

POST GUILD UNIT

FORUM...



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

June 6, 2008

David Simon Entertains, Inspires Guild-Covered Employees

Guild-covered employees at the Washington Post were treated to a candid conversation May 21 with David Simon, the former Baltimore Sun reporter who went on to produce the HBO hit series *The Wire*. Simon held court at The Post Pub for nearly two hours, talking freely about everything from newspapers' obsession with Pulitzer Prizes, to police departments' obsession with faking their crime statistics, to why he had to kill off the popular "Stringer" Bell character in season three and, yes, the great importance and value of having a union at The Post.

Simon noted the differences in how workers at non-unionized newspapers have been treated of late -- with many of them being laid off with no notice -- as compared to workers at unionized papers where labor contracts have forced management to temper its colder impulses. He blamed newspaper publishers for not appreciating early in the Internet revolution that the news and other content they generated each day had great value, whether printed on paper or uploaded to the Web. While the movie and music industries have fought from the beginning to retain that value by insisting on tight intellectual property rules and by charging appropriate fees for downloads and online rights, the newspapers gave their content away for free, Simon said. Now, with the public spoiled by the availability of free news, there seems to be no turning back, he said. And the companies -- and ultimately their employees -- are paying the price, as cost-cutting has become almost as important as news gathering itself.

Simon emphasized that now, more than ever, Post employees ought to be working to keep the Guild strong. The three buyouts in the past five years have taken a particular toll on union membership, which was already tilted somewhat towards older employees. In the latest buyout alone, 61 Guild members either left or will soon leave The Post, including a number of long-term activists. It will be up to the new generation of younger newspaper employees to keep the Guild strong, Simon said.

Employees who want to learn more about how they can strengthen workers' rights at The Post -- by simply joining or by becoming more active -- should contact any of the representatives or officers listed at the bottom of this bulletin.

Post Newsroom Guild Chair Hits End of His Press Run

On a personal note, as the writer of many of these missives over the years, I'd like to thank all of my colleagues, comrades and co-conspirators at The Post who have in various ways helped the cause of labor relations and justice here while creating -- from scratch! -- a product we can all be so proud of every day. I have taken the buyout and will be continuing my interest in science and science policy at a local think tank. I leave with an intense appreciation for the pool of talented people here at The Post, and with real gratitude that my work as a Guild officer has given me access to the full range of talented individuals who together put out the daily miracle that this newspaper is. To all of you who are selling ads, keeping the computers running, handling circulation issues, manning the phones, taking the photos, creating the art, doing news research, writing the news and opinion pieces, and performing the important work of copy editing, copy aiding and editorial aiding, all I can say is: It has been a real privilege. Stick together. Speak up when something is not right. And don't give up.

-- Rick Weiss

For information, contact any of the following members or representatives:

Darlene Meyer, 334-7007	JoAnn Goslin, 334-7217	Chris Schoppa, 334-6954
Stephen Richardson, 334-7730	Ann Marie Ditchey, 334-5744	Jerry Martineau 334-4838
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For Contact Info, to see the contract, or old bulletins go to: WWW.WBNG.ORG/POST