

# FORUM



Local 32035 The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

May 26, 2005

## Pay for performance is coming to The Sun. Can it be fair? Does the company care?

By Lori Calderone

In mid-July, some 600 Guild unit members at The Baltimore Sun (Tribune) will be “rewarded” by the first ever “pay for performance” pay increases at the newspaper. For the first time, instead of across the board increases to all employees, part of the negotiated increase will be carved out and placed into a pay for performance pool, from which the company will—at its sole discretion—award pay increases within departments to some or all Guild employees (excepting commission sales employees). All the pool money has to be paid out, but all employees don’t have to receive it.

During bargaining on the performance evaluations that underlie this process, the Guild asked The Sun how it would ensure that pay for performance (some companies like The Washington Post call it merit pay) would be awarded in a way that did not unintentionally discriminate against minorities, older workers, and women. The response: our managers will eyeball it.

The Guild’s experience in the newspaper industry, shared by any worker or manager who is being honest, is that compensation systems that are at the sole discretion of management do tend to discriminate. Intentionally or not. The reason for this is the

same reason women and minorities do not appear in the newsroom in any where close to the same proportion that they exist in the general population. People, including company managers, tend to hire those like them, tend to relate better to those like them, and tend to reward more those like them. And most companies are run predominately by white men. It is human nature, which is no defense against discrimination. Which is why pay for performance systems must be carefully monitored and controlled, or they will result in discrimination.

When the Guild asked The Sun if it would conduct analysis of its pay systems, The Sun said no, but it would happy to see the union’s findings. And indeed they will after the first PFP payments are awarded this July.

The Guild’s June membership meeting will focus on the topic of discretionary pay. First, we’ll hear a brief report on **The Washington Post merit pay analysis** conducted over by the Guild over the past year (you can see a summary at <http://www.wbng.org/post/bulletins/2005/020105.pdf>). No surprise, and based on the WP’s own data, it demonstrates that men at the paper earn more than women (even separate from merit pay issues), race affects pay within individual departments and across the company, that men are more likely than women to receive merit pay, and that men’s merit pay is higher than women’s.

The June membership meeting will also take a look at what union members can do about such trends. **Joint contractual Union-Company EEO committees** can have some impact on corporate policies, and we’ll discuss why a joint union-company committee is superior in all regards to a company diversity committee. Both The Post and The Sun have hung up their employees for years in company-sponsored committees that make lots of recommendation but little material difference. Contractual committees have legal and contractual rights, and more protection for its members, too. Having faith in the boss hasn’t worked, and there’s a better way. Finally, our June membership meeting will focus on Sun Guild unit members **questions and concerns about the upcoming PFP process**, and look at collective action we can take, while the union is doing its analysis.

Our June program will focus on pay for performance, but **the union is nothing without our members! So we do expect to see you there!**

## Membership Meeting

Saturday, June 11, 2005

Baltimore Guild Office

415 St. Paul Place\*

Baltimore, MD

10:00-Noon (directions below)

Pay for performance:

**A discussion of Guild investigation and enforcement of equitable merit pay practices at**

**The Baltimore Sun and**

**The Washington Post**

\*(directions page 2)

## A few words from your departing AO

As I leave to literally greener pastures in Maine (at least when the snow's not falling) I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Even in relatively tame times for organized labor, the challenges have been non-stop, and fascinating. I hope I've been someone you can trust and rely upon, and that in some small way I have helped the local be a better, stronger one for its members.

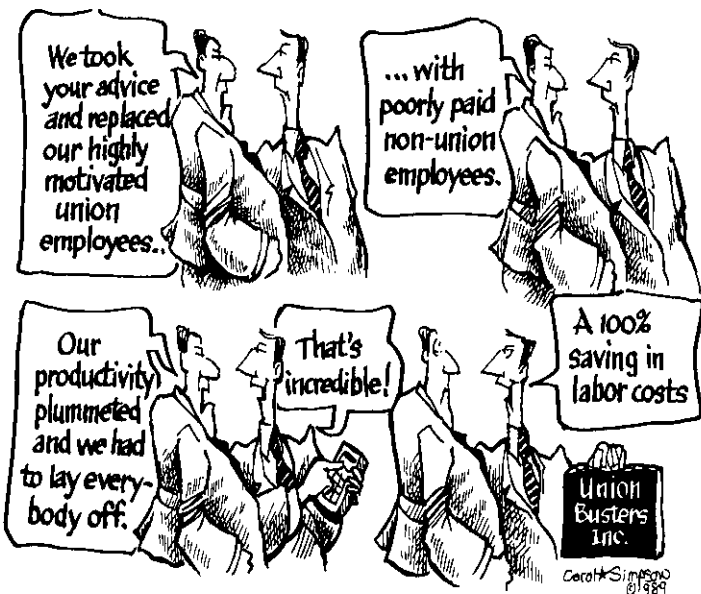
American labor law is so stacked against workers that a successful union can sustain itself only if a substantial number of its members take some role, small or large, in the work, and if every member makes a commitment to push the envelope in collective, concerted and, yes, as aggressive as needed, action that keeps the employer on its toes. From my experience in the labor movement, I can say with confidence that WBNG has an excellent and talented staff representing your interests. Each of our local reps genuinely wants your input and involvement in the union; our office staff, as well, works diligently to ensure that the local functions professionally and efficiently, has been an excellent steward of union resources. I've been proud to work with them all.

But it is you, the members, who will make all the difference in battling indifferent and anti-union employers. Better contracts, and stronger workplaces can't be won by contract enforcement alone, and with only the efforts of your unit officers. Whenever the companies witness shows of solidarity by their workers, they are required to step back and consider the risks of their often-whimsical positions. *You* can build that solidarity. Your employer's product, whatever it is, is created through *your* labor. Leverage it. And, take some time each month to give your talents and energy to your union, and each week to talk to a non-member about the union. A better investment you cannot make on behalf of yourself and your fellow workers.

Labor creates all wealth. Don't forget it.

In solidarity,

Lori



# f G U I L D forum...



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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.

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### Directions to Baltimore Guild Office, 415 St Paul Place, 410-752-6930:

From DC area:

1. Take the Baltimore-Washington Parkway (Rt.295) north to Baltimore.
2. The Parkway empties into Russell St. Continue on Russell St. for a few blocks until you get to Pratt St.
3. Make a right turn onto Pratt St. Continue on Pratt St. for seven blocks until you get to Calvert St.
4. Make a left turn onto Calvert St. Continue Calvert St.
5. Turn Left on Franklin, park if you can. Or proceed to St. Paul, turn left, and park.
6. Proceed to 415 on the left.