

Primary full of attack-dog dangers

By Dominique Paul Noth Editor, Labor Press major upset on the Democrat side, some major fissures on the Republican side and that stubborn Wisconsin independence in the primary.

Perhaps Wisconsin voters can be stampeded by strident attacks on the radio, outside ad money and slick TV platitudes. So hope the big conservative financiers behind the Tea Party. But then again, in pockets on Sept. 14, maybe not with Wisconsin people who hate personal attacks as opposed to political ones. The price of attacking too hard may be measured not only in losing but in winning.

There was one major upset that rejected much of the negative personals in ads, automated calls and floods of fliers. The upset undid a Democrat accused of playing footsie with the principles he once avowed. The Senate District 7 contest brought up every dirty trick in the book -- radio and right-wing pundits making hay out of ancient brushes with the law, third party ads from voucher school advocates who were saying nothing about children. In fact, you had to cover the children's ears from these attacks.

Neither side played bean bag. But East Side and South Side, the district was turned off by one kind of attack more than the other. Sixty-one to 39%, the 13,000 voters sent incumbent Jeff Plale packing, choosing personable county supervisor Chris Larson, who it turns out is not as wildly liberal as painted but definitely committed to clean energy and union jobs -- things Plale had once been elected on.

The GOP fissure was within the nomination to face Tom Barrett for governor, Barrett having a primary walk-through on the Democratic side and wisely saving his money for the big show Nov. 2.

The GOP winner went so far to the dark side that he may face a larger price than just spending most of his money. He has to regain credibility within his own party.

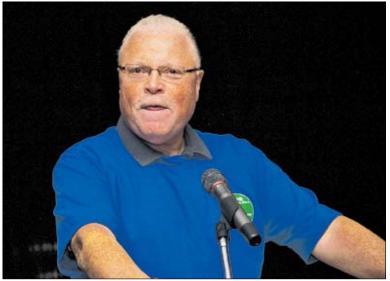
After last minute hysterics and accusations against his opponent, followed by naked pleading from his radio supporters for voters to stay on the Republican side, County Executive Scott Walker won over Mark Neumann. It looked at the end

Were you there? Special photo displays Pages 5-8

like a comfortable victory, 58%-40% -- until you look inside these numbers and remember they reflect the diehard Republicans around the state.

County by county figures reveal that Walker ran even or behind in many of the rural counties. He badly needed that 73% to 77% of the vote in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, a statistical home turf advantage he will not enjoy Nov. 2.

To win this primary in the last month, after internal polls showed the race tightening, Walker unleashed his old demons, the "say anything to <u>Primary</u> continued Page 4



AFSCME International's Lee Saunders speaking in Milwaukee

AFSCME relives real 9/11

n 9/11, Lee Saunders was a block and a half from the World Trade Center in New York City. He saw the towers catch fire and the second plane hit -- not on TV like the rest of the nation. Right there.

On 9/11 2010 the new Secretary-Treasurer of AFSCME International, also newly elected to the national AFL-CIO's ruling executive council, was in Milwaukee as keynote speaker for the first Next Wave Conference for young union activists who will lead AFSCME into the future.

Saunders took them back to his 9/11 to reinforce how much revisionist history they are hearing today, reminding them of who were the first to attempt rescue and why the current climate for public workers is so insulting, coming from candidates trying to get their party back in power by diverting voters from the real causes of our economic problems.

"I was there," Saunders said. "The first people back in those towers to die trying to help were public workers. The very first of those <u>Saunders</u> continued Page 2

We're adding a political voice! ACTION! issues will appear all around voters starting Oct. 1

ur new publication is all about the hot issues, all politics, all in your face. **ACTION!** will hit the streets, the churches, the union halls, the stores and campuses speaking to the entire community about the Nov. 2 election. The first edition rolls out in the first week of October.

Different from the Milwaukee Labor Press, which will continue to reach 50,000 households every month, **ACTION!** will be found all over town, on our Labor 2010 neighborhood walks, distributed by community leaders and organizations as well as by unions throughout the state with hard-hitting visuals, details and articles about the state's big races and the Milwaukee area's tight contests.

It's a necessary strong reaction to a lot of fabrications being leveled at the voters, who need a progressive voice to cut through the nonsense.

Published by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, using outside designers and a totally different look, it will be tabloid size, take political ads and speak frankly. New issues will be published as the need arises, which means more than one might appear in this election cycle and **ACTION!** will return whenever the community needs it.

Look for it. Read it. Pass it on. And mainly, take your political ACTION! at the polls!

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Saunders From Page 1

killed was an AFSCME worker" from the district council Saunders was working with. "So I get angry at this

shameful exercise. They're trying to scapegoat public workers for the problems this country is facing" - the same workers, he reminded the crowd, who are the front line defense in sacrifice for the public and the same people who teach our children, pick up our garbage, fix up our roads and speed services throughout the community.

Next Wave is an effort to fight back. Saunders, long a close ally of AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, now is one of Next Wave's big champions and its inspirational leaders. Other states were paying attention to this three-day Milwaukee conference, centered at the Wyndham Hotel for workshops and video presentations, a special cooperative venture of all of Wisconsin's district councils, attended by all their executive directors.

The 200 attendees were drawn from District Council 24 headed by Martin Biel and representing more than 22,000 state employees, Council 40 headed by Rick Badger and speaking for 33,000 public service and health care workers in 71Wisconsin counties, and District Council 48 headed by Richard Abelson representing more than 10,000 public service employees in Milwaukee County.

The conferees were certainly put through the paces. Busloads helped out at three community centers. They walked neighborhoods speaking for AFSCME's political candidates. With Saunders as a speaker on Friday they flooded a 4 p.m. "Right Wing - Believe It or Not" rally at Clas Park to protest Scott Walker's failed budgets and efforts to force an extra furlough month on county workers.

Rally speakers countered the attacks on public employees. Let's put the blame where it belongs, said Abelson, "We are going to point out that the wizards of Wall Street crashed the economy, not front-line workers. We are going to stand together and say enough is enough."

Calendar

www.milwaukeelabor.org

For updated master list of events, visit www.milwaukeelabor.org

Monday, September 27

State AFL-CIO Convention in Green Bay Three-day conference, Radissson Conference Center Costs, workshops contact 414-771-0700

> <u>Wednesday, October 6</u> Monthly Delegate Meeting

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

Saturday, October 9

Labor2010 Walk, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Breakfast, lunch, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Monday, October 11

Senior Power Luncheon, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Rep. David Obey and David Newby honored in main fundraising event for Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans See Story on Page 9.

Saturday, October 16

Labor2010 Walk, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Breakfast, lunch, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Saturday, October 23 Labor2010 Walk, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Breakfast, lunch, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Saturday, October 30 Labor2010 Walk, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Breakfast, lunch, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

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When the going gets tough, the tough get going

By Lynnda Guyton Editorial Assistant, Labor Press

Spotlight

The unfortunate flip-side of this popular saying is that the need for toughness is an essential part of a life dedicated to the labor movement.

avid Newby's life is well worth celebrating - and will be, as parties in his honor are scheduled in October. In 1994 David Newby

became the president of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO. As the statewide coordinating council for all AFL-CIO unions in Wisconsin, the state AFL-CIO determines union policy on state issues, speaks for labor and working people on matters of public concern, provides services to local unions, and coordinates political and legislative action with its affiliated local unions.

Newby was one of the award winners at the Milwaukee Labor Councils 1st Annual Awards Banquet in June for his dedication, unionism and support of his union brothers and sisters' concerns.

He led the efforts in the state legislative program coordinating initiatives on family and medical leave, minimum wage, health care and plant closing notification, which passed even before they were finalized on the national level. He wants others to know that the Wisconsin federation is seen as a national leader in legislation, politics, workforce development, health care --- in fact, one of the best in the country.

From 1973 on, he recalled, he had this great sense of being involved in the labor movement because unions were under vicious attacks, wages were stagnant and the total number of union members was remaining stagnant, not growing with the workforce. "Our goal was to fend off attacks as best we could so we could figure out new ways of organizing," he said.

Labor is now a much different movement and better organized internally using current power and numbers to influence policy and politics, he emphasized - "our biggest accomplishment." He added that the key is growing the numbers.

orn in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1942, David Newby grad-Duated from Fairview Park High School and earned a BA from the College of Wooster in 1964. He received a MA degree in history from the University of Chicago and did graduate work at UW-Madison. Newby taught from 1965 to 1968 at Tuskegee Institute, a black college in Alabama. He recalls that being a powerful and formative experience. He worked closely with SNCC, a civil rights organization, on voter registration and other civil rights issues.

Also during his first year at Tuskegee, a student of his was



David Newby seemed almost embarrassed last June at the attention he received from such other labor activists as MALC's Sheila D. Cochran (left) and AFT nurses' leader Candice Owley when he was honored with a special MALC service award.

shot and killed by a white gas station attendant in the white part of town. In response, students and sympathetic faculty (including Newby) organized weeks of boycotts and sit-ins at white businesses. This mobilization led to the election in the spring of 1966 of the first African American sheriff south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Newby was made a deputy sheriff to help protect the county jailhouse from a threatened attack by the Ku Klux Klan the night that new sheriff, Lucius Amerson, was sworn in

ewby didn't learn much about unions until after he was in college, lived in Madison and worked as a teaching assistant -- and became active in the American Federation of Teachers Local 3220, the Teaching Assistants Association.

He was elected trustee of the Madison Federation of Labor in 1981 and its president in 1982. He is still a member of the local and has hanging on his wall in his office a large replica of a lifetime membership card that he received just a few months ago.

Newby expressed how there was nothing that he has done in his life that he regrets and that his whole life is taken up with whatever he can do for the good of his union brothers and sisters. His heart remains in his influential commitment to economic and social justice issues. Being elected state AFL-CIO president (along with holding the secretary-treasurer office prior to that, elected in



1986) were positions where he could work towards those goals. The most influential person

in Newby's life was Harvey Goldberg a teacher at UW-Madison he met in 1960. He remembers hitchhiking from Columbus to learn from him, noting that Goldberg inspired a couple of generations of students that came in contact with him. There would be twice as many people coming to his lectures as were registered. He had the talent of giving empowerment to others; his message was: "No matter where you are situated in life everyone can make a difference."

Newby's influence was put in perspective during a conversation with Sheila D. Cochran, now the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's chief operating officer. She spoke highly of him, recalling when he first ran for president of the state AFL-CIO and was elected. She said that there had not been one time that she had any doubt about his abilities as president and still fully supports him. He has made great contributions to the labor movement and noted that he's the type of person you would want as a leader because "labor is engrained in him." She added that because of his core values he will truly be missed and will leave a great legacy when he departs as president.

Rewby says he has no commitments but would stay active in the issues that are important to him such as health care and internal trade policies. He is on the Legislative Council Committee on state implementation of the federal health care reform legislation. While he will be leaving his position as president of the state AFL-CIO, he intends to stay active in the struggle for social and economic justice.

He also wants to find time to travel and said he definitely has places to go. A trip to France is high on the agenda because he has a special fondness and enjoyment for the country. Newby has no hobbies to speak of now, (remember Union has been his life) but in his earlier years was pretty good at cross country skiing, loved canoeing and fishing and now tries hard to get into the gym at least once a week. He loves movies but can't remember the last time he saw one.

There is one person that plays a very important part in Newby's life and that's his wife, Kathleen McElroy. They married in 1968. He credits her for making an enormous difference in his life and says he couldn't have accomplished so much without her support.

He says they fundamentally share the same values and "she's incredibly helpful" in writing articles and speeches and in sharing her perspective. McElroy also produced two major musicals, including the first labor opera written since the 1930s (and sponsored by the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO and the Wisconsin Labor History Society) --"Esperanza."

The Newbys have no children. He says his wife's take on the subject is that they didn't have the courage and his answer is they forgot because they were doing too many other things.



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Primary From Page 1

score points" debater and the "take no prisoners" extremist pitchman, aiming at his once dear friend Neumann.

In doing so, he violated the so-called Reagan 11th Commandment ("Thou shalt not speak ill of a fellow Republican"). A number of traditional Republicans throughout the state, already skeptical of his managerial competence as the vote showed, will not soon forgive him. The 321,000 who voted for him on the GOP side must first face a massive 221,000 who didn't. - and many who won't.

The near upset came in the

Milwaukee County sheriff's race where David Clarke was on a seesaw throughout the night's count with Milwaukee police lieutenant Chris Moews, a political unknown who ran a strong convincing race. Clarke finally pulled ahead with 53% of the vote, but in raw numbers only 30,539 votes to Moews' 26,727.

Clarke has pretended to be a Democrat to be elected, but footsteps behind him are not going away, not with a mere 4,000 vote difference. So much for his plans to run for future office in Milwaukee County.

nother interesting signal of Democratic campaign thinking was in the lieutenant governor's race, where the voters clearly determined that a veteran Fox Valley Democrat used to beating Republicans was a better fit on the state ballot with Barrett than a fellow Milwaukeean. So the voters, with two established liberals to choose from in a field of four, backed Tom Nelson over veteran state Sen. Spencer Coggs. It was a massive choice, 51%-21%.

The biggest tea party echo was expected, since Ron Johnson's money easily seduced the GOP into giving him its nomination and backing.

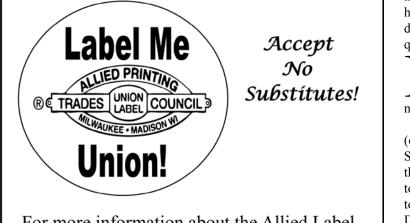
The appeal is that he is a cipher, a total unknown able to spend millions and hire the sort of political marketeers who can remake him into a TV personality. He is primed along with thirdparty admen to outspend incumbent Russ Feingold four to one in the campaign for US senate, hoping all the while the media doesn't make him answer serious questions about governing.

Assembly races were a mixed bag for organized labor.

While Senate District 7 (connecting the East Side with South Side lakefront) was more than ready to change from Plale to Larson, change is much harder to sell in the southwest Assembly District 7.

here labor had backed the energetic Scott Dettman,

but came up 1,000 votes shy: 1,207 to 2.143 could not unseat longtime incumbent Peggy Krusik, who had worried many former backers with her recent votes and behavior. But



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Labor's Stephanie Bloomingdale celebrated with an exuberant Chris Larson primary night.

Dettman came closer than expected for an unknown and will more than likely be back. or unions, there was a surprisingly strong win in Assembly District 8 by community organizer JoCasta Zamarripa triumphing handily despite the four-color fliers (and whisper campaign) from former Ald. Angel Sanchez. A third candidate, Laura Manriquez, barely registered with the voters. The percentages were 53, 21 and 17. Zamarripa will take over for Pedro Colon as the lone Hispanic in the state Assembly. (And don't fret about Colon; he was just named a Milwaukee circuit court judge.)

The Coggs political name in Milwaukee may not have carried Spencer to the top in the statewide lieutenant governor's race but it sure worked for county supervisor Elizabeth Coggs who dominated Assembly District 10 in the race to replace retiring Annette (Polly) Williams. (In all these state legislature races in Milwaukee, the Democrat has historically won the general election.) Coggs' reputation and campaigning deservedly carried the day with 67% of the vote.

That left as a far distant second (27%) a candidate the Milwaukee Area Labor Council

www.milwaukeelabor.org

had first supported -- until Stephanie Findley either foolishly, or playing both sides to win, took money and posed for the holy pictures of slick mailed brochures from a notorious D.C. based voucher foundation noted for meddling in local elections. The misleadingly named

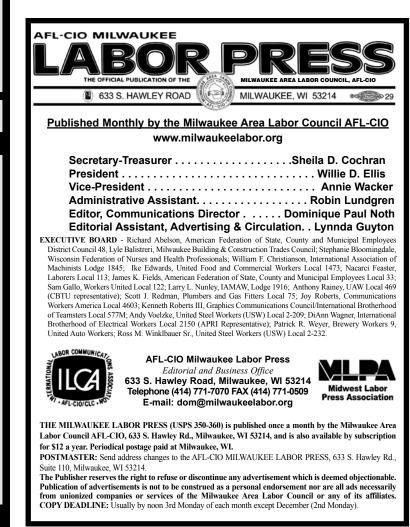
American Federation for Children (AFC) is rolling in Action Fund money and networks, as every candidate should know, and Plale certainly knew when he called on them to try to smear Larson in that senate campaign.

To be clear, many union candidates accept voucher schools as a legal reality but they prefer public education and say so in labor interviews, as Findley did and won major union backing.

But once she took AFC money she opened the door to their campaign literature that, without advance permission, pictured labor leaders known in the community -- a move that brought loud complaints against the shenanigans of this wellheeled voucher machine, and also rebounded to Findley's detriment.

L's worth noting that AFC spend some \$50,000 to \$100,000 by early expenditure records on many area races. It is also worth noting that their major candidates lost every time. One of the more reprehensible mailers for Plale accused Larson of being a bad county supervisor and a fake champion of the worker. AFC concocted it.

They provided help not just for Findley, who says she has returned their campaign contribution, but for Sanchez against Zamarripa, and for Michael Erdmann against District 17's Rep. Barbara Toles. She swamped him with 84% of the vote.



AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS, Thursday, September 30, 2010 - Page 5

Organize for Justice LABORFEST 2010















Winners at Laborfest The raffle tickets are sold all

Fair forward, so a lot of union and non-union folks pick them up for the chance to win a 2011 Harley-Davidson 2011 Fat Boy Low Rider.

Wouldn't you know, the winner was a motorcycle buff from one of the unions that builds the Harleys. The winner was Kevin O'Hearn of USW Local 1343.

The drawing for the second big prize, \$500, was won by Guy Yuker. Then came a number of \$100 winners: Veliciad Cooper, Ruben Franco, Shajuan May, Gary Adamczak, Ken Greening, Denese Johamsen, Phil Barron and Darren Hull.



Kids make it loud and clear

If you ever thought Laborfest was a party for grownup workers, the children could argue quite differently. From Zeidler Park where families gather to the parade itself and even to the president's speech at Laborfest, cameras caught a lot of youngsters. **ABOVE:** One of the parade's busiest organizers, and also president of the MALC, Willie D. Ellis at left, took time to pack the kids from Operating Engineers Local 139 onto one of the many vehicles the local provided the parade.

BELOW: Children were also a big part of the larger than usual crowd that gathered along the route to watch the parade go by.



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TOP: Raindrops came and went throughout the parade but smiles and cheers from the marchers never departed. **PHOTOS RIGHT AND BELOW:** Among the large contingents were AFT Local 212 and the painters' union District Council 7. The bricklayers not only sported signs but pulled wagons of its members and families. BOTTOM LEFT: The MASH unit of musicians, stagehands and actors rained music on the watching crowd. They were riding a flatbed provided by Operating Engineers Local 139









Parade organizers, in this case from the steelworkers' union, handed out the gold -- tickets to hear Obama, given to parade participants as the first in line for the president's Laborfest speech.



last walk, holding a place of honor at the front of the Laborfest parade.









WERE YOU THERE? The iron workers and the insulators were. So were happy CWA members and the IBEW units. And the Teamsters packed the

route with trucks and honks.



FSC AFSCME units packed the parade and candy throwers were kept busy feeding a larger growd of wetchere there were kept busy feeding a larger crowd of watchers than usual.

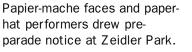
Laborfest photos by editor Dominique Paul Noth, AFT Local 212's Sue Ruggles and visiting photographer Richard Nemish.

Newest county supervisor Nikiya Harris marches with IUOE Local 317. AFL-CIO's Todd Anderson and Sheila Cochran chatted with Eric Von during 1290's live gazebo broadcast from Zeidler Park while, nearby, OPEIU set up its banner. **BOTTOM:** The sheet metal workers step out.



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Mask and marionette creator Max Samson leaned against his Ferris Wheel concoction. At right, the saw man created a buzz.







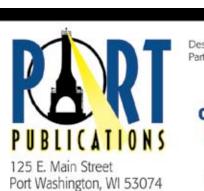


What you missed They had to assemble in the rain off a corner of Zeidler Park. They marched at the end of the parade. The president's arrival delayed their pageant into late into Laborfest. But for those who saw or caught snippets, the enthusiasm from dancers and costume people of the Milwaukee Public Theatre pageant was unmistakable. And the messages of peace and green technology were creatively captivating.



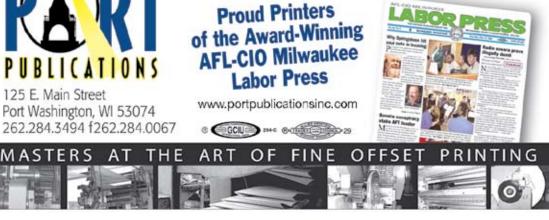






It took human handlers to make this puppet seem to march on his own in the Laborfest parade.

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Labor Press tops awards

Tn the prestigious North American contest for all Labor publications, the Milwaukee Labor Press has won the most multiple first place awards in history.

The International Labor Communications Association, which annually hires judges to evaluate hundreds of print and electronic publications in all categories, announced that editor Dominique Paul Noth and the Labor Press had taken several prizes, among them (with judges' commentary when available):

First Place, General Excellence among all state and central council publications. The judges examined two contiguous issues to determine the top winner and praised the Labor Press for "Quirky and interesting writing, sometimes with a sense of humor, on a variety of subjects from workplace to social justice to social issues. Takes on larger issues well. Makes its points without being preachy. Good headlines. Good use of photos."

First Place General Excellence Internet among all labor websites. The award went to www.MilwaukeeLabor.org, created by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, with Noth's original news stories plus an archive of Labor Press publications dating back five years.

Saul Miller Awards - First Place, best political action story among all international, national labor organizations. Named after a pioneer journalist (as are all the top ILCA awards), the honor went to last December's examination of the health care debate: ""Heeding the Human Cost."



Editor Dominique Paul Noth

Noth commented that the diverse opinions of union and community members in the noholds-barred forum on health legislation led to the prestigious prize. The judges called the story "Well-written, heartfelt -debunks the opposition's argument attacking the need for health reform."

Another third place award for best editorial or column went to the Labor Press for "City Should Sink Its Own Breed of Water Pirates" with the judges noting, "Noth highlights the proposed privatization of Milwaukee's water system -- to make the case (humorously) that such short-term grabs will be financially detrimental in the long run."

The paper has won several ILCA awards over the years, most recently the top prize among all publications, the Max Steinbock Award in 2007, for Noth's story about artist Terese Agnew. Labor Press also came in first this year in a regional contest among labor publications run by the Midwest Labor Press Association.

Labor council delegates in September greeted the news with applause and voted to send Noth to Washington, D.C., to attend the ILCA awards ceremony in November.



that enhance the lives of seniors and working people will be honored by the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans at its Senior Power Luncheon Oct. 11, the group's major fundraiser.

Awards for their dedication will be presented to departing House leader Rep. David Obey, and the departing AFL-CIO state president, David Newby.

The guest speaker is another notable: Barbara Kennelly, CEO and president of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

In underlining the purpose of her speech, the WIARA's president, Leon Burzynki said educating the public that Social Security has never contributed one cent to the federal deficit is "one of our biggest challenges seniors need to know that, by law, Social Security cannot contribute to the federal deficit. We cannot and will not be railroaded by individuals, including Congressman Paul Ryan, who want to cut benefits to balance the federal deficit."

The alliance will also recognize and honor Joe Kreuser, Jerry LaPoint, Dave Hansen, and Margarita Garcia Guerrero for

their dedication to quality of life issues for retirees and workers.

The luncheon on Monday, Oct. 11, takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Wyndham Hotel (across from the airport on Howell Ave.). The cost of lunch at this main fund-raiser is \$75 and to reserve a table for eight costs \$600. Organizations and businesses can reserve an exhibit booth or place an ad in the Power Lunch booklet.

The Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, an affiliate of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, was launched nationally in 2001, and in Wisconsin in 2005, by a coalition of AFL-CIO affiliated unions and community based organizations dedicated to economic and social justice. The WIARA represents more than 89,000 Wisconsin retirees. For further information contact (414) 771-9511 or visit www.wisconsinara.org

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OBAMA PHOTO GALLERY – AFT Local 212's Susan Ruggles, hired by the National AFL-CIO and given access up close and personal, not only captured President Obama reveling in the Laborfest crowd. She also caught the labor press' Lynnda Guyton as one of the ecstatic recipients of a presidential handshake.





CLOCKWISE: Notable warmups included Gwen Moore, AFL-CIO national chief Richard Trumka and MALC's Sheila Cochran.

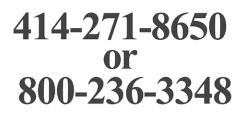


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Laborfest heated up Obama

By Dominique Paul Noth Editor, Labor Press The huge supportive crowd at Laborfest was primed for the president of the US to lay out his vision, defend his successes, rebut the fallacies that had invaded their TV sets and wield his wry humor and lance-sharp examples of why the "party of no" needed to be laid waste Nov. 2.

From every corner around Miller Stage -- where at least 10,000 listeners had gathered on bleaches, behind barricades, peeking out from concession stands, listening from picnic tables and leaning against metal fencing, the crowd erupted in cheer after cheer.

It was his third visit to the state in two months and his second to Laborfest, where he gave a notable campaign speech in 2008 during his run for the White House. Now Barack Obama was being asked to inspire and reassure. "Why can't his message get through today?" many in the crowd had asked, even though they knew the force of the money and lobbying interests against him.

And Obama delivered, certainly in vision and common sense explanation that deserved to be heard above the media cacophony.

This time, he did not try to mix creating jobs with deficit reduction, a rhetorical device which in the past seemed to dilute his message. He talked about those efforts separately and wondered aloud why he was dismissed by Republicans even when he promoted ideas they once championed.

"They talk about me like a dog," he inserted into his speech, one of his most personal candid moments, which brought a growl of recognition from the crowd about what could really lay behind that attitude. He has clearly been in a constant fight against a stream of hostility and negativism -- even while his presidency has made landmark strides in attacking the deficit, controlling runaway military expenditures, curbing Wall Street, rescuing an abandoned auto industry and spreading health care in ways that may not bear full fruit to the public by November, something the Republicans have been counting on with their delaying tactics.

"Even on things we usually agree on, they say no," Obama recounted to growing laughter and applause. "If I said the sky was blue, they say no. If I said fish live in the sea, they'd say no. They just think it's better to score political points before an election than to solve problems. So they said no to help for small businesses, even when the small businesses said we desperately need this. This used to be their key constituency. They said no. No to middle-class tax cuts.



A full report on Obama's Laborfest speech with more photos is available at milwaukeelabor.org

They say they're for tax cuts; I say, okay, let's give tax cuts to the middle class. No.

"No to clean energy jobs. No to making college more affordable. No to reforming Wall Street. They're saying right now, no to cutting more taxes for small business owners and helping them get financing.

"Their slogan is 'No we can't.' No, no, no, no.

"I mean, I personally think 'Yes we can' is more inspiring. To steal a line from our old friend Ted Kennedy: What is it about working men and women that they find so offensive?"

His skewers didn't stop there even as he announced a new sixyear program that, in a different era would gain bipartisan support - a way to use investment banking, not the deficit, to modernize the nation's crumbling infrastructure. The plan would rebuild 150,000 miles of roads, lay and maintain 4,000 miles of railways, restore 150 miles of runways and galvanize a "next-generation airtraffic control system" to reduce travel time and delays for American travelers. "That's not a Republican or a Democratic idea," Obama pointed out.

But he is certainly conscious of the realities of their "no" even to good ideas. It's a reality, Obama was saying, that will force the American people to take a stand at the polls Nov. 2. He scoffed at the Republican ideas of driving in reverse, drawing chuckles with his extended comparison of their philosophy to putting the car in the ditch and then asking for the keys.

"Now, anybody who thinks that we can move this economy forward with just a few folks at the top doing well, hoping that it's going to trickle down to working people who are running faster and faster just to keep up, you'll never see it.

"If that's what you're waiting for, you should stop waiting, because it's never happened in our history. That's not how America was built."

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