

# GUILD forum



Local 32035

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

May 5, 2004

## GUILD MEMBERSHIP MEETING MAY 22

What if you were given one inducement to attend a Guild meeting? Well, what if you were given AT LEAST FOUR inducements?

Start counting 'em off! We in WBNG are all invited to come to a daylong Guild meeting featuring dozens of Guild leaders and activists from everywhere in the United States east of the Rockies — an inducement in itself! The date is Saturday, May 22, and the location is the Holiday Inn on the Hill, 415 New Jersey Ave. NW, one block west of North Capitol Street between D and E Streets in the Capitol Hill district of D.C.

**Inducement #1** starts right at 9 a.m., when TNG-CWA president Linda Foley gives her "State of the Guild" remarks. She'll be backed by several regional vice presidents who serve on the Guild's Sector Executive Council, including WBNG's own Connie Knox, who represents Region 2 (WBNG, Puerto Rico, and all locals in between).

**Inducement #2** starts at about 10:30 a.m. or so, when WBNG member Joey Hipolito, research associate for United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, leads an illuminating session on corporate research tools to strengthen our hand at the bargaining table and in the community.

After a lunch break (on your own) comes **Inducement #3** at 2 p.m.: WBNG member, Elise Bryant (George Meany Center/National Labor College) will coordinate a presentation that touches on the related issues of diversity, discrimination and pay equity.

You'll barely have time to catch your breath before **Inducement #4**: An extensive examination into how the Guild gets involved with (and stays out of) the political process. We can't reveal yet just who's going to take part in this, but we have indications that a member of Maryland's congressional delegation could be part of this program. If you've ever had opinions on how — and how not — TNG should be involved in politics, this is for you.

Following Inducement #4, you are welcome to attend a business meeting of the Guild's Southern District

*Continued, next column*

### Guild Membership Meeting

May 22, 2004

9:00 a.m.- all day

Holiday Inn on the Hill- 415 New Jersey Ave, NW, DC

#### Agenda:

- 9:00:** State of the Guild, Linda Foley, President
- 10:30:** Corporate Research Tools. Joey Hipolito and panel
- 2:00:** Weapons of Mass Construction: Changing the culture in the workplace. Elise Bryant
- 3:30:** The Guild Green Zone: Political Panel Discussion, with Special Guest Congressman Paul Sarbanes
- Evening:** Hospitality Suites: meet Guild sisters and brothers from around the nation

Council. And, after the Southern District and other regional district councils have concluded their meetings, stop by the Guild's hospitality suite inside the hotel to talk Guild, talk union, talk politics, talk baseball, or anything else on your mind.

And come back, if you choose, around 9:30 a.m. the following day, Sunday, May 23. All participating locals will have a chance to break down the issues they face in their cities and bargaining units. While sympathetic ears are always welcome, ideas to do battle with employers are even more welcome.

Come when you can, leave when you must. We've said it before, and we'll say it again: If you're looking for a meeting where all anyone does is approve the minutes of the previous meeting, this ain't it. For additional information, call Mark Pattison (days 202-541-3263/ evenings/weekends 202-829-9289.)

## President's Perspective

Bill Salganik, WBNG President

Last June, Guild members at the Sun ratified a contract which, most agreed, was unsatisfactory. "We had a gun to our heads," one member said. Tribune Company, clearly prepared to take a strike to win concessions, had replacement workers standing by.

The previous November, members at the Washington Post also approved a contract reluctantly. Although it had no major concessions, it clearly didn't represent any major gains either.

The Guild, both within the Washington-Baltimore local and at the international level, is engaged in a process designed to improve our bargaining strength. Here are some of the things we're working on:

**Community involvement.** We're considering how to build better ties to our communities – both because that's a good thing itself and as a source of support when things get tough – without compromising our appearance of objectivity as journalists.

**Mobilizing.** We've had a successful mobilizing training session, and we're working to strengthen the mobilizing structure in each of our bargaining units.

**Research.** We want to have a better understanding of our employers. The Newspaper Guild (TNG) international and the parent Communications Workers of America (CWA) will be helping track our large corporate employers.

**Collaboration.** We're working to better share information and tactics with other Guild units and other unions confronting the same employers.


**Strategies and tactics.** TNG is committed to building a "tool kit" or "bank" of strategies and tactics – what works and why, what doesn't work and why.

As always, we welcome member input and participation. The weekend of May 21-23, there will be a regional Guild meeting in Washington, to include panels on research and on community/political involvement. It's clear that to win better contracts, we can't wait to get involved until a few weeks before bargaining. Tribune and Post management are working now to get contracts they consider better.

## **WBNG Member Anthony Shadid Wins Pulitzer for International Reporting**

Congratulations to Washington Post Guild Member Anthony Shadid, who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. Shadid is the Islamic affairs correspondent for the Washington Post, based in the Middle East. The Pulitzer judges cited his "for his extraordinary ability to capture, at personal peril, the voices and emotions of Iraqis as their country was invaded, their leader toppled and their way of life upended."

Pulitzer finalists included WBNG members **David Ottaway** and **Joe Stephens** of the Washington Post for coverage of questionable practices of the Nature Conservancy; **Erica Niedowski** of the Baltimore Sun for a story on how one of America's best hospitals let an infant with a preventable condition die; **Barton Gellman** of the Washington Post for reports on the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; and **Ann Hull** of the Washington Post for stories on the lives of wounded soldiers returning from Iraq.

**G U I L D**  
**f o r u m . . .** 

May 5, 2004

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## **WBNG Executive Council Secretary and At-Large Seats Vacant**

Pursuant to Guild by-laws, this is notice to WBNG members that the position of secretary and one (1) at-large seat are vacant.

Pursuant to the Article V, section 9, a temporary secretary will be appointed at the next meeting of the Executive Council, currently scheduled for May 12, 2004.

Nominations for both seats will be taken at the September membership meeting (currently scheduled for Saturday, September 11), and the vacancies shall be filled at the meeting by secret ballot.

## **WMD: Workers' Memorial Day**

### **Good Jobs. Safe Jobs. Protect Workers Now**

By Deborah Weinstock

Thirty-four years ago, Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act, promising every worker the right to a safe job. Unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality - winning protections that have saved hundreds of thousand of lives and prevented millions of workplace injuries. Nonetheless, the toll of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths remains enormous. Millions of workers are unnecessarily killed or injured every year.

Regrettably, the Bush administration has turned its back on workers and workplace safety. Siding with its corporate friends, the administration has overturned or blocked dozens of important workplace protections including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's ergonomics standard and new protections on tuberculosis, indoor air quality, reactive chemicals and cancer causing substances. Voluntary compliance has been favored over enforcement and job safety programs have been weakened, leaving workers in danger.

At the same time, good jobs — jobs that pay decent wages and provide health care and pensions — are disappearing. Corporations are looking to export jobs and cut pay and benefits. Workers are considered more expendable than ever. Worker safety and health protections, rarely a priority for most companies, will be further threatened in a low wage economy.

On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO observed Workers' Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job and to renew the fight for safe workplaces. We will fight to make workers' issues a priority and to keep and create good jobs in this country. We will fight for the freedom of workers to form unions and, through their unions, to speak out and bargain for safe jobs, respect and a better future. We will keep fighting until the promise of safe jobs for all workers is a reality.

### **Mourn for the Dead. Fight like hell for the Living.**

Decades of struggle by workers and their unions have resulted in significant improvements in working conditions. But the fight to protect workers is getting harder as the Bush administration has joined with business groups to roll back, block or stall needed protections.

- Many long-recognized hazards have not been addressed, and new workplace hazards that emerge get no attention.
- Ergonomic hazards still cripple and injure more workers than any other workplace hazard.
- Immigrant workers are being killed on the job in record numbers.
- Millions of workers have no Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) protections.
- Companies who repeatedly break OSH Act laws, killing workers, face only weak penalties.

**REGISTER  
TO  
VOTE!  
ELECTION DAY IS  
NOVEMBER 2, 2004.  
EXERCISE YOUR CIVIC VOICE.**

### **Newsroom Diversity: Painfully Slow Progress for Journalists of Color and for Women**

Against a backdrop of declining newsroom employment, minority representation gained marginally in 2003 over prior years, according to a survey released last month by the Association of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). Minority journalists comprised 12.9% of the newsroom population, with 31.7 % representation in the U.S. population. This is the third year in a row that the numbers have crept upwards, with consistent 0.5% increases each year.

ASNE's goal is for the minority census in newsrooms to mirror the nation's minority population by 2025. Continued marginal incremental increases make reaching that goal unlikely.

The Washington Post reported that 22.6% of its newsroom is minority, up almost 2% from the prior year. The Baltimore Sun reported that 16% of its newsroom in 2003 was comprised of journalists of color, up only two tenths of a percent from 2002.

Meanwhile, the ASNE survey reflects that newsroom employment is dropping. Newsrooms have lost an estimated 2,000 full-time professionals since 2000, according to ASNE.

ASNE reports that daily newspapers, 65% of which responded to the survey, are still staffed largely by men. Sixty percent of reporters and nearly 74% of photographers are men; 65.8% of all supervisors are men. The percentage of women working in daily newsrooms increased in 2003 to 37.2%, following two years of decline.

## **Guild Enforces Contractual Rights Across the Local**

### **Sun/Tribune**

The Baltimore Sun/Tribune, whose mantra is “sustainable margin of improvement” (read: increase profits every quarter) is refusing to go to binding arbitration on two layoff-related grievances, as required by contract. The Guild filed a grievance after the Sun improperly laid off seven employees on December 19<sup>th</sup>, ignoring seniority and a number of other contractual rights. The Guild is not challenging the Sun’s prerogative to reduce the workforce through layoff, only that it failed to follow contractual procedures and adversely effected employees. The Guild also filed a grievance regarding the layoff of Michelle Ferrante and related issues on January 23 since the layoff was not to reduce the force but for other reasons not related to reduction in the workforce. The Guild also asserts that when the Sun refused to bump Michelle into a previously held job, it violated the contractual protections that minimize the horrible impact of job loss.

The Baltimore Sun/Tribune responded to the arbitration demand by telling the arbitrator that he has “no authority” to hear the cases. Since the grievances do not challenge to the Sun’s right to conduct a layoff, the Sun’s posture is frivolous. Of course, they have the right to make their case—but the contract requires that they make their case before a third party arbitrator. Seeking to sidestep its dispute resolution obligations, as well as drive up costs for the Guild, the Sun/Tribune refuses to submit to the arbitration process it agreed to in the labor agreement.

The Sun has left the Guild with little choice but to file a complaint in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, Baltimore Division, to compel the Sun to arbitrate the layoff grievances. Workers have fought hard for more than 50 years at The Sun to win and maintain third party dispute resolution that is fair and affordable. The Guild won’t permit Tribune/ Sun to strip away these rights.

### **AFL-CIO**

A third party arbitrator will hear evidence on June 9 regarding the AFL-CIO’s unjust termination of a media outreach specialist, fired on February 20 for “premature disclosure.” At issue is an email sent by the federation chief of staff on February 13 to over 575 federation managers and employees in the DC headquarters and across the nation. That email announced that the federation would endorse John Kerry for President the following week. The federation fired the grievant although it has no evidence that he sent the broadcast email to anyone. The charge of “premature disclosure” missed its target by a few miles and at least 48 hours. On February 11, two days before the email, Tim Russert reported on NBC’s “Today” show that the AFL-CIO would endorse Kerry the next week (he also reported it the prior evening on “Hardball”, but who’s counting). No one has been charged with or disciplined for this earlier “premature leak.”

## **Post Moving Work Out of DC**

### **Action conflicts with pledge to support the community**

The Washington Post has informed the Guild that it will contract out substantial portions of the work of its call center to LaCrosse, Wisconsin. According to its plan, effective June 14 it will schedule most of its current call center employees to afternoon shifts, and contract the heaviest call volume for subscription cancellations to APAC Customer Services Incorporated.

Forty-five Post employees will experience major changes to their lives as The Post begins eroding away the call center duties in favor of a non-union low wage contractor. Post call center employees, while among the lowest paid workers in the company, still have the stability of regular employment, health and pension benefits, and opportunity for overtime work and pay. The Post’s actions deprive the Washington community of a pool of decent stable jobs to support local families and businesses. Contracting out also conflicts with the commitment of the company, as expressed by Don Graham, Chairman and CEO. Mr. Graham notes, on the paper’s website, that the company has been committed to “strong support to the communities where we do business and a good place to work.”

The Post’s Labor VP told the Guild that “we are a newspaper, not a call center.” The Post is not a printer, a delivery service, or a Human Resources department either, but a great newspaper is the sum of all its parts, and a good employer doesn’t strip jobs away from the community where it does business.

The Guild is bargaining over the issue with the company.

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## **BNA employees are mobilizing to keep the company headquarters in Washington.**

BNA recently announced it’s investigating the possibility of moving the headquarters to either Maryland or Virginia, and is considering close-in suburbs and the not so close-in suburbs like the Dulles corridor.

A Guild survey of the more than 700 downtown unit employees found strong opposition to any move out of DC. And more than 90 percent said Guild-covered employees should have a representative on the BNA panel investigating a possible move.

But BNA President Paul Wojcik told a Guild membership committee the decision on whether to move or not is a management decision and “it’s going to stay that way.”

More than 100 members attended that meeting. Several others showed up at the BNA shareholders annual meeting April 17 to distribute leaflets expressing employee concerns about a possible move.