

# POST GUILD UNIT

# FORUM...



The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, Local 32035, TNG-CWA

March 23, 2006

## Guild Proposes Fair Compensation for Radio Work

After hearing concerns from Post employees in almost every section of the newspaper, the Guild met on Wednesday with Post management to discuss ground rules for work done in conjunction with The Post's new radio deal.

From discussions with a number of employees in the past week, the Guild had learned that some reporters are being offered payments for radio work while others are not – even though, in some cases, the ones not being offered compensation have made larger commitments to radio than those being paid. Some reporters also informed the Guild that their editors had told them, not asked them, to do their share for radio, in contrast to Post management's assurance that all radio work would be voluntary. Still others complained that the rules of engagement, such as how long their commitment was for and what was really expected of them, had been left unclear in the rush to fill airtime slots. The venture is scheduled to go live on March 30.

At Wednesday's meeting with management, the Guild proposed a graduated schedule of minimum payments that would apply to everyone who participates in the venture. Minimum payments would range from \$35 to \$250 per appearance, depending on the length of the spot and whether it was a regularly scheduled appearance or a one-shot contribution. (As in other areas, the Guild supports individuals' right to bargain higher-than-minimum rates for radio work.) The Guild also proposed a set of five "ground rules" for radio work, including one that would ensure that a decision to **not** participate would not be grounds for a negative evaluation or disciplinary action.

Reasserting the Guild's right to bargain over the new kind of work, Guild representative Rick Ehrmann -- accompanied by Guild officers Rick Weiss, Robert Pierre, Robin Groom and Darlene Meyer, and newsroom representative Stephen King -- invited Post managers to accept the proposed terms or make a counterproposal.

The response: A rejection of the notion that employees should be guaranteed fair minimums for extra work and a lecture that employees ought to embrace change and move on.

Payments "will vary," said Post VP for Labor Trish Dunn. "We're approaching it flexibly."

So far, according to what the Guild has learned, that has largely meant, "The meek will work for free." Two reporters approached to do weekly morning spots of ten minutes each were initially offered nothing. When they balked, they got promises of \$50 per spot. Other reporters who did not know payments were being made available to others have made commitments without any promise of compensation.

Tina Gulland, who heads the radio operation, said that her budget is tight and she has no intention of paying reporters for "every two seconds" they're on the air. As a

general guideline, she said, extra consideration will be given for those who do spots for early-morning drive time, while those who go on the air sporadically or during their regular workday should not expect extra compensation.

The Guild countered that reporters who interrupt their work to go on the air at deadline time deserve the same compensation as those who interrupt their breakfast. Both commitments require radio work **in addition to** the employee's regular workload.

Dunn reiterated that participation in radio work is voluntary – for now-- but also restated the long-held Post position that the company can require staffers to do radio and other disparate forms of work if it chooses to. “We pay our journalists at The Washington Post to do journalism, and whatever platform we put it on is up to us,” Dunn said, acknowledging in the same breath that journalism “has grown in directions none of us ever anticipated.”

The Guild, by contrast, believes that The Post must bargain over radio work because of how different it is from the work that Post employees were hired to perform and because the “voluntariness” of radio work is questionable, given management's assertions that merit pay decisions will be judged in part on employees' participation. The Guild has a number of options if Post management does not come to terms with the issue, including filing an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board.

The Guild would like to hear from you about your experiences dealing with this new venture and what you would like to see happen next. Contact any of the Guild officers or representatives above, or call the Guild office: 202 785-3650, ext. 14.

Here is the proposal the Guild presented to Post management. Our goal, as you can see by the modest numbers we proposed, is not to break the bank or sink the radio enterprise but merely to set guidelines that help our members equitably traverse this new terrain.

#### 1. Compensation

The minimum compensation for scheduled appearances shall be as follows:

10 minutes or under: \$50

More than 10 minutes to 30 minutes: \$100

More than 30 minute to 60 minutes: \$250

The minimum compensation for sporadic appearances shall be as follows:

10 minutes or under: \$35

More than 10 minutes to 30 minutes: \$75

More than 30 minutes to 60 minutes: \$175

2. Radio work is voluntary. Employees' evaluations shall not be negatively affected by their radio work or lack of radio work. No disciplinary action against any employee will be initiated as a result of radio work.
3. The Post will provide training to enhance Guild-covered employees' effectiveness on radio.
4. The Post will make every effort to afford all Guild-covered News employees the opportunity to appear on WP Radio, should such employees so desire.
5. The Post will provide clear guidelines concerning the extent of commentary beyond the reported facts that are expected on WP Radio.
6. The Post or a Guild-covered employee shall give at least two weeks notice of intent to terminate a radio work commitment.