

Labor leaps to Lena's side

A novel COPE meeting puts candidate for county exec through her expressive paces.

See Page 5



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(USPS 350-360)

Wisconsin labor aligns for future **CHANGE** in a massive reorganization

"County" will soon have to be dropped from the name of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO. The labor councils of Washington and Ozaukee counties are merging into Milwaukee.

But that's only one of the organizational changes whipping through Wisconsin labor.

Six service areas will soon blanket the state, each with permanent field staff assisting locals geographically while coordinating the campaigns of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO.

Outlying councils will be served through agreements with Minnesota and Michigan.

The aim is nothing less than the restructuring of the labor movement in Wisconsin, changing a pell-mell assortment of nearly 30 patchwork councils into a battering ram for working families.

The initiative creates mobilization where numbers and purpose were once lacking and provides a persistent year-round focus on political and legislative advances.

It seeks to capture and invigorate the existing talents of locals; support affiliates more closely; encourage constituency groups in many regions to work with labor, and expand the influence and size of unions.

All this results from the AFL-CIO led New Alliance, a national re-examination region by region and state by state, allowing local conditions and effectiveness to determine the final results in coordinated labor councils. Wisconsin is the 11th state to undergo the New Alliance changes. Most of the rest are also battleground states at election time.

For the Wisconsin version, local and national labor leaders spent more than a year in listening sessions, statewide committees and intense analysis to decide how to keep the best of the old -- and admit to themselves how much has to be new.

Underneath there is also a clearer definition, even an insistence, on what makes a successful CLC (central labor council). "What all this proves is we are serious about winning," commented a Green Bay member of the planning sessions.

While some assessments and staffing will not be completed until 2009, the conversion starts immediately. Reframing and expansion of the board of the state AFL-CIO goes into effect in two months. The Labor 2008 election strategy and staff are in effect a dress rehearsal for the future.

Even elected positions will change as the state AFL-CIO reorganizes. The elected executive vice president is in practical terms a manager of political leadership and will soon become just that. Outside Milwaukee and Madison, the state AFL-CIO will bear responsibility not just for recruiting and hiring field staff but also for running it.

Change continued Page 9



Jim Jorgensen, known to all as Jimbo, in his final weeks as business manager of Iron Workers Local 8. Over his left shoulder is a 75 year old photo of considerable meaning.

Jimbo's journey of iron

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

My neighbor has a wall-sized bloup of a famous and dizzying photo of the New York skyline during construction of the Rockefeller Center. The foreground shows 11 workers sitting on an I-beam casually eating lunch as their legs swing free outside the 69th floor of the RCA (now GE) building. No nets, no fakery, no retouching.

75 years later, "Lunch Atop a Skyscraper" by Charles Ebbets (a noted photographer and something of a daredevil), first published in the New York Herald Tribune, remains a breathtaking image and the way most Americans still imagine the nonchalant daring of iron workers.

Jimbo has a smaller version of the picture on his office wall at the Iron Workers Local 8 Hall on W. Adler Lane,

where several Milwaukee unions conduct their meetings.

He also has a family connection. One of the 11 figures on the I-beam is his grandfather, his relatives say.

They should know. Jimbo, as everyone calls Jim Jorgensen, is a third-generation iron worker from New York. You can hear Brooklyn in his voice. His mother still lives there and flew out for his massive Milwaukee retirement party last month.

Jimbo got his union card in the 1960s and helped build the World Trade Center. ("For those of us who put it up, an even more horrifying day," he says of 9/11,

when iron workers from around the country streamed to Manhattan to offer trained help.)

Back in those 1960s, Jimbo confesses, he was "pretty wild," contrasting with his later solidity as a union leader. The two sides of his personality sometimes merge (he still knows how to party) and have accidentally formed a legend.

Before or after, everybody in construction seems to know some story about Jimbo.

On a recent visit to New York after interviewing him here, I met my niece's boy friend, a young

Jimbo continued Page 10

Where are fair trade pioneers? Right here

It's a pattern. White House inaction and congressional despair force progressives to focus on the local front to enact gains that really count. Not the best place, but sometimes the only place.

It's been true for everything from health care to global warming, where federal impotency is forcing more states and local communities to step into effective action. Often the public, fixated on D.C., doesn't notice.

Now that's proving true on global fair trade awareness and preventing backdoor use of sweatshops and child labor.

Headlines trumpet every setback for human and environmental rights in D.C., such as the recent Peru Free Trade Agreement, so effective improvement and consensus go unnoticed right next door.

Particularly notable is the emergence of Wisconsin people in leadership roles for fair trade and the city of Milwaukee as a beacon to other cities.

For example, there are only three "Fair Trade Towns" in the US, although hundreds in Europe. And the largest by far of the three is Milwaukee, which joined municipalities in Pennsylvania and Vermont last month by passing legislation sponsored by Tony

Zielinski, the 14th District alderman who has even gotten his colleagues to agree to sufficient manpower to give the action teeth.

In October, which was not so coincidentally national Fair Trade Month, Zielinski led the passage of a sweat-free ordinance. It is not an attack on perspiration but on sweatshops. It committed city government to procure only goods (as well as apparel) in contracts over \$30,000 that are sweatshop free.

National global trade advocates and local businesses joined Zielinski at City Hall for an exposition of fair trade goods and information as Mayor Barrett declared October 15 as Milwaukee's Fair Trade Day.

At first, city managers resisted the latest legislation, arguing that it would force more work on a limited staff in the city procurement office. The moral as well as the economic concerns behind Zielinski's efforts led his colleagues on the Common Council to agree to added manpower.

"Some foreign workers are being taken advantage of by having to work under inhumane conditions and wages," argued the alderman. "In turn, the sweatshop practices of other countries are



costing Americans family supporting jobs. If there is to be a level playing field, government must use its purchasing power to lead the way to social justice."

Milwaukee had already emerged as a leader in making its uniforms subject to sweat-free manufacturing concerns. That was the Clean Clothes Campaign supported by the Milwaukee County Labor Council. Coordinator Michael Howden noted that four years ago the city committed to the vision of not procuring sweatshop-produced clothing.

What was unique about Zielinski's resolutions was the city extended that view beyond apparel, prioritizing sweat-free conditions to "all" products the city buys. Simultaneously (if more technical), the city is now committed to examine the wage rates of the vendors from other countries that it uses.

These sorts of basic concerns - are trade agreements helping foreign workers as well as US economies? Do they protect worker and environmental safety? -- have brought Wisconsin faces into national leadership roles. Andy Gussert, a veteran trade

activist, chose not to seek a second term as president of the American Federation of Teachers in Wisconsin. Instead as executive director he will lead the Citizens Trade Campaign (www.citizenstrade.org), a leading national umbrella for the fair trade movement.

One of CTC's strongest affiliates is the Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition, which Gussert led prior to being elected AFT-Wisconsin president.

Now taking over as executive director for WFTC is another well-known activist, formerly southeast Wisconsin director for Gov. Doyle, Sachin Chheda. Chheda is also a partner in a local consulting firm and has worked with Gussert on progressive issues "since we were kids," he recalled with a laugh.

Chheda has recently been leading Supreme Court Justice Louis Butler's re-election bid, and will continue to work with that campaign as a senior adviser. See Page 4.

Reflecting the urgency of his new assignment, Chheda flew out to D.C. just after our interview to buttonhole Republican and Democratic members of Congress about concerns in so-called "free trade" agreements with Peru, Colombia and South Korea.

Chheda is confident that the Colombia and South Korea agreements can be defeated, and says the Colombia agreement especially is a "slap in the face" of the labor movement. "Colombia has the world's worst record on labor relations," says Chheda. "They murder trade unionists with impunity. To create a trade agreement with Colombia is a terrible insult to working people around the world."

Chheda was less confident about defeating the Peru agree-

ment, and sure enough it squeaked through in November.

The Peru Free Trade Agreement put a normally strong supporter of fair trade on a fence - the AFL-CIO, which opposed the final bill despite "significant" improvements in labor and environmental standards but also

asked its members not to contact their representatives in opposition.



Zielinski

The biggest reason, fair trade advocates hope, was to save labor's ammunition for the trade pacts with South Korea and particularly Colum-

bia. Not so incidentally, elected to replace Gussert as president of AFT-Wisconsin was another notable political name and the first professor to head the union. Bryan Kennedy, assistant professor of Portuguese at UW-Milwaukee and a member of Local 3535, is best known for the unenviable task of running twice as a Democrat against Rep. James Sensenbrenner.

At AFT, he announced a priority - securing collective bargaining rights for UW faculty and academic staff. Currently prevented by state law, this right was included but then dropped in the recent state budget compromise with Assembly Republicans, who also tried to kill existing bargaining rights.

-- D.P.N.

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Unions taking temperature of health plans

By Mike Hall, AFL-CIO
Special to Labor Press

Health care costs are rising at twice the rate of inflation -- which in turn undermines union bargaining, forces unionized employers to operate at a disadvantage and, ultimately, means more out-of-pocket costs for families.

Increasingly, the current health care system is not working for union members who have health insurance. It certainly isn't working for the 47 million US residents, including 8.7 million children, who had no health insurance in 2006.

Yet it's serving insurance and drug companies very well. In addition to stunning corporate profits, CEOs are pocketing stratospheric pay. In 2006, CEOs of health insurance corporations made an average \$8.7 million each in annual total compensation (pay and stock options). Big Pharma CEOs each took in an average \$4.4 million in total compensation.

Union members have a key stake in this battle. Unions have built a national standard of comprehensive health care benefits funded by employers. But as the cost of health care spins out of



control, businesses that offer these benefits are hobbled in a global marketplace and also are at a competitive disadvantage here at home. Today's broken health care system drags down the American economy. And that hurts everyone. In addition, health care costs are increasingly the crux of many union negotiations, and union members say they simply can't continue to take on increased costs.

As part of the AFL-CIO union movement, we are fighting for a unique American plan for secure, high-quality health care

for all. The campaign centerpiece is a nationwide team of union activists who will work with a broad alliance of grassroots, community and business groups to win progressive health care reform, arm union members with the information and tools they need to become health care activists and voters and make the 2008 elections a mandate on health care reform.

The AFL-CIO has not endorsed a specific health care plan, but several central elements of any health care reform proposal must:

- Build on what's best in American health care.
- Control costs.

A pioneer inroad in shaping the AFL-CIO position was the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and the proposal put forward by President David Newby and others to get to universal health coverage by creating an enormous pool of employees treated the same whether they worked for small or large businesses.

The labor community was also instrumental in the Healthy Wisconsin initiative, pushed by state Senate Democrats. "Healthy Wisconsin was not included in the state budget due to fierce opposition by Republicans to comprehensive, secure health care," Newby pointed out, but "Senate Democrats deserve a huge amount of credit for making health care a top priority in our state once again."

"The health care issue is now front and center and must be addressed by state policymakers."

• Make sure that everyone gets high-quality health care as good as or better than they have now.

• Cover preventive care.
• Let people choose their own doctor and other providers.
• Make the government the watchdog on costs, quality and fairness.

• Offer a public alternative to private insurance.
• Divide responsibility among employers, government and individuals.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says this massive mobilization will "put the full-force of the 10 million union members and 3 million union retirees behind winning high-quality, secure health care for every person in America."

As Sweeney says, "In America -- no one should go without health care."

For more information visit the www.aflcio.org/healthcare.

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|----------------|------|--------|
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| SLAMMERS | 26 | 16 |
| GUTTER RATS | 21 | 21 |
| CRAZY 8's | 19 | 23 |
| ONE BOARD OVER | 18 | 24 |
| 8 BALLS | 16 | 26 |

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 180

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| DEL GROSS | 234 |
| ELMER HELM | 233 |
| BOB WAGNER | 226 |
| DAN LAACK | 213 |
| DON WIEDMANN | 206 |
| EUGENE HERRICK | 195 |
| DON PHILLIPS | 193 |
| DAN KNIPPEL | 191 |
| STEVE KUKLINSKI | 186 |
| BYRON BERG | 183 |

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 490

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| BOB WAGNER | 631 |
| DEL GROSS | 608 |
| DAN LAACK | 604 |
| ELMER HELM | 556 |
| DON WIEDMANN | 507 |
| EUGENE HERRICK | 490 |

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 180

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| DAN LAACK | 264 |
|-----------|-----|

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 400

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| RAE MATOWSKI | 526 |
| JOYCE KNIPPEL | 486 |
| PHYLISS NAVARRETE | 447 |
| ELAINE KARIER | 415 |

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 155

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
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No fooling! A busy April 1

The special meeting that endorsed Lena Taylor for Milwaukee County executive hardly means the work is done for the COPE committee and for the forces of labor.

That April 1 election will call upon the Milwaukee County Labor Council to evaluate and interview many candidates and decide who represents the best interests of workers and their families.

And this will have to take place fairly quickly. It is obvious already that several races will feature more than two candidates and force a runoff in the Feb. 19 primary.

(That February primary will have a larger turnout than customary for local races. It is also when Wisconsin voters can give their preferences in the US presidential race. Recognizing the strength of the Democratic field, the national AFL-CIO held off on making one recommendation. Some individual national unions have announced their preferences but other unions are also reflecting diversity of choices. Given the push to make other states' primaries decisive, Wisconsin probably won't hold the early influence it once did nationally.

But given the interest in changing direction, one thing is clear - Wisconsinites want to vote.)

In Wisconsin, at this stage, some of the April 1 choices seem fairly obvious yet others are up in the air. In fairness, COPE will seek questionnaires and interviews with all the candidates for local offices and work with the Wisconsin AFL-CIO in any statewide races.

There will be some roil and boil in the local races. No major candidate had emerged to challenge Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett (though Atty. Andrew Shaw has taken out papers). But other city administrative offices will be hotly contested, which is a fairly rare occurrence.

Likely to be a strenuous high-cost campaign - for the first time in recent memory - is the office of city attorney, State Rep. Pedro Colon, a stalwart on issues affecting the MATC, seniors, unions and the Latino community, is challenging the veteran incumbent, Grant Langley.

Another name familiar to the labor community, author and activist Rick Kissell, would like to replace Wayne Whittow, for decades the city treasurer Milwaukeeans know because his

name is on the property tax bill. Alderman Michael McGee's seat has dominated media attention in Common Council elections, especially after he demonstrated in a special recall that defiance of authority was a selling point in District 6. Now there is rampant speculations because it is unclear at this point a.) if he can run (only if not convicted), b.) will be running from jail or c.) will be in a trial continuing on Election Day. Then again, we may not get that far, depending on what emerges from the Feb. 19 primary.

But look past the headline-making and newspaper-selling confusion of District 6. At first glance it seems that all the Common Council incumbents look strong, but there are undercurrents. Challengers in some districts are just forming their campaigns. Female voters have already expressed displeasure that the Common Council currently is an all-men's club. So expect some appealing challenges to hover, particularly since they have another month to file. And all Common Council seats are on the ballot.

So are all the seats on the Milwaukee County Board.



Supreme Court Justice Louis Butler - show with Lynda Guyton of the Laborfest staff - picked up key backing as early as Labor Day. SEE BOX BELOW.

Several there are also facing challenges and at least one seat is wide open. Supervisor Dan Devine, whose votes have clearly disappointed the union supporters who helped elect him, has announced his departure in order to run for West Allis mayor.

There are suburban contests as well that could play into the

city and county government races.

And just when voters get there hands around all this, along will come the Big Show - the November 4 election (preceded by a September 19 primary) that decides the presidency, all the House seats, half the Wisconsin Senate and all of the Assembly.

April 1 brings one statewide race of considerable consequence. For several months, after the debacle of buying a seat for Annette Ziegler on the Supreme Court, her right-wing financiers (Club for Growth and Wisconsin Manufactures & Commerce) were faced with the reality that she had serial problems with ethics. That has also created a diplomatic and moral dilemma for her new colleagues, who have to decide on the appropriate censure. See conflictsfromAtoziegler.com. Ziegler's win preserved the left-right balance on the court, but the forces that helped elect her face a much bigger problem in 2008. Here they seek to knock off a respected incumbent, Louis Butler, the first African American to sit on the court. He has won backing in abundance from labor, including a Laborfest endorsement from the police union. A veteran of both municipal and circuit court seats, he also has a national reputation for teaching other judges analysis, judicial temperament and restraint. So Butler is prepared for any contest - and the l'affaire Ziegler left a bad taste even in the mouths of many members of the WMC. As a result, for months the conservatives couldn't find any noted name to throw against Butler in the April 1 race. In fact, several judges declined to run. The funders have finally found a largely unknown conservative -- Burnett County Circuit Court Judge Michael Gableman. And a Sun Prairie lawyer, Charlie Schutze, is also running, likely to force a Feb. 19 primary. Not surprisingly, state labor in force has already determined to re-elect Butler.

Unions find a Taylor-made foe for Walker

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Having just cast a key Madison vote – and again criticizing the trick (no treat) budget deal imposed by Assembly Republicans – Sen. Lena Taylor rushed back to her beloved Milwaukee on Halloween, armed with irrepresible energy and costumed appropriately in a Rosie the Riveter T-shirt.

She was late for a unique confrontation with two dozen union leaders, who may have been delighted to see her enter the fray for county executive but still grilled her hot and heavy.

Wasn't she moving too fast, asked one, citing her election to the Assembly four years ago followed in 2004 by replacing Gwen Moore in the state Senate after Moore's elevation to the House – and now, before completing her first Senate term as an influential voice for Milwaukee, taking on the well-heeled Scott Walker.

"People say I'm too ambitious," Taylor shot back. "What do they want me to be – lazy?"

The timing, she pointed out, was hardly hers. She noted how happy she has been as a state senator, content to run for re-election next November.

But progressives were chafing around to find someone willing to take on an extremely well-funded shrewd campaigner who had duped the public – twice! – with a phony "no tax increase" pledge.

She was being urged to help rescue Milwaukee county with the care and flowing ideas she had shown in Madison.

As potential candidates dropped away, and as "run Lena run" talk grew, it also became evident that she was the only one who scared Walker. He launched personal attacks on her even before she decided to run.

"It became clear," she recalled, "it was coming down to me."

But what about that Walker war-chest and the need to raise a million dollars starting from nothing?

Citing commitments for about \$150,000 within a week of her announcement and describing candidly her need to form an aggressive proven staff with ability to raise money while she spoke at every forum and gathering available, Taylor looked the union leaders right in the eye and said, "I will need your help."

In fundraising, "I intend to max myself out and max out every supportive supervisor – and max out all of you. I've proven that I can do it and that I make better every position I touch."

She can beat Walker, she said, and union leaders agree, since the public has wised up.

But it won't be easy. The need to get behind a



Lena Taylor survived some blunt questions Oct.31 from dozens of union leaders.

good candidate early with ground troops and money was a big part of the rationale for this unprecedented Oct. 31 meeting of COPE (Committee on Political Education) by the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Never before, noted Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran, had COPE gathered five months before a general election and just for candidates in one local race.

The committee also interviewed the low-key Joe Klein and invited the incumbent, whose campaign manager declined, saying Walker had not announced his candidacy, and implying it was a waste of time to talk to the unions anyway.

"I think we also have seen quite enough of Mr. Scott Walker," said Cochran, noting that COPE had openly heard him out twice before and found him slippery and that county unions, public and private, had watched the services and facilities they had nurtured for years deteriorate during his reign.

Taylor refused to be drawn into personal attacks, though she has criticized the incumbent for

continuing to play the pension card without having solved the problem and for not fighting hard enough for good courts, parks and transit.

Still, the unions were asking, Show will Taylor touch the county and help dig it out of such a huge hole?

She pointed to the track record and her abilities to form consensus.

She has actual experience helping the poor and actual success running a business. A Milwaukee graduate of Rufus King High, she unlike her opponent didn't drop out of university. She went on to earn her law degree and start her own inner city company.

In the state legislature, both parties agree (though the GOP isn't happy about it) that she has shown finesse and understands budgets. She passed up a likely financial leadership position to run for county exec.

"I don't have all the answers yet," she said about curing the county. "But I will ask the right questions and I do know how to get things done."

She also had one-liners. Asked about regional economic

initiatives such as M-7 and the fears that suburbs will use them to bypass Milwaukee residents, she said, "I'm all for cooperation, but I'm not running for county executive of Waukesha."

She is champing at the bit to debate Walker, though many observers think he will run from that as much as he can, so quick is Taylor on her feet and so high-energy is her campaign style.

"The key," noted one union leader, "is how seriously she will listen to others, since Walker hasn't, and how inclusive she comes across." His view was that Taylor's governmental savvy and friendly manner would cross racial lines, just as Moore's did.

"This community has grown up, despite what you hear on talk radio," he added.

There is another side to this campaign. Almost all the April elections are supposedly non-partisan, but Walker came out of the GOP Assembly – and ironically would have been a cheerleader for the hacks at Gov. Doyle's revenue sharing he actually relies on. Taylor is a Democratic party leader.

So both partisan and nonpartisan citizens will be stirred.

Insiders speculate that 15 of the current 19 supervisors would support Taylor, as will most city aldermen and state elected officials.

"The only question," said one county supervisor, "is who among us will be wimpy." Right out of the gate a number have expressed support for Taylor, particularly Roger Quindel, Gerry Broderick, Marina Dimitrijevic and John Weishan.

Mayor Tom Barrett was knee deep in budget concerns when she announced, noted a spokesman, so this is "not the time for partisan politics" (a tacit admission that this nonpartisan race is anything but). But the spokesman added, "The mayor will want to be helpful – there is plenty of time for campaigning down the road."

For elected officials yes. For unions, the time is now. COPE brought its enthusiastic endorsement of Lena Taylor to the November delegate meeting, which agreed by acclamation. The MCLC has urged all its members to volunteer for and give to her campaign.

Why the hurry? One delegate pointed to Walker's budget, fixed yet again Nov. 5 ("as much as we can," noted Board Chairman Lee Holloway) by a veto-proof majority. It restored \$9 million in safety net cuts.

The only good news, the delegate noted, was forced on Walker by media exposure and public outrage, notably more money for mental health housing after people died.

"By the time the media works through every service Walker had destroyed and by the time the public gets outraged, there won't be a county government left," commented the delegate. "We have to fix things now."

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Exasperated AFL-CIO asks world to judge the NLRB

By James Parks

Special to Labor Press

Instead of fulfilling its mission to protect workers and promote collective bargaining, in recent years the Republican majority on the National Labor Relations Board

(NLRB) has systematically reduced the freedom of workers to join unions.

The abuses have been so egregious that the AFL-CIO in late October took the unusual step of filing a complaint with the International Labor

Organization (ILO) charging the Bush administration's NLRB with denying workers' rights in violation of international labor standards.

"Under Bush, America's labor board has so failed our nation's workers that we must now turn to the world's international watchdogs to monitor and intervene," noted AFL-CIO President John Sweeney - a sad state of affairs for a country that once led the world in fighting for worker rights.

"The Bush labor board is Kryptonite for America's workers. There is no historic precedent for such aggressive efforts to curtail workers' rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining."

The complaint highlights numerous NLRB cases over the course of several years, including a particularly egregious set of decisions issued by the NLRB in late September.

Many of the 61 decisions issued then continue the erosion of workers' rights begun in earlier years by the board. They are so at odds with the basic purpose from which the NLRB was formed -- to balance the concerns of workers and employers and to demonstrate that abuse of workers would not be tolerated by the US government -- that there was no choice but to complain to the international community.

So upsetting were these that they led to a national week of action Nov. 13 by unions, with local demonstrations and marches and widespread dissemination of placards.

In case after case, the Bush NLRB has denied workers' rights while protecting employers.

For example, in a partisan vote, the board ruled Sept. 29 that if employers voluntarily recognize a union based on union authorization cards (also known as majority sign-up), anti-union employees have 45 days to petition for a decertification election, and the employer must notify employees of this 45-day window.

Consider: Although recognition by majority sign-up requires more than 50% of workers to choose union representation, only 30% of the employees need to sign the petition for a decertification election.

In a ringing dissent, NLRB

members Wilma Liebman and Dennis Walsh said the decision "cuts voluntary recognition off at the knees."

The ILO complaint, filed with the organization's Committee on Freedom of Association, says the NLRB responded to a "rise in unlawful employer conduct" by shrinking coverage of the National Labor Relations Act, limiting the rights protected by the statute and strengthening management's ability to discriminate, harass and intimidate workers. It also charges the NLRB with steadfastly refusing to apply the few meaningful remedies available under the law.

The AFL-CIO has two previous complaints before the ILO, an agency of the United Nations. The complaints challenge the NLRB's denial of collective bargaining rights to workers now classified as supervisors and to university teaching and research assistants.



First job fair works at HIRE center

HIRE Center staff (above) were all smiles and laughter Nov. 7 as they signed in a steady stream of visitors for the first-ever job fair in the 21 years the center has been helping dislocated workers. A range of companies set up booths -



Midwest Airlines (right), FedEx and Master Lock among them - and visitors not only sought jobs but surged across the hallway at 816 W. National Ave. There they could use the resources center with its computer access and other helpful aids. Many also signed up for the dislocated worker programs of the "Help In Re-Employment" center. Call (414) 385-6920 to learn more.

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Senators push FCC, media to (finally!) listen

This fall Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) uncovered that Federal Communications Commission Chairman Kevin Martin was rushing forward with a secret plan to gut media ownership rules. Since forced in the open, Martin ignored repeated requests and warnings from senators on both sides of the aisle to slow down, address the dismal state of female and minority ownership, and listen to the public.

On Nov. 8, at a Senate Commerce Committee hearing, senators indicated that they wouldn't take Martin's behavior anymore. And what diverse senators! Dorgan was joined by Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) in introducing legislation, with impressive bipartisan support, that would halt the FCC rush to gut long-standing media ownership rules.

"If the FCC won't do their job to keep East and West Coast media conglomerates from pushing out these local voices," noted arch-conservative Lott, "then there is a role for the Congress to play."

"We believe localism and

RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITIES
Radio ownership: **7.7%**
TV station ownership: **3.26%**
US population: **33%**

diversity of media ownership are vital in a democracy," said Dorgan, considerably more liberal. "Our bill recognizes the importance of a wide range of media owners and local content, and requires a process that does not rush past those concerns to open the gates for even more consolidation of media ownership."

The bipartisan 2007 Media Ownership Act is co-sponsored by Sens. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), Olympia Snowe (R-Maine), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.).

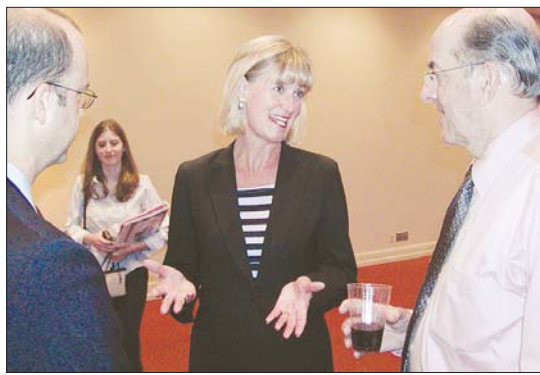
It came in a confusing time for consumers about just what is happening at the FCC. Martin has already announced some new rules that are applauded by consumers and fly in the face of Bush era "hands-off" deregulation - rules that make the FCC a stronger watchdog and open

greater competition for rival video services and more independent programmers.

That side of Martin's rule change proposals reveals that even he has been disturbed by the power of the largest cable companies over the market, the rising rates and the close ties to providers of programs.

Yet at the same time, Martin was quietly seeking to allow greater cross-ownership in local markets, the senators noted. Their bill directs the FCC to conduct a separate proceeding on localism and create an independent minority and female ownership task force before moving forward with any changes to media ownership limits - despite heavy lobbying against all this by giant media conglomerates. The bill would also give the public a 90-day comment period on any proposed rules.

Evidence from the hearings that Congress is still absorbing confirms that media consolidation is harmful to minority ownership - just as Martin has concluded that greater cable ownership has monopolistic overtones. As markets become more concentrated, the research reveals, minority ownership declines. Martin was attempting in advance of analysis to create new rules that would allow one company to own multiple television and radio stations, as well as a major daily newspaper in a single market - on top of existing cases such as Milwaukee where some cross-ownership was grandfathered in.



In September 2006, Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton took time out from the (successful) campaign trail to welcome FCC commissioners Jonathan Adelstein (left) and Michael Copps to a UWM hearing pressing less corporate media concentration and more diverse ownership. Labor leaders were among the panelists (below) on an issue that is still burning hot today.



Senate movement toward the bipartisan bill undercut a stealth campaign. Many accused the Bush-appointed Martin of trying to write some new rules not to protect consumers but simply to protect business before the current administration leaves power.

News of this bill came just one day before the final FCC hearing on media ownership in Seattle. At other public hearings, in Chicago, Tampa, Portland, Harrisburg, Nashville, and Los Angeles, thousands of concerned citizens expressed their opposition to any rule changes that would let Big Media swallow up

more local outlets. The fight of community leaders with the FCC has been going on a long time. In September of 2006, with two sympathetic FCC board members present (the Democratic holdovers), more than 300 people packed the Free Press hearing at UWM to testify against more media conglomeration in local radio and TV.

Dozens of hearings later, Martin admitted to Congress, he could only think of one person not affiliated with a media company who had testified in favor of media consolidation.

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Change From Page 1

What the analysts decided is being unveiled to delegates and labor gatherings through November and December. There will be specific steps. January brings mergers and dissolution of some labor councils, along with formal assembly (a convocation required by the bylaws) of the new lineup.

It won't be until October 2008 that the only mandatory financial impact on the rank and file takes place - a separated state AFL-CIO monthly per-cap of 25 cents to pay for the expanded staff. See sidebar.

Some aspects of the change are simple, some are complicated by bylaws and geographical concerns. The New Alliance threaded potential disputes and focused on expanding service while keeping successful models.

"Local cooperation has been a key to union success," the planners noted, even as there has been a separation into national federations (the AFL-CIO and Change to Win) and a few national unions that go their own way.

The New Alliance also had to face some hard realities. Not all central labor councils in the state met the national requirements of regular quorums, assemblies and charters. Density of union members, or lack thereof, had also affected the purpose of labor councils. Some have proven very successful in reaching goals, not surprisingly the ones centered in the state's largest cities, Milwaukee and Madison, which both provide frequent member contact and prize-winning professional newspapers delivered to homes.

Many councils had no staff; others have staff stretched to the limit. "The most some could do was hold a good Fourth of July picnic," noted one New Alliance member.

So all sorts of solutions were put together.

Service Areas: Six will be created and new staff (zone coordinators) assigned by 2009. The geographical stress will be reduced by working out service agreements for Superior with the northeast Minnesota labor council and for Marinette-Menominee with the Michigan AFL-CIO.

For examples of how the service areas will work, sharing one will be the central labor councils of Rock, Racine, Kenosha and Waukesha counties (though the close relationship between Waukesha and Milwaukee will also continue).

Mergers: There will be three merged Central Labor Councils, each the focal point of a service region. In western central Wisconsin, Chippewa and Eau Claire will merge. Madison's very active SCFL (South Central Federation of Labor) will add Dodge and Jefferson. Milwaukee will add Ozaukee and

Washington.

Area Labor Federations: Two will be created out of existing regional affiliates and councils to work on achieving critical mass and consistent programs, without enforcing per capita tax systems or treasuries such as Milwaukee and Madison have. That may change as the ALFs, as these federations are known, take hold. But it will be up to members to determine that, even as they are served with staff from the state AFL-CIO.

The two pilot ALFs will have rules on active membership and board representation. One ALF will have jurisdiction for Waupaca, Marathon, Portage, Wood, Lincoln, Adams, Langlade, Menominee and Shawano counties. The other will cover Brown Kewaunee, Door, Manitowoc, Calumet, Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, Oconto, Sheboygan and Green Lake.

Staff Additions: In Milwaukee and Madison (SCFL), the service area staff will report to and be directed by the council's principal officers while responsible to the Wisconsin AFL-CIO for the statewide initiative.

The New Alliance will play a continued role as adviser and examiner. Its coordinating committee will continue to help with strategic planning and assess the results in March 2009.

While the coordinating committee and the national AFL-CIO will be watching and measuring these changes closely over the next two years, the planners have sought to build in flexibility to allow unions to come together on state issues and seek mutual support on other concerns.

-- Dominique Paul North

The price of change

The most vital labor councils in the state, the New Alliance found, were the ones in Madison and Milwaukee. Both will expand through mergers. But the potentially larger group of union members immediately raised questions of how to serve them and how to pay for that service.

Next October, the state AFL-CIO will add a separated 25 cents a month per capita to cover the additional staff costs in six new regions, raising its total per-cap to \$1 a month. The Milwaukee and Madison labor councils will direct the new staff positions in their areas, but the state federation will in effect pay salaries and benefits.

In Milwaukee, the council members pay 92 cents a month in per capita, for which they get three full time members, a separate three-person staff of community service workers attached to the United Way and a prize winning newspaper, the Labor Press, delivered monthly to their doors. There is also frequently attached staffs for organizing and political campaigns.

There are no full time staff currently at the Ozaukee and Washington labor councils, which are joining with Milwaukee. And the monthly member per cap is only 15 cents.

No one intends them to jump to what Milwaukee union members pay the Milwaukee council - "not without having proved our value and not without talking to their leadership and members about how best to serve them," noted Sheila Cochran. She is Milwaukee's chief operating officer and secretary-treasurer.

Currently the Washington and Ozaukee councils have only about 3,000 members, and some Milwaukee council members already live



The AFL-CIO's Steve Kwaterski, Phil Neuenfeldt and Sue Ledbetter explained the New Alliance changes to MCLC delegates in November

in these counties. But there is a potential for growth by almost 6,000 union members - more if the political realities improve.

True solidarity, Cochran said in an interview, requires mutual support among workers, electing officials who believe in workers - and then holding their feet to the fire. Central labor councils have proven the most effective vehicles to these goals, she noted. She intends to hear from the councils and union members in these two counties first, she said, "and there are some innovative solutions that won't burden these workers' finances," she said.

"But the first priority is getting stronger to protect them."

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Jimbo

From Page 1

iron worker. Way out there he had heard quite a bit about Jimbo. It turned out that his father, Edward Walsh, president of the New York State Iron Workers District Council, had just flown out to Milwaukee to attend Jorgensen's retirement bash.

Among the stories Jimbo wouldn't tell me is just why he had to leave New York three decades ago. But friends in Manhattan and Milwaukee say he switched to a Midwest local in the mid-1970s out of some big big trouble.

Of course, high spirits cling to the tales of many iron workers. But hijinks can stigmatize you in terms of union leadership. The change from self-concern to union concern is not for everyone. An iron worker in the field doesn't realize how much has to be learned to lead a union and how bettering life for other workers just takes you over.

In that sense, Jimbo's journey is remarkable. Because if you had told his family and friends back in New York that young Jimbo would emerge as a smart negotiator and a persuasive union leader, "They would have never believed it," he admits.

"I fit that image, you know — big arms, thick neck, no brains."

Clearly not true. The brains part, anyway.

But still, something had to calm him down and straighten him out. What was it? "My wife (Cindy) and two baby girls," he says.

He became a business agent for Local 8. Over 14 years he learned the tangled rules of contracts, jurisdictions, trust funds and Taft-Hartley, worker comp,



OSHA and on and on. He was pretty darn good and elected business manager in 2000, the official leader of Local 8.

With his beard, big laugh and brawny arms, Jimbo is like a huge tattooed leprechaun who can impossibly glare you down.

He would probably deny with that glare what his colleagues describe as the sudden warmth and even sweetness that comes over him talking about his construction workers. One leader in another trades described the contradiction: "The nicest friend and the nastiest opponent — whatever the occasion requires."

That gruffness may simply disguise how shrewdly he can bargain and how coolly he tries to act while handling an incredible range of projects requiring his iron men and women.

There's most obviously the Downtown bridges and the Marquette Interchange but iron workers are also all over stadiums, skyscrapers, hospitals, power plants, even condos, stairways,

and reinforcing rods in concrete.

Jimbo seemed to have a telephone grafted to his ear in his final year. "We're at capacity" he said happily. "Right now we're full gear, there are so many projects. The phone never stops."

He remembers the years in the dumps but now predicts that full employment for trained iron workers will extend out for another six years and he sees more opportunities after that, as veteran workers reach retirement age.

Local 8's region stretches into Michigan and north in Wisconsin to the Fox Valley. BSO&RIW in its name stands for Bridge Structural Ornament and Reinforcing Iron Workers. Its regular membership has grown to 1,200. It calls in hundreds of boomers from other districts for work. It has hundreds of apprentices going through tough exams and mandatory welding in a training building right next to its headquarters.

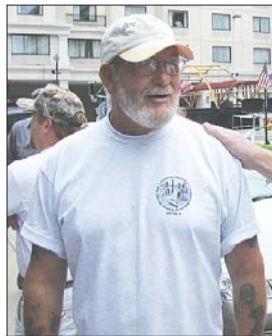
This is a world where a boss isn't just bad; he is "a dirty no good penny pinching slave driver," to quote Local 8's literature. Non-union companies are not just wrong but selfish, denying good wages and benefits while pouring corporate dues into anti-union associations.

It's a world of union pride dating back more than a century. The local's website opens with Abraham Lincoln: "Labor is the superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration."

Obviously, Republican presidents have changed and some change is not for the better.

But some changes were long overdue, Jimbo points out, particu-

The phone calls that inundate his office pair with the politicians who always seek Jimbo out at Zeidler Park before the Laborfest parade (below).



Signs pushing safety greet every apprentice class held in the iron workers' training center on Adler Lane. Three such classes were going on simultaneously on a recent visit.



larly in union safety and diversity.

Consider: In his youth, Jimbo was much like those daredevils in that old picture. Other union veterans still recall screaming at him and his colleagues about the hopping from beam to beam on the job.

Maturity sobers you up. OSHA in 1970 gave safety a big push on harnesses and procedures.

Technology provided better ways of building, anchoring and reinforcing. Training and on-the-job scrutiny these days make the lives and health of workers No. 1. But union leaders had to embrace the concepts in their hearts and actions.

"A lot of good men died from the foolishness," Jimbo remembers. And even in a world of tighter regulations, construction is dangerous work, and only unions regularly challenge job conditions and contractors. The famous Miller Park crane tragedy in 1999 — working in too high a wind — cost the lives of William DeGrave, Jerome Starr and Jeffrey Wischer. Local 8 iron workers all.

Another change is diversity. Iron workers traditionally have been jobs handed down from father to son just as happened in Jimbo's youth. There have been inroads, most famously the "iron-walkers" — American Indians as they prefer to be called, particularly in the New York area.

But frankly, and Jorgensen understands the problems with this, the family affair has made the union largely white and resistant to recruiting more broadly. Now he's proud to be a big part of

changing that. "Look at our apprentices," he says.

He arranged for the apprentice training coordinator and assistant coordinator, Larry Gonzales and Richard Hanson, to share the numbers. They also showed off the facilities one evening.

Three separate classes of about a dozen each were being drilled in safety, welding and technical details in cavernous chambers used for a variety of training purposes.

Some 553 applicants are being processed, the numbers show. And a full diversity count was available on the 222 apprentices who were on various levels of a three-year program in Wisconsin and Michigan.

More than 17% were women and minorities, which represents a continuing increase in such numbers. Latinos were just behind African Americans as the largest group, with far smaller numbers of Asians and native Americans.

But increasing diversity "is the future of our union," Jimbo said. It's not just that the current workforce is aging. Iron workers will be needed to repair the infrastructure as bridges and buildings reach the end of their life expectancy, he pointed out.

Replacements will be forced on both industry and government, he said, and workers will have to know and employ the better safety and building techniques that the iron workers are now so good at teaching and using.

"We're hungry for good candidates. I think we'll reflect the makeup of the street pretty quickly," Jimbo said as he prepared to leave the career of his lifetime.

"But we have to be honest."

Yes, he suggests, the union is now safer, more open and more deeply trained.

But don't look for a soft life. "There's no lying about what's involved. Physically, it's tough and always will be. There's nothing easy about iron work."

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In Memoriam

“A woman whose beauty words can't describe.” “A very sweet girl.” That's the definitions of Weetsie in all those dictionaries of slang and affectionate terms that have gained a reputation for accuracy on the Internet.

And to all her friends in the labor movement, that sure described Weetsie, or Weets, as Marie Schloemilch was known to all.

Weetsie started her last union job before a young senator, Al Gore, pushed Congress to fund what became the Internet. To be precise, she was born in 1909, two years after Gore's father.

Her first union job came the year that new guy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, became president. That was in 1933 working for a just-formed outfit called the State, County and Municipal Employees. Today it's AFSCME.

That first union job was followed in the 1930s by a job for Teamsters Local 200, followed by the Building Service Employees and then the AFL-CIO Region 12 office in Wisconsin.

But she was best known from her last union job, office secretary, starting in 1974. She worked directly for the leaders of what is today UNITE HERE Local 122. She was actually a member of the local's executive board. She didn't retire until 2003, at age 93.

Weetsie was 98 when she died Nov. 7. Hers was a remarkably productive career as a dedicated unionist – for 70 years! Memorial services were held Nov. 13 at Prasser-Klecicka Bay View Chapel, 3275 S. Howell Ave.

Even into the 1990s, noted former Labor Press editor Carole Casamento in a profile, you didn't want to play golf with Weetsie -- unless you liked to lose. Braves then Brewers and always the Packers, she was a big sports fan. She survived four brothers and three sisters, but doted on five nephews and seven nieces – one of whom, Julie Mauer, is retiring this year from Local 122.

She may have thought she had outlived all her friends, but a surprising number of younger union members remember her fondly as what the Internet accurately describes. Weetsie was “a beautiful woman.”

Calendar

Wednesday, November 28

MCLC Executive Board

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

Friday, November 30, 2007

Fun Fund-Raiser for APRI

Meals, dancing, card games and raffles to benefit the Milwaukee Chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute

\$15, 5:30 p.m. to midnight

Laborers Local 113 Hall, 6310 W. Appleton Ave.

Wednesday, December 5

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO

Election of two board members.

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

Friday, December 14, 2007

MCLC Holiday Open House

The Milwaukee County Labor Council extends food, drink and merriment to elected officials and all members.

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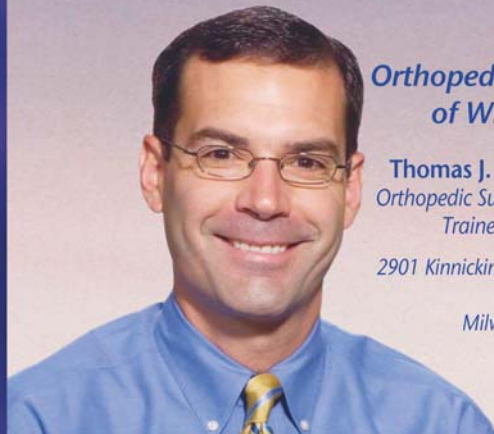


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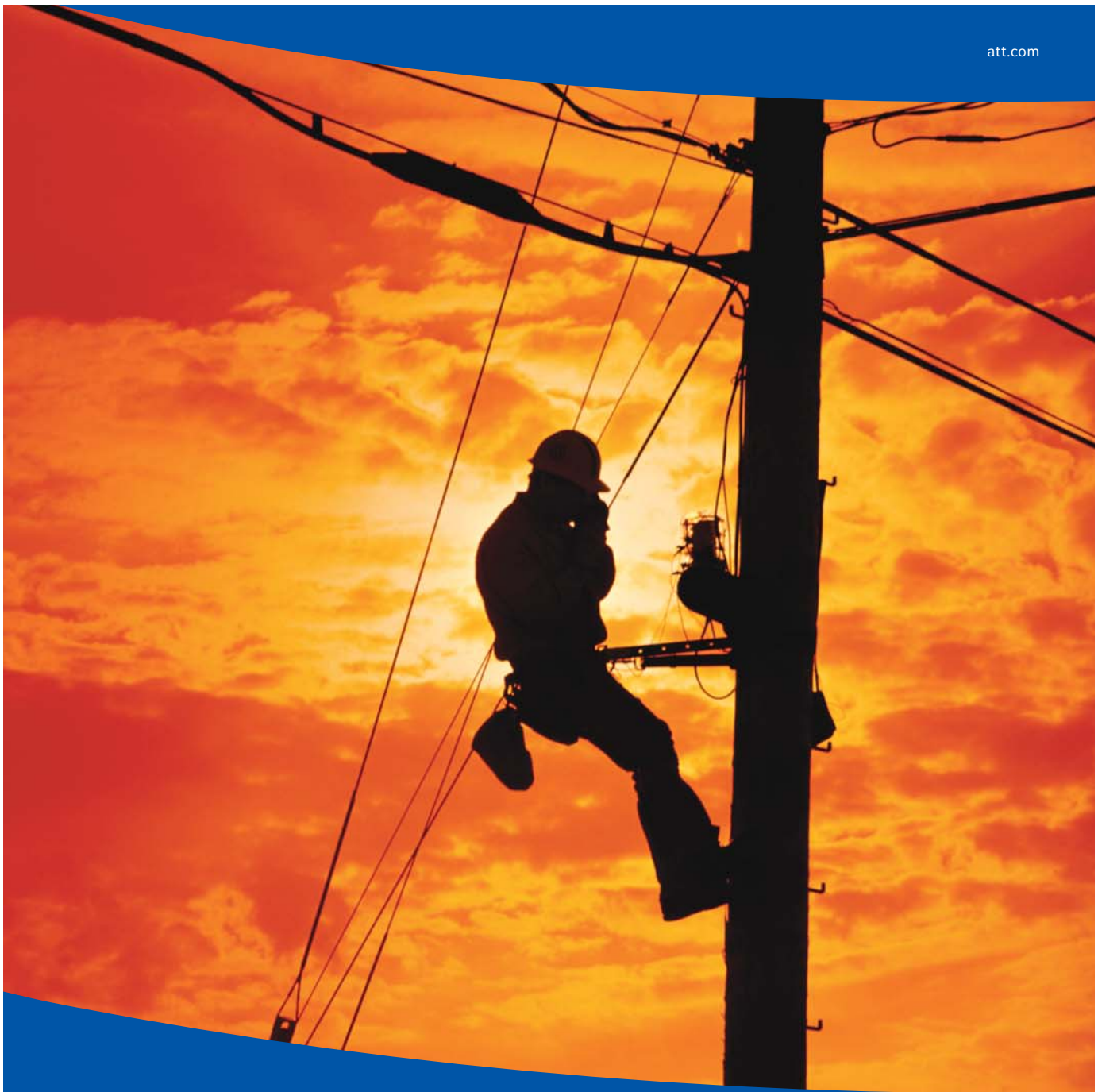


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