Courts" and building on the week-end events. Among the panel discussions:

10:30 a.m. Friday, July 7: "Celebrating the Immigrant Rights Movement," panelists include journalist Roberto Rodriguez, Christine Neumann-Ortiz of Voces de la Frontera and Colin Rajah of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

7 p.m. Saturday, July 8: "Fighting Brutality, Violence, and Racial Oppression in Our Communities," panelists include Biko Baker of the Campaign Against Violence and David Crowley of Urban Underground.

Support comes from such groups as the South Central Federation of Labor, In These Times, the A. E. Havens Center, the Wisconsin Community Fund and Progressive magazine.

Calendar

Wednesday, June 28

Executive Board Meeting
Milwaukee County Labor Council
2 p.m., MBCT, 5941 W. Bluemound Rd.

Tuesday, July 4

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!
No delegate meeting July 5

Monday, July 10

Laborfest 2006 Planning Meeting
5 p.m., Yatchak Hall
633 S. Hawley Rd.

Thursday, July 13

Day of Action Rally: Mock NLRB Court
4 p.m., Bay View Historical Marker
S. Superior St. and Russell Ave.

Wednesday, July 26

Executive Board Meeting
Milwaukee County Labor Council
2 p.m., MBCT, 5941 W. Bluemound Rd.



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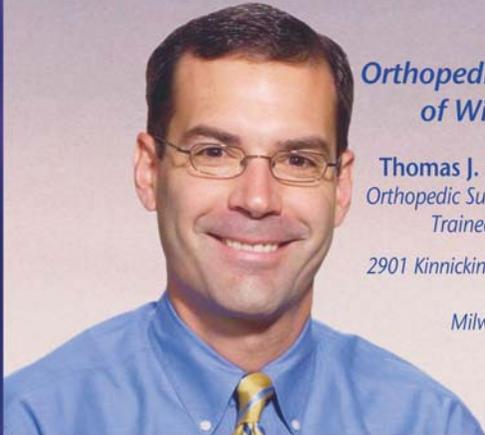
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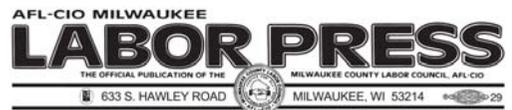
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Milwaukee labor council impressed this visitor

The speaker was a surprise at the June delegate meeting, which had been moved at the last minute because of a scheduling conflict at Serb Hall to Yatchak Hall (the old Assembly room) at 633 S. Hawley Rd.

But the turnout also surprised the speaker and made her point. Linda Chavez-Thompson, executive vice president of the national AFL-CIO, was welcomed by a packed house, yet the delegates had only days before learned by email and postcards of the changed location.

"You are my proof that central labor councils are the life's blood of the union movement," Chavez-Thompson told the delegates. When told that this level of turnout - more than 140 persons - was natural, she was doubly impressed, confessing that she sometimes missed the sense of personal activism when she was a local labor council leader. "That's when I learned not to volunteer," she joked.

The truth is, she has never learned not to volunteer. As one of the top three leaders of the national AFL-CIO ("and the best looking," she joked, "but don't tell John Sweeny and Richard Trumka that I said that"), Chavez Thompson was in town for preliminary talks about plans that will unfold at year's end to make labor councils even stronger and freer to maneuver as a "New Alliance" strategy emerges.

She has taken the lead in the AFL-CIO's uncompromising stand on immigration reform, insisting that "as long as there is one group of exploited workers in this country, we're all exploited." She is also taking the lead in the NLRB action this summer (See Page 1).

Her frequent flyer miles also mount up because she has made a point to be at rallies or protests on common causes whether organized by the AFL-CIO or by the Change to Win unions, "because whatever problems there are at the top, we're in common concern at the local level."

She also noted that the Milwaukee County Labor Council is an embodiment of the success of Solidarity Charters, having welcomed back virtually all the unions that were forced to disaffiliate last summer and actually adding a few more. Indeed, while the Laborers recently split from the national AFL-CIO, in Milwaukee they have signaled their determination to stay in the labor council fold.

"This is why I say the central councils are the labor movement," Chavez-Thompson said, in effect applauding the delegates even as they applauded her. She intends to be back, for common political and community causes and in the winter to add more voice to the power of the local alliance.



TOP: As Linda Chavez-Thompson arrived at the MCLC offices the evening of June 7, for a whirlwind day of meetings and planning sessions, she found one of her national AFL-CIO traveling partners, Diane Ebenreiter (left), already helping MCLC secretary Robin Lundgren stuff delegate envelopes. The youngest union worker Ebenreiter was trying to keep up with was Robin's daughter, Kylie.



LEFT: The national AFL-CIO's Midwest coordinator, Todd Anderson, joined Chavez-Thompson in MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran's office for some intense sharing and strategy on Milwaukee labor issues.

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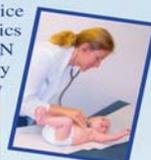
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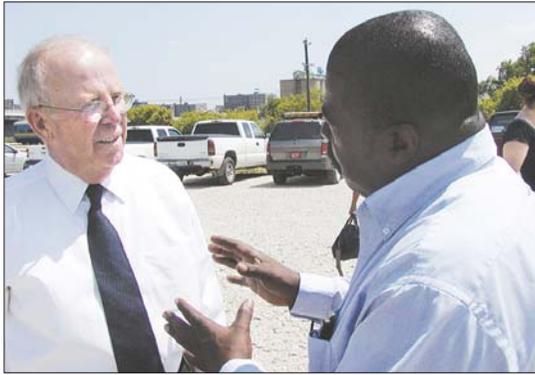
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Helmets

From Page 1

Nationally, about 200,000 folks emerging from the active military, the National Guard and related veteran components have used Helmets to Hardhats — “and Guard folks are using it most of all,” noted Caulfield in an interview. He also is working to help the construction trades industry add office jobs for returning disabled veterans.

The software at helmetsto-hardhats.org, with current estimates always fluid as jobs are filled and new postings come in, has about 40,000 vets right now



LEFT: Maj. Gen. Matthew Caulfield and MCLC President Willie D. Ellis traded stories from the front — the labor front, that is.

BELOW RIGHT: building trades leader Lyle Balistreri and another general, Roger Lalich, chatted before the governor arrived.

for 72,000 career opportunities. Wisconsin job openings are reportedly above 1,000. The state

construction industry estimates that it will be adding 5,000 construction jobs in the next six years.

Caulfield, who has spoken out for a decade about the urgency of re-entry to good jobs for the military, said, “Despite what you hear, I’m not the father of Helmets to Hardhats. The unions are.”

That title, he said, belongs to the national AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department because it was the first to recognize the value and push the program.

“No matter how you feel about the war, you have to admire and support these soldiers,” said Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council AFL-CIO who hosted the event and whose staff, along with the governor’s office, arranged the impressive mid-Marquette Interchange setting.

And whatever national conflicts you’ve been reading about, all 15 of the international construction trades unions are together for keeps on Helmets to



Hardhats. “They are the trustees of the program,” noted Caulfield, along with nine signatory contractor groups and companies.

The Pentagon is strongly behind the effort, putting \$5 million into seed money. And though the feds this year cut the allocation by \$1 million, the success and obvious benefits to participating states and contractors

Continued Next Page

Appeal of Hardhats program pointedly rebukes anti-union myths

Attacks on union construction have been popping up, in all places, on Brewers radio broadcasts. The cold slap in the face to such sentiments includes the military’s enthusiastic embrace of the high standards, new skills, discipline and legitimate pay of precision union construction work represented in the powerful attraction of Helmets to Hardhats.

Those radio ads stem from the non-union ABC (contracting network), the same group that in recent surveys single-handedly made the construction industry look lousy in black Milwaukee hiring (its apprentice figures, or lack thereof, were invisibly included in publicized analysis).

Yet its radio ads now concoct statistics of non-union construction that literally count every outhouse and prefab cottage in the state — and don’t mention the standards required of contractors and workers on vital high-rise and highway projects.

Nor do the ads mention ABC’s venal efforts to change the laws in order to flood worksites with its low-pay apprentices and the failure of its apprentice programs to reach union graduation rates, not to mention pay and benefits.

But Helmets to Hardhats knows. It’s looking for discipline, training, wages and benefits good enough for our returning soldiers. And it’s sticking with the unions.



Regina Tesnow (left) and Julie Winkelmann, who helped organize the ceremony for the Milwaukee construction trades council, were inviting IBEW Local 494 workers from Habermehl Electric to stop by — and discovered that one was also a just-returned Iraq veteran.

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are likely to keep the program roaring along.

Well-heeled companies support the concept. Union contractors are eager to employ veterans and veterans are eager for the standards and pay in these jobs.

Don't discount either the automatic affinity and camaraderie between the trades unions and the returning soldiers. It was palpable at the event. The respect was mutual, pro to pro.

This was actually the rare case where a cliché became truth — win-win. So Helmets to Hardhats was described by Sean McGarvey, the AFL-CIO national trades department treasurer and secretary, Roberta Gassman (secretary of the state's workforce development department), Brigadier General Roger Lalich of the Wisconsin National Guard, and Ken Lambert, executive vice president of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers.

Around the parking lot, military trucks nestled next to media cameras, union leaders chatted with soldiers and onlookers. One of the curious was an IBEW electrical crew that came over to see what all the dignitary fuss was about. One member of that Local 494 was an Iraq veteran.

Other recent veterans, alerted by friends, approached Balistreri in the parking lot asking how to get in.

Balistreri also told the media the story of how he was entering his union office when he bumped into a returning Iraqi vet inquiring about a job and already pre-certified by the Big Step training program. "You knew immediately he was the real deal," said Balistreri, who put him in touch with the Carpenters union.

Today, more than a year later and making over \$17 an hour in take-home pay on his way up the wage ladder, Damar Liedereach,



Gov. Doyle talked up Helmets to Hardhats surrounded by Marquette Interchange workers and contractors.

late of the US Army 2nd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, is an apprentice in the construction career he wanted, flooring specialist. His boss, Howie Bruss of Resilient Flooring, couldn't be happier with him and came to the ceremony.

Ramrod straight but a bit sheepish about being the poster boy for Wisconsin's Helmets to Hardhats, Liedereach can take comfort that he is no longer alone. Other state vets are using the program.

Willie D. Ellis, president of the MCLC and an organizer and business representative for

Operating Engineers Local 139, filled Caulfield in on one notable example — a local returning soldier whose military equipment training enabled him to use Helmets to Hardhats to jump directly to journeyman's status in that union.

Noting the governor's visit with the troops in Iraq, Caulfield pointed out that Doyle was hearing the same concerns he did among the soldiers — "How will they be greeted when they come home?" he said. Certainly with honor for their service, that's not a problem in this conflict. But what about jobs?

"The governor and I both

know they don't want to come back to pump gas," Caulfield said. "They want to put their experience to work."

Added Caulfield, "What they all say they will miss about the military is the comradeship, the sense of discipline and belonging. Well, the unions don't just call each other Brothers and Sisters, they mean it. They bring it to the job. So it's a real welcome home."

Balistreri thanked the assembled media for recognizing the value of the program. Quietly, he may also have been hoping the media would do some basic homework about the ongoing subtext to the event and the power of high standards in union construction work.

First, while Helmets to Hardhats puts returning soldiers

at the front of the apprenticeship line in union construction jobs, many of those soldiers, as Caulfield noted, are minorities and women. So this program dovetails with the construction unions' all-too-lonely efforts to add minorities and women to the family-supporting jobs within Wisconsin's construction boom.

Work on the Marquette Interchange, according to recent reports, is 24.5% minority and women, even ahead of the major Helmets to Hardhats push. Drivers-by can't always tell because much of the highway work happens at night.

"I think it will instantly add diversity to the construction trades," Caulfield said, "and contractors know these will be reliable workers who will take to the intense construction training."

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Needs of shelters stir labor



Labor descended in force on United Way headquarters on Vine St. June 8, arriving by police car, fire truck and Ironworkers Local 8 van, joining MPS schoolbus children to provide the biggest volunteer crowd in memory for the closing ceremony of the spring-long Health and Hygiene Drive of AFL-CIO Community Services.

LEFT: In a hall packed with people and boxes, field mobilizer Annie Wacker was framed by an MCLC banner as she revealed that \$100,000 worth of product was being delivered to 24 homeless shelters. Wacker and teammates Doug Curler and Mike Balistriere noted particularly the unstinting help from UAW Local 1866 despite their own uncertain future as Delphi goes through bankruptcy.

RIGHT TOP: Many other unions also helped, as did children. Fifth-grader Gabriella Johnson of Golda Meir spoke up on the civics and human lessons the children learned.

BELOW: River Trail students spent hours packing at MCLC.



Annie Lauer, the new summer Faith Community for Worker Justice intern, introduced herself to the labor community by sorting and delivering boxes. The Notre Dame University senior-to-be will be key in Labor in the Pulpits efforts.

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