

GUILD forum



Local 32035

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

January 10, 2005

Guild Membership Meeting January 29, 2005

10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

CWA District 2
962 Wayne Avenue, Suite 500
Silver Spring, MD 20910

(Corner of Georgia and Wayne, 1.5 blocks north of the Silver Spring metro; ample public parking)

Rebuilding the Labor Movement: Reform Models for Labor

Invited Speakers from
Service Employee International Union (SEIU)
Communications Workers of America (CWA) and
WBNG members Elise Bryant, Michelle Amber, and Mark Gruenberg on

SEIU, CWA, and Teamster Reform Proposals
Strengthening the role of minorities and women
Strengthening Worker's Power

And on the Guild business agenda:

A vote on the WBNG Green Zone (see page 4 for text of proposal)

Front Page and Guild Service Awards Entry Deadline Jan.31 **Master of Ceremonies for March 28 event is Tom Sherwood.**

The annual Front Page Awards competition, recognizing outstanding work published, or posted on the Internet, in calendar 2004, is now open. Guild Service awards nominations are also being received during this period.

There is one slight, but important, change in the rules. Please supply TWO copies of each entry. You need not be a WBNG member to enter, but you must be covered under a Guild contract negotiated by WBNG. Only Guild members, though, will be eligible for the grand prizes in writing, photography and design. Freelance work is not eligible. Only Guild members are eligible for Guild service awards.

All entries must be received no later than 5 p.m. Monday, January 31, 2005. You can deliver them in person, or mail them to: Front Page Awards, Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, 1100 15th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20005. Please submit no more than three entries (series count as one entry) per category. Judges retain the right to move entries into another category.

There is no entry fee. If you have questions or desire more information, call either of the Front Page Awards Committee's co-chairs, Mark Gruenberg (202-898-4825, unionnews@hotmail.com) or Mark Pattison (202-541-3263, mpattison@catholicnews.com).

And save Monday, March 28, for the Front Page and Guild Service Awards presentation at the AFL-CIO headquarters lobby, 815 16th St. NW in Washington. Reception at 6:30 p.m., awards conferred starting about 7:15 p.m. Former Guild member Tom Sherwood will MC the event. [See page 2 for a full listing of awards categories.](#)

President's Perspective

Bill Salganik, WBNG President

On the ballot this month, along with candidates to represent the local at the Guild convention (officially, the "sector conference"), you'll see a bylaws amendment concerning freelance membership.

Where did this come from? Why is it on the ballot? What's the point?

The bylaws amendment was drafted by the officers, and approved at a general membership meeting. It's on the ballot because we're a democratic union, and proposed changes in the bylaws (the local equivalent of a constitution) are submitted for a membership vote.

The amendment is an effort to bring the local's membership rules in line with a change in The Newspaper Guild's constitution, approved last year after more than a year of discussion. The constitution now gives locals the right to create a "freelance unit."

Nationally, the change was made to give the Guild an opportunity to build relationship with stringers and freelancers which could, potentially, lead to bringing them under contract protection. That's not only good for the freelancers. It's good for those of us already covered by contracts to extend wage scales and benefits to those who might offer our employers a source of labor at lower cost and without job protections.

There's an additional reason why the bylaws change is important to the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild. In addition to the members we have covered by contracts, we currently have 28 other members who are self-employed or otherwise in situations that wouldn't allow contract coverage under labor law. The bylaws change would bring the status of these members into conformance with the current Guild constitution.

These members have joined us because they want to be part of the labor movement and of the Guild. We're happy to have them, and that's why the officers suggested, and members at the last meeting approved, the bylaws change you'll be voting on.

Guild Service Award Categories

The annual Guild Service Awards honor outstanding contributions to the Guild, the labor movement, the workplace and the community. Any WBNG member in good standing may nominate any other WBNG member in good standing. Just write a letter detailing the nominee's accomplishments. The same deadline of Monday, Jan. 31, applies. A panel of WBNG Executive Council members will choose the winners, each of whom will win cash awards.

GUILD SERVICE AWARDS

Member of the Year (Dan de Souza Memorial Award)

Shop Steward of the Year (Nadine Grinder Memorial Award)

Unit Officer of the Year

Organizer of the Year

Customer Service Professional of the Year

Herb Block Community Service Award

Guild Unit of the Year (unit most successfully meeting "Build the Guild" program goals)

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WBNG is Local 35 of The Newspaper Guild; Local 32035 of the Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, CLC. WBNG is solely responsible for **Guild Forum** content.

LOCAL 35 OFFICERS

President: Bill Salganik

Salganik@comcast.net

Vice President: J. Darlene Meyer

dmeyer@wbng.org

Secretary: Sheila Lindsay

Slindsay@ana.org

Treasurer: Mark Pattison

Mpattison@catholicnews.com

WBNG STAFF

Lori Calderone, Administrative Officer

lcalderone@wbng.org

Rick Ehrmann, Local Representative

rehrmann@wbng.org

Cet Parks, Local Representative

cparks@wbng.org

Paul Reilly, Local Representative

preilly@wbng.org

Tiffany Harris, Local Representative

Tharris@wbng.org

Nancy Banks, Office Manager

nbanks@wbng.org

Elsie Thull, Bookkeeper

ethull@wbng.org

Front Page Award Categories

ART

Advertising Design

Editorial Cartooning

Illustration Design

Labor Promotional Campaign

Marketing and Promotion Design

News Graphics Design

Web Site Design

WRITING

Morton Mintz Award for Investigative Reporting

Bernie Harrison Memorial Award for Commentary

Frank C. Porter Memorial Award for Labor and Business

Reporting

Criticism

Feature Writing

Headline Writing

International News Reporting

Local News Reporting

National News Reporting

Non-Daily Specialized Technical Reporting

Public Service Reporting

Sports Reporting

Unit Publication

PHOTOGRAPHY

Black & White Photography

Feature Photography

Local News Photography

National News Photography

Picture Story

Portrait Photography

Sports Photography

Back to the Green Way

Ken May, BNA Guild unit

For the last few months, WBNG has been involved in a discussion of whether we should be involved in politics, which should culminate in a vote at the January 29th meeting.

I found this discussion to be especially interesting since, over the years, I have been on both sides of the issue. I have, in the past, found force in the argument that our involvement in politics would be a conflict of interest with our journalists' covering politics. And yet, on second thought,...

No one objects to our taking grievances to arbitration, even though BNA publishes *Labor Arbitration Reports*, which is obviously about arbitration, and is written by union members like me.

From my recollection, no one objected to our filing lawsuits against the Washington Post on overtime and EEO issues on the grounds that Post reporters cover the courts and might have to write about the judge who might hear the cases.

So I think members' aversion to political involvement goes deeper. Many of us think that involvement in politics is beneath us, that politics is somehow too dirty for our involvement.

I once heard Steve Sachs, Maryland's former attorney general, speak at a BNA conference. He said, as a Marylander, he was often nostalgic about the *New Yorker* cartoon in which one convict says to the other, "You know, the food was better when you were governor." I've lived in Maryland since 1954, I know what he was talking about.

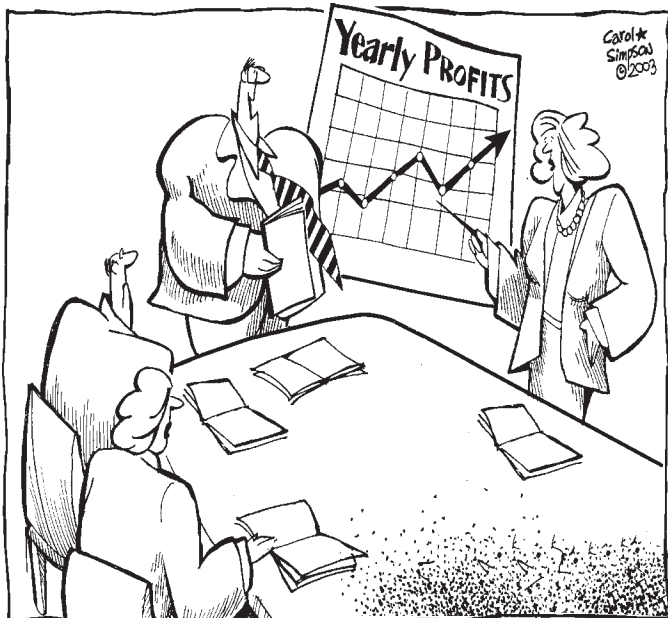
In the ideal world, important public decisions would be made by people much wiser and more public spirited than a lot of our office holders. But they are not.

In the December 12th *Washington Post*, Albert Crenshaw wrote of IBM's pension policies that "It is part of a fundamental shift in our sense of what American society owes individuals in the form of financial protection and what individuals owe society in forms of self-reliance—a shift of a magnitude unseen since the 1930s, when it went in the opposite direction.

When I started at BNA in 1985, BNA offered premium-free health insurance, a defined-benefit pension, and retiree health insurance. I thought this unremarkable and pretty much what employers should offer their employees. Now, BNA still offers these things, and is almost an amazing, and expensive, exception to the rule.

The trend away from corporations living up to their responsibilities to their employees is aided by corporation-friendly legislation, which may only get worse. For instance, there is talk of tax reform that would end the deductibility of health insurance for corporations. So if you think your employer's been trying to cut health benefits now, you ain't seen nothing yet, if this passes.

We can't limit ourselves to fighting at the bargaining table to protect a decent way of life for employees. We have to fight trends that make workers' lives miserable, in the halls of our political bodies, too.



"Our financial projections for next year look excellent. Handford, misinform the union immediately."

New Contract Ratified by Guild AFP Members

Members at Agence France Presse in December approved a new two-year contract that will raise wages 3% each year. A COLA in the second year will protect against inflation.

The contract also increases the company contribution to the 401(k), as well as boosting severance pay, per diems and the transportation subsidy.

The compensation increases will be partially offset by an increase in health care costs. The Guild agreed to an increase in co-pays for office visits and prescription drugs. Guild-covered employees also will have to pay a portion of other medical bills – either ten percent or five percent, depending on the plan. Out of network percentages are higher.

The health care plan used by most unit members – a POS plan – will continue to be premium free. AFP had sought to impose a premium on that plan.

The monthly premium for the PPO will increase from \$15 a month for individuals to \$30, and from \$40 for families to \$80.

Guild-Radio Free Asia Reach Tentative Agreement

After nearly 15 months of bargaining, the Guild and Radio Free Asia reached tentative agreement on an initial contract just before Christmas. A ratification vote is scheduled for January 11.

The three-year contract, covering about 125 employees, will be retroactive to October 1, 2004, and calls for a restructuring of the Broadcaster job classification as of October 1, 2005. Most of those covered by the contract are Broadcasters.

Under that restructuring, the seven current Broadcaster grades will be condensed into three, increasing the starting salary for a Broadcaster by nearly 16%.

The lowest level Broadcaster will have a starting annual salary of \$43,000 (compared to the current \$37,148) and a top of \$51,389. The middle level will start at \$49,895 and top out at \$59,629. The top level will start at \$54,884 and end at \$65,591.

Under the restructuring, no Broadcaster can be moved to a lower salary. Most will receive raises of at least 3% in October 2005 – some will get raises well in excess of 3%. Anyone who does not get at least a 3% pay raise will be eligible for a one-time performance based lump-sum payment of 3% of their salary.

All employees will receive a 3.5% pay increase as of January 1, 2005. Annual raises in 2006 and 2007 will be tied to the federal government increases.

Other highlights: Guild shop; a more generous retirement plan; layoff protections; guaranteed vacations, holidays — and things most people with unions take for granted, like just cause for discipline; guaranteed severance, and a grievance and arbitration process.

This tentative agreement is the result of the strong support of the members in the language services but especially due to the hard work and dedication of the rank-and-file bargaining team: Karma Zurkhang, Liu Hong and Poly Sam. The team was lead by Local Representative Paul Reilly.

RFA broadcasts in nine languages to China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Burma, North Korea and Tibet. It is funded by Congress but is set up as a private non-profit corporation.

Guild Green Zone

Guild members will be voting on the following proposed Green Zone policy at the January 29, 2005 membership meeting:

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, a broad based union of journalists, advertising sales staff, professional staff, administrative and customer service support staff, and technical professionals recognizes the necessity for the Guild to take positions on issues which affect the economic and social well-being of our current and future members, as well as the well-being and security of our families. We also recognize that professional ethics and standards of our journalist members often require abstaining from community, civic, and partisan matters that create a conflict of interest.

Our mission to protect and enhance the well being of our members cannot be achieved merely by bargaining and enforcing contracts. Rather, we must judiciously support the broader issues, which directly impact both our power at the table and the employer's options at the table. Further, we must support the concerted actions of other unionized workers wherever possible if the labor movement is to reach its greatest potential and bring economic and social justice to the workplace.

All of our members are free, of course, as Americans, to take their own positions and act upon them. WBNG's actions are not the actions of each individual of the union, just as a politician's actions are not the actions of each and every voter who cast a vote his way. The Local must take actions and support causes after sensitive and deliberate debate reflecting the concerns of our individual members, yet must not shy away from supporting in a broader arena the very issues for which we fight at the bargaining table.

We therefore agree that:

The Executive Council of WBNG may elect to take the following actions under the following situations:

- 1) Inform and educate Guild members on issues that support workers.
- 2) Endorse, announce to members, and participate in concerted actions that support union, labor, and journalism issues locally and nationally.
- 3) Invite any publicly known individual to demonstrate support for any Guild contract or other campaign (after receiving approval from the unit leadership, where there is a unit).
- 4) With notice to membership as provided in the by-laws (15 days) and opportunity for membership approval at a membership meeting (specially called, if necessary) endorse legislation relating to issues commonly appearing at the bargaining table (i.e., health care, retirement security, living wage, etc.)
- 5) The Local shall not endorse any candidate for office; however, the local may provide members with factual information on candidates' positions, and may inform members of AFL-CIO, central labor council, or other organization's email activists lists, and get-out-the-vote or similar activities in order that members may make individual decisions about participation.