



Coal union leader John Lewis in 1951, emerging from the Illinois mine where 119 workers died.

We're all coal miners

By Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor

Weighing the aftermath of the deaths of 16 coal miners in West Virginia over the first 32 days of 2006, an acquaintance said to me sarcastically, "I suppose this is something else you're going to blame on George Bush."

Well, there's enough blame to go around. Back in 2004, did any candidate for president talk about workplace dangers?

But, and here's a sad truth for the diminishing fans of the current president, the unfolding coal mining tragedy has remarkable similarities to the calculated neglect and managerial bungling of Hurricane Katrina. It's irrefutable that the last five years have seen sizeable cutbacks in the funding and mine safety initiatives of the Clinton administration -- plus a whole-

sale turning over of federal watchdog agencies to industry insiders, the very people the government is supposed to be watching.

But blame isn't what the nation first felt. Indeed, there was welcome optimism that partisan concerns would be transcended and that empathy and humanity would radiate throughout the nation after the 12 deaths at the Sago mine, further propelled by two hours of false hope when the families thought the miners had been rescued.

Then came two more deaths in another mine explosion and then two more individual deaths on the coal-mining job, leading West Virginia and the US to stand-down all mining for

Coal continued Page 4

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Thursday, February 23, 2006



(USPS 350-360)

Winning a vote yet losing a union

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

It's always like this. The room is so quiet you can hear the sound of one paper ballot gently laid on another.

The workers sit and stand, watching every move as the arbitrator removes each ballot from a cardboard box and stacks them

in two piles, one for yes, one for no. The management observers stand against the wall and watch just as carefully and quietly.

All were gathered February 9 in the dim basement of Bluemound Bowl, right next door to the Quebecor World printing plant. It was as if no one was breathing.

But their eyes had it quickly. The eyes had it. The pile for the union was nearly twice as high as the pile of nays.

Were this a National Labor Relations Board election, the final count would have been a formality. A plurality of votes decides the issue.

Were the Employee Free Choice Act not mired in the molasses of Congress, the Milwaukee decision would have come months earlier, when 65% of the 159 workers signed cards saying they wanted a union. It would only take half plus one of the workforce to go right to bargaining.

But February 9, the room of watchers still held their breath through the count -- 75 for the union, 45 against.

And the union lost.

Under the neutrality agreement reached by Quebecor World (QW) and the unions, a card-check majority gets you to an election -- and gives the com-

Vote continued Page 5



Silently and intently, the front table of workers in a darkened Bluemound Bowl watch the arbitrator count out the votes for union representation.



Inner city adults are guided in two languages by instructor Marla Posell (back) at a satellite MATC learning lab. A lawsuit seeks to protect the rights and programs of these minorities. **Story** Page 3

US unions halt decline in 2005

Even journalists trying to play it down the middle are tilted by previous stories or fixed attitudes on their editors' part. So it is not surprising that the objective essential -- the "lead" in newspaper parlance -- was buried in many newspapers in their evaluation of federal Bureau of Labor Statistics figures for 2005.

The lead of the story should have been that the union slide has halted after more than two decades.

Union membership nationwide held firm and by some analysis up-ticked slightly. It certainly did in Wisconsin, where the total number of workers dropped but the percentage in unions as well as the percentage represented by unions went up.

The figures led some in the media to assume a temporary glitch. They referred to it happening despite the "disruption" in national union leadership.

In reality, these figures were not related to the disaffiliation of several unions from the national AFL-CIO. That may still have an impact on future union numbers, up or down. But disaffiliation occurred only seven months ago. The 2005 labor figures reflect unionizing efforts and workplace additions well underway before any split.

The Wisconsin figures are worth examining, since they keep Wisconsin well above the national average in union membership -- and that's despite the fact that closings and other factors statewide took away about 4,000 union workers.

With roughly some 2,550,000 workers in Wisconsin, 16.1% (about 410,000) belong to unions. The number of workers represented

Join continued Page 9

AFL-CIO powers up with NEA

The AFL-CIO is partnering with the nation's largest union, opening direct charter participation to any NEA union that wants to be a full player in local AFL-CIO labor councils.

The agreement, approved by governing boards of both the AFL-CIO and NEA (National Education Association), is expected to be signed by the end of February.

The NEA has 2.7 million members. Among its affiliates is the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA), representing the city's public school teachers and paraprofessionals.

The AFL-CIO's existing large teacher affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, is very supportive of the new agreement, said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

The NEA deal is historic in establishing a tight partnership between the biggest association of education unions (NEA) and the biggest union federation (the AFL-CIO). Despite enormous agreement on

issues, the autonomy of the NEA structure and its distinct relationship with its family of unions are different from the AFL-CIO model and have always been a stumbling block in per-capita deals and full cooperation.

Until now.

Under the agreement, NEA unions will retain their autonomy and are free to choose having an AFL-CIO voice -- without paying for more than they use. The AFL-CIO and the NEA also agreed to retain separate national identities while propelling "a unified voice on behalf of America's working families, our members and the public."

Generally speaking, here's how the Labor Solidarity Partnership works:

Any NEA union that wants to work with an AFL-CIO state or local labor councils (such as the Wisconsin AFL-CIO or the MCLC) will be designated a Directly Affiliated NEA Local and will fulfill

NEA continued Page 11

Teachers drowning a second time in New Orleans

I didn't expect the street to look like this...I've never seen anything like this. -- Joe DeRose, from New Orleans, who lost his home and all his possessions.

I told my daughter, "Pack light -- we'll be back in three days" -- Elsie Burkhalter, from Slidell, Louisiana, who returned to find her home destroyed and an oak tree in her kitchen.

By Sue Ruggles

Special to the Labor Press

Joe DeRose is communications director of United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO). Elsie Burkhalter is president of the St. Tammany Federation of Teachers.

They are just two of hundreds of thousands lives turned upside down. Both have relocated to Baton Rouge, where the Louisiana Federation of Teachers opened its doors as a relief and organizing center, and where UTNO is now headquartered.

Katrina may have wiped out New Orleans, but the man-made disaster in its wake has proved just as devastating. Powerful forces took advantage of the catastrophe to push their own narrow agenda.

In November, the Louisiana State Legislature voted to take over the public schools in New Orleans, and

reopen them as charter schools. That move -- and the Orleans Parish School Board's decision to grant charters to 22 public schools -- put 4,500 public school teachers and 3,500 school employees out of work and stripped them of their rights and health insurance under union contracts.

About 7,000 teachers and school employees are represented by UTNO and 1,000 by other unions. Many lost everything they owned in the hurricane -- and now have had their paychecks, benefits, seniority, and recall rights swept away.

"This is a sad day for the teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, and other employees of New Orleans Public Schools and for the city of New Orleans," said UTNO President Brenda Mitchell.

Teachers found out about the layoffs on the news. Mitchell pledged to fight for the rights of union members under the contract and the law.

As of February 9, all New Orleans Public Schools employees not working in the few schools that are open were "terminated," which means they will lose their health coverage.

Meanwhile, 60,000 students have no schools. Only a

handful of the 117 schools in New Orleans have reopened.

What's the response of the federal government? Privatize. The Bush administration sees this tragedy as an opportunity to push school vouchers, tax breaks for oil companies, and no-bid contracts -- while cutting health care, social spending, and student loans.

There's not one federal dollar to rebuild the public schools in New Orleans. Yet there's a \$20.9 million federal grant for charter schools. The US Department of Education also wants to give vouchers worth \$7,500 to students displaced by Katrina, for use at private or public schools.

"New Orleans is likely to be the largest charter school city in the country," according to Greg Richmond, president of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

Why the rush to charter schools?

"Charters don't have the same union rules, and that's the biggest thing they have going for them," explained Walter Isaacson, vice chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority.

In fact, the charter school plan was being secretly devel-



While helping the AFT shoot a video of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Joe DeRose took photos of Bradley Elementary School in New Orleans, flooded beyond repair.

oped by a Republican legislator and collaborators as far back as June. It only needed a political opening to gain traction. And Katrina provided that opening.

"It's sad that they're seizing this as an opportunity to take needed money away from public education," said UTNO's Mitchell.

Plagued by mismanagement, lack of funding, and a declining infrastructure, the New Orleans public schools were labeled as "failing." But in fact, test scores had begun to rebound in the last two years, thanks to dedicated work by teachers, students, and parents.

Even the US Department of Education admits that charter schools are less likely to meet performance standards than public schools. In a five-state study, only 79% of charter schools met standards, versus 94% of public schools.

Community leaders charged that the concept was being rammed through without public input and won a court order temporarily stalling the plan.

According to the Bring Back New Orleans website, the committee directing the charter school plan includes representatives from IBM and the Gates Foundation, but no teachers, parents, or union members.

"We who live or work in New Orleans have already suffered one tragedy," Lisa Keeling, an UTNO member and elementary school teacher for 21 years in New Orleans, told Louisiana legislators.

"Only you can prevent us from suffering another. Help me and my fellow teachers who want New Orleans schools to reopen so we can teach again."

For more information and to help, visit www.aft.org/katrina.



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Suit charges illegal muffling of city voice at MATC

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

At its heart, the citizens' lawsuit says an elected official failed to represent the minorities and women of the city of Milwaukee as was his duty under state statute.

Underneath, the lawsuit deals with future balance and control of the Milwaukee Area Technical College.

The more you explore the tale, the more other issues are at play — privatization seeking a stronger hold on public education, politicians and business interests engaged in power games. Should the lawsuit fail, its supporters fear the working families of the city will be further disenfranchised from decision influence.

The lawsuit is all about the MATC but it had to be filed against the Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors, where the activity originated.

The behavior in question was promulgated by the president of the MPS board, Kenneth Johnson, supported by his bare majority of similarly-minded voucher and privatization members on the board, most of whom don't have to face the voters until April of 2007.

The plaintiffs in Milwaukee Circuit Court are Milwaukee citizens combined with Local 212 of the American Federation of Teachers, the union representing MATC teachers and paraprofessionals. All have banded together under the name Citizens for Fair Representation.

Several prominent labor leaders are in the group, as are Latino community leaders and Ellen Bravo, the founder of 9to5 who is now a UWM professor. Among these plaintiffs as private citizens are UAW retiree George McKinney and Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the

D-LIMIT: The tension and polarization between President Darnell Cole and the MATC faculty and staff were further illustrated Feb. 8 in an Internet poll conducted by UWM and commissioned by the AFT. It was a report card evaluating Cole on fulfilling the college's educational mission and it drew a notably high response for such polls (47%) from faculty and staff. Across the board, for vision, management style, values, results and ability to work with his employees, Cole got a D grade.

Milwaukee County Labor Council and an MATC board member (including two years as chair) from 1995 to 2003.

The timing of the lawsuit Jan. 25 inadvertently played into some Madison fuming by GOP legislators about technical college boards and how their ability to levy taxes, as well as to direct policy, is "taxation without representation."

In actual fact, the makeup of these boards is tightly controlled by state statute to ensure equitable representation and hold elected officials responsible.

The law requires an appointment committee to interview candidates and select the MATC board, and that board must include one school district administrator, one elected official, two employers, two employees and three additional members.

The appointment committee is composed of the 21 presidents of the school boards with territory within the district — all public officials who face an electorate to answer for their decisions.

Recognizing the size and student feeding power of the city of Milwaukee, one of the 21, the president of the MPS board, gets to select four other members for the appointment committee. Historically, the only minority members of the committee have stemmed from this city pool.

Last May, Johnson offered his four names and got a rubber-stamp from his four supporters on the MPS board.

All the names were male. Only one was a minority. Only one is an elected official. One even lives in Fox Point.

All are close to Johnson's political views, though Milwaukee abounds with different and even contrary views on public education.

And Milwaukee is a minority-majority city in population — 59% minorities, in fact, including 39% African American and 13% Latino. It is also 52% women according to 2004 census data.

The state statute, the lawsuit points out, specifies that the four additional members "shall be appointed so as to reflect, to the extent possible, the distribution of women and minorities within the first-class city." The plaintiffs ask the court to invalidate Johnson's picks.

The Citizens for Fair Representation also argue that Johnson abridged the power of city residents by choosing individuals primarily not accountable to the electorate.

Johnson's choices consisted of only one MPS board member,

the newest, Danny Goldberg.

His other choices include Tim Sheehy, head of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (the Fox Point guy), and Bruce Thompson, who was defeated by Jennifer Morales in an MPS board race despite his strong backing from Sheehy and the MMAC.

In fact, Sheehy and the well-heeled MMAC have opposed all four progressive candidates on the MPS board and backed Johnson and his four supporting votes.

The lone African American selected by Johnson (who is black) is Dasha Young, community relations mouthpiece for County Executive Scott Walker.

Johnson declined to discuss the lawsuit or the agenda behind his selections. He referred inquiries to the city attorney's office, which handles lawsuits against the MPS and has 45 days to respond. That means an answer must come just before the appointment committee is supposed to make its choices for the MATC board on March 25.

The motivations for Johnson's choices trouble many in and out of the MATC, which has long boasted close relationships with large area employees. It also works closely with public schools, particularly in its close ties to Bradley Tech.

MATC teachers and staff, many represented by AFSCME,

have also turned to the board in the past to resist efforts by current MATC President Darnell Cole to privatize services and reduce community programs.

Local 212 has just started a new round of contract negotiations with the administration, which wants more cuts in union representation.

Recently, Johnson startled many in the community who assumed the president of the MPS board was the logical champion of public education for all. He participated in commercials pushing for more private voucher schools. Sheehy also participated in these ads.

Then there's charter schools, a separate but related "school choice" program that has more levels of accountability but also takes taxpayer money for operations.

Only four entities can create Milwaukee charter schools, which have their own boards of governance, educational policies, rules for accepting students and usually different standards for teachers than regular MPS schools.

Those entities are the MPS itself, UWM, the city of Milwaukee — and the MATC, which to this point has not created a single such school.

The reason, as Cochran has pointed out, has been ideology — the board's mandate to serve "all the children of Milwaukee."

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Coal From Page 1

safety reviews and accelerated inspections.

And now emerges revelations in testimony and events that here is something else we have fallen way behind other industrial nations.

In Canada, 72 miners escaped unharmed after a potash mine explosion because of safe areas deep underground and, something the United Mine Workers of America had been pushing for years, ample long-term oxygen reserves rather than a miserly one-hour canister for each miner.

UMWA President Cecil Roberts told Congress recently that oxygen reserves was the No. 1 priority. Just before we went to press, the federal government ordered long-term oxygen supplies as an emergency measure, rewarding under the glare from the public spotlight what union leaders had been demanding for years.

The senators also learned that Australia had developed a \$20 handheld device to keep miners in contact with the surface, only used in a handful of America's 15,000 mines. They also learned of fire-proof conveyor belts, not yet employed in the US. Any of these technologies would have saved lives.

So would have an attentive response system. Congress learned that the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration didn't hear of the Sago explosion for several hours and then took more hours for the depleted safety teams to respond.

History demonstrates, soberingly, that it has taken major disasters to move consciousness --

When John Lewis shamed Congress

A passionate speech to Congress by legendary labor leader John Lewis 54 years ago are credited with forcing passage of the Federal Coal Mine Safety Act in 1952, the first effective piece of federal legislation.

The Truman administration brought the bill forward, asking Congress for federal power to enforce safety in US coal mines. The trigger was a deadly coal mine explosion in West Frankfort, Illinois. But the passion came from Lewis, who had headed the coal workers union since the 1920s.

Lewis told the House of Representatives on

February 21, 1952, that he had just returned from 119 funerals. His blunt imagery was effective:

"They went to work, the last shift before Christmas. And many of them were brought home to their loved ones in rubber sacks ... because they were mangled, and shattered, and blown apart, and cooked with gas, until they no longer resembled human beings. And the best the morticians could do was to put them in long rubber sacks with a zipper. And for a Christmas present in Franklin County, 119 families could look at rubber sacks in lieu of their loved ones.... The mining industry continues to be a mortician's paradise."

and conscience -- forward.

And there is particular historical resonance in the coal industry. Over 150 years, an entire culture of sorrow and solidarity has been built around the fate of the coal miner.

That culture was quietly there this January if you listened carefully to the background music or absorbed the historical images accompanying the coverage -- a haunting range of songs, documentary images and historical interviews.

It was briefly touched on in some reports explaining the oral history of mining families and the coal union's litany of tragic and heroic names and times: The Molly Maguires, the Lattimer Massacre, the Ludlow Massacre, the Battle of Blair Mountain, Cabin Creek, Buffalo Creek, Bloody Harlan.

It was good that the younger members of our community were made aware even in outline of that history, because we all do take for granted coal and how we get it (though American coal plays a vital part every time we turn on the lights).

It was painful for older workers, who recall firsthand when

coal mining tragedies seemed a natural and inescapable part of the times.

But a new perspective is required. As many of today's miners point out, coal-mining may still be a tough way to make a living but it is romantic fatalistic nonsense that the profession will always be so dangerous that miners have to die.

In fact, coal mining's improvement was until January one of the most remarkable success stories in American labor history.

A century ago, more workers died in a year in US coal mines than were killed on 9/11 - 3,242 alone in 1907, including children unprotected by labor laws.

Even in 1931, as legendary union leader John Lewis began a string of victories in organizing, 1,463 miners died on the job from horrific explosions, falling ledges, cave-ins and bodies mangled in equipment.

By 2005, the yearly number had shrunk to 25.

The astonishing change was driven by three elements that the Bush administration seems to philosophically resist -- union activism, honest science, and socially-motivated big govern-

ment regulation.

Formed in the 1880s and a major force from the 1930s to the 1970s, the UMWA had enormous impact, not just in militant and sometimes confrontational organizing but also in safety advocacy and humanizing the plight inside the mines.

It helped win the eight-hour day in 1898, collective bargaining rights in 1933, health and retirement benefits in 1946, and health and safety protections in 1969 (in fact the union was a pioneer in health benefit models for workers).

Even today, representing 11% of US coal miners, the union's trained rescue teams respond to every call and union experts are a leading informative voice of industry solutions.

(Which made it even stranger that the Sago mine owners tried to prevent union safety workers from participating in the investigation into the explosion at the non-union mine, despite the legal requests of two surviving families for that representation. It took a court order to keep the union in.)

Science not only spelled out the peril in the mines and the lingering health issues (such as Black Lung Disease, which despite environmental advances still affects thousands of miners). It also created important technological advances in ventilation and automation that drove up efficiency and safety (and drove down the number of US coal miners from 900,000 to about 100,000 today).

Science and technology have continued to develop initiatives that foreign mines employ (not China, where more than 1,000 miners die each year according to available figures) and that US conglomerates have ignored.

(Which makes it even stranger that the Bush administration cut back on those developments.)

Technology and unions had



Cecil Roberts, the current coal mining union president.

provided advances long before the government took the problems of coal mines seriously enough.

Always in the wake of devastating explosions, deaths and public outrage, federal legislation tightened up. When television was new, there was intensive coverage of mine explosions -- and those images did a lot to drive forward the federal oversight (as did passion from labor leaders -- see box above).

Federal regulation of workplaces remains notoriously underfunded and understaffed in the best of circumstances -- and the current administration is proving the worst of circumstances. The fines on coal companies have been trivial - in fact USA Today called them "some of the smallest fines of any industry for federal violations."

But when the government attention was led by professionals and human concern, federal and state officials did apply pressure in regular inspections and citations -- and in continuous safety research, advocating limitations on coal dust in the mines and programs to monitor long-range health effects.

Something has gone away. One hundred years ago, miners took a canary underground to test for carbon monoxide. If the bird died, the miners knew more ventilation was needed. This inefficient method produced a picturesque figure of speech. Something warning us of disaster was "the canary in the coal mine."

West Virginia brought more to the surface than the bodies of miners. It offered a new "canary in the coal mine" for workers everywhere:

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From Page 1

pany several months to try to change minds. And then the election must prove that half plus one of the entire workforce wants the union. Not just those who voted.

So the 24% of the 159 workers who didn't vote in effect voted no. If we chose elected officials this way, Herb Kohl would need 50% plus one of ALL eligible voters in Wisconsin. Otherwise, the unknown on the other side would automatically win his Senate seat.

The results at Bluemound Bowl brought no howls from the workers, just a quiet agony. They, and organizers from the Teamsters and the Graphic Communications Conference, had worked hard, spoken to and chartered every worker.

And they knew they had the votes, or certainly the promises, and they had spent months explaining the rules. Cold feet, indifference, intimidation, a decision to go shopping instead of vote, a belief that union support had been so strong in the card-check phase — whatever the reason, 38 workers didn't show up. Only five of those were needed to go over the top.

It was not the end, the union-supporting workers said afterward. It hurt and it was depressing, but in the real world it was a hiccup. Perhaps some workers buckled to the intense



Workers and organizers formed a large circle to pray for strength and continued solidarity after winning the actual vote — but not by enough — for the bindery employees at the Quebecor World plant on Bluemound Rd.

pressure mounted by QW management, but not that many and the union forces still had a majority, along with a cold slap in the face about why every vote does indeed count.

Overall, the neutrality agreement has been a good thing. It was reached last May shortly after the GCIU joined the Teamsters (becoming a separate conference within the union).

It came after three years of global pressure for QW to change its behavior toward workers seeking to form a union. The campaign has been as active in Europe and South America as in the US.

QW is the second largest commercial printer in the world — 32,000 workers in 17 countries. It got there in part through mergers and acquisitions, which means some of its plants have long been union and others never

were. In Milwaukee, there's a rarer case — the press and pre-press workers have been union for decades (members of Local 577M of the GCC) while the bindery-related workers are not.

In Milwaukee, many unions as well as the MCLC and AFL-CIO training classes joined the global campaign by encouraging QW's customers, such as Kohl's, to speak to their print supplier about the treatment of workers, which in some plants extended beyond wages and firings of union supporters to injuries and other safety issues. Leading politicians joined the fight globally.

Since the neutrality agreement last May, under a third-

party arbitration monitor, the union effort gained strength as non-union workers quickly saw the advantage of a united voice. Two US plants were organized. In Brazil, Teamsters officials joined with workers in Recife on January 30, in an action that led the company to recognize the workers' union and address long-standing health and safety problems.

The neutrality agreement forbids bad behavior by both sides. But bad behavior by the company has continued, and that's not just the union view. The independent arbitrator chosen by both sides blasted QW just three days before the Milwaukee vote for its behavior in Covington, Kentucky, where a union effort also narrowly failed through much the same process.

"I have no hesitancy in concluding the company was engaged in a systematic campaign to convince its employees of the risks and futility of unionization," the arbitrator said Feb. 6, noting that the company's actions were a direct violation of the agreement to "make no statement or action showing opposition to unionization."

Workers at QW here say the company's practices were eerily similar to Covington after the cards were signed: company fliers and warnings about plant

closings, wage freezes, and benefit cuts.

Said the arbitrator in the Covington case: "No reasonable, disinterested person can walk away from the totality of the presentations without a clear sense of the company's position: unionization and collective bargaining are non-productive and dangerous for employees and should be avoided. I call that 'showing opposition'."

QW's response to the arbitrator's ruling was that "under the terms of this agreement the standard of neutrality has some subjective measure."

In Covington, workers hold another election in November. Expect the same here.

Union spokesmen in Milwaukee are adhering to the private-resolution agreement by limiting their comments on QW's practices, but it is likely that grievances similar to Covington's will be filed and that there will be a new vote in Milwaukee.

"As long as the workers want to fight, we'll fight with them," said one organizer.

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Official Notice


One round of nominations was held in February but there's another chance for folks willing to serve their union.

Elections for all delegates and officers for AFSCME Local 82 will be held April 11 but nominations will continue to be taken

at the March 14 general membership meeting. (Check with current leaders for the meeting place.)


The local represents custodians and related positions at UWM.

Berthina Joseph
Local 82 Secretary



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Unfolding a new workers' law strategy

Is the National Labor Relations Act the enemy? Or is it all the creeping judicial decisions that have rewritten the intention of the act and the behavior of its controlling board?

Should the labor community just wring its hands or can it borrow a page from the civil rights pioneers of the 1930s and launch coordinated litigation to reverse the damage?

The realities and the strategies to re-establish worker rights will be open to Milwaukee discussion at two events timed to the Cornell University Press publication of "Taking Back the Workers' Law: How to Fight the Assault on Labor Rights."

The book's notable author is Ellen Dannin, a veteran law professor (currently Wayne State University) who has clerked in the federal courts, worked for the NLRB and written extensively on US and global labor issues.

First, she will discuss the issue at a free event at

Downtown's Milwaukee Area Technical College. That takes place Thursday, March 9, at noon in Room S120.

The next afternoon she will be the special speaker in an ongoing luncheon program arranged by the Milwaukee chapter of LERA (Labor and Employment Relations Association).

LERA, a national association that changed its name in 2004 from the Industrial Relations Association, regularly gathers experts from management, labor, the legal and academic community and interested others to hear from notable guests.

The Friday March 10 luncheon (social mix at 11:30 a.m., food at noon) will be held at Aliota's, 3041 N. Mayfair Rd., Wauwatosa.

Cost is \$10 for students, \$15 for LERA members and \$20 for all others. To reserve a place, contact Susan Donahue Davies, (414) 229-4009, or suedono@uwm.edu.



Lyle Balistreri last spring at a Downtown labor rally

Mayor puts Balistreri on city's plan commission

Mayor Tom Barrett has appointed Lyle Balistreri to the Milwaukee Plan Commission, a move to get the input of a veteran construction trades leader on city development and master planning -- and perhaps a new recognition, after a few dropped balls, of the concerns of organized labor in Milwaukee's heavy construction and refurbishing activity.

"They know I'm about union jobs," said Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council AFL-CIO. "But they also know I want family-supporting jobs for city residents and that I've been around development issues for quite a while."

Labor has often had a representative on the city plan commission -- known as CPC in City Hall jargon. Balistreri will take the seat occupied by Douglas Drake, a leader for the USW and, like Balistreri, a member of the executive board of the MCLC.

But Balistreri may be uniquely positioned on Wisconsin development and how it affects workers. He's also been appointed by Gov. Doyle to the State Council on Workforce Investment and he sits on the directorial board of the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County (actually now the secretary-treasurer). He's also been involved in governance of Bradley Tech high school and on several other jobs and development initiatives.

"I suspect there will be some projects on which I'll have to recuse myself," said Balistreri, who has also been deeply involved in negotiating several Project Labor Agreements with Milwaukee companies.

The seven-member board within the Department of City Development is the official planning body under state statute and meets monthly to consider a range of projects and make recommendations. Zoning maps and changes, subdivision approvals, business improvement districts, public land acquisition and disposition and development projects such as Park East, tax incremental districts and even new streets require the board's advice to the Common Council.

Commissioner Balistreri's nomination is expected to sail through approval by the aldermen.

Trapshooting Time

The labor council and its volunteers are seeking to pull more union members into trapshooting recreation.

It is well known that bowling and golfing are league sports supported by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO but for decades the council has also sponsored the MCLC Trapshooting League. It now conducts its contests at Lake View Rod and Gun Club at Lake Muskego.

Teams of six shooters are now being formed for the 20-week season that starts the second week of April (usually on Wednesdays).

Interested trapshooters can form a team sponsored by their own affiliated local.

If your local doesn't have enough shooters to make a team, you can also sign up for an independent team, each formed as soon as the inquiries reach six.

Last season, eight teams of six competed. Each local pays \$185 to field a team. For more informa-

tion or to sign up, contact trapshoot organizer Roger Schmidt at (262) 782-0605. You can also contact MCLC secretary Robin Lundgren at (414) 771-7070.

Golf

Meanwhile, golf is heating up -- even if the weather doesn't. A planning and organizational meeting for senior golfers will be held at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, March 25, in Yatchak Hall next to MCLC headquarters at 633 S. Hawley Rd.

The league is open not just to retired men and women, including spouses, of local unions affiliated with the MCLC.

It is also open to men and women over 60 and still working through an affiliated union.

The league plays on a handicap basis every Monday, May through September, at the Brookfield Hills Golf Course (south of Brookfield Square on Moorland Rd.).



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Moving Right Along



Paul Welnak

Welnak retiring as IBEW leader

Retiring after more than 16 years as business manager of his local, Paul Welnak will be honored March 24.

That local is IBEW 494, 3,200 members strong.

Paying tribute to his leadership will not just be his own International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers colleagues but also a larger community of both business and union people.

Wisconsin's compensation and dwelling code councils and on the various electrical standards and code committees that establish process and certification for electrical workers.

For details of the event honoring him, contact Mary Grossman at IBEW Local 494, (414) 327-5202.

His experience has been called on statewide and nationally. He has served on Wisconsin's compensation and dwelling code councils and on the various electrical standards and code committees that establish process and certification for electrical workers.

For details of the event honoring him, contact Mary Grossman at IBEW Local 494, (414) 327-5202.

Taking the field for AFL-CIO here

A new face and a new voice for union activism and mobilization was introduced in February to the MCLC delegates. Sue Ledbetter has been assigned by the AFL-CIO to Wisconsin as the Senior Field Staff person.

"I've really got three states, but Wisconsin is the battleground," said Ledbetter, who worked for nine years as director of the central labor council of Wichita/Hutchinson, Kansas.

But she's hardly from Kansas in the "Wizard of Oz" sense.

She's a political veteran honored by the NAACP, National Organization for Women, Kansas for Human Dignity, Wichita Gay and Lesbian Alliance and the Wichita School Board for her work on worker compensation laws in that state,



Sue Ledbetter

and her efforts at HIV/AIDS awareness, worker justice and safety, living wage ordinances and rape laws. She did earlier work in many Kansas house and statewide political contests.

She's already plunged into Wisconsin election and community mobilization efforts. She will be living in Milwaukee and working out of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO office at 6333 W. Blue Mound Rd.

You can reach her by office number, (414) 476-2896, or on her cell, (414) 526-3781.



Stanthia Grier of IBEW Local 2150 (being sworn in by President Willie D. Ellis) was one of the new executive board members inducted at the Feb. 1 MCLC delegate meeting. So was veteran AFSCME District Council 48 leader Paula Dorsey (below), the sole nomination for an open seat and elected by acclamation. She was being sworn in by Vincent Bobot, former municipal judge now a candidate for sheriff.

RIGHT: A familiar council face in a different role, Annie Wacker gave her first talk as newly elected vice-president of the MCLC at this meeting.



Bowling

MCLC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

JANUARY 2006 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
LABORERS 113	85	62
ONE BOARD OVER	82	65
8 BALLS	80	67
SLAMMERS	74	73
GUTTER RATS	69	78
CRAZY 8's	51	96

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 500

BOB WAGNER	697
DAN LAACK	670
SAM SAMUELSON	667
DEL GROSS	606
ELMER HELM	579
WAYNE FRANZEN	572
JOHN PADRON	560
DON BOOTON	552
DON WIEDMANN	537
JOE MISHICH	509
HANK ZEISSE	501

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 200

DAN LAACK	266
SAM SAMUELSON	266
BOB WAGNER	238

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 200

DON BOOTON	233
WAYNE FRANZEN	232
DEL GROSS	225
JOE MISHICH	223
ELMER HELM	223
DON WIEDMANN	219
JOHN PADRON	219

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 475

PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	499
ELAINE KARIER	481

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 165

PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	189
ELAINE KARIER	168



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UCAN get practical tips

It's a can-do theme that will help union members assure their financial knowledge, political acumen and future life on Tuesdays from March 7 to April 11.

Presented by the AFL-CIO Community Services in association with MetLife®, it's known as UCAN - in this case UCAN control your financial destiny.

From 6 to 8 p.m. (including a closing night dinner) and \$30, the organizers have put together a series of important classes and discussions to take place at Yatchak Hall at 633 S. Hawley Rd., home building to both the Milwaukee County Labor Council and the AFL-CIO field mobilizers involved in the project.

The topics seem more timely than ever.

Tuesday, March 7: ARE YOU LISTENING? Designed to provide skills and techniques before making important decisions.

Tuesday, March 14th: DEVELOPING YOUR FINANCIAL PROFILE. Practical advice to transform dreams into

reality, exploring such topics as ensuring money to fund retirement, education for family members, working for a second home.

Tuesday, March 21: 401(k) AND 457 ROLLOVERS. What do the ages of 59 1/2, 62, 65 and 70 1/2 represent to you? How can you avoid paying taxes on your "Backdrop," Lump Sum or Pension distribution? There are special rules and options and UCAN use them to your advantage.

Tuesday, March 28: WISCONSIN: HIGH TAX STATE - FACT OR FICTION? Where does Wisconsin really rank? Do corporations pay their fair share? What is the impact of the gas tax repeal? Learn the facts.

Tuesday, April 4: TAXES AND YOUR MONEY. There may be unnecessary taxes chipping at your income and there may be more ways of keeping your money for yourself.

Tuesday, April 11 (dinner reception follows class): THERE IS A BETTER WAY! How you can mobilize and make public officials listen, plus other roads to action by working families.

There are also some scholarships available. For more information or to reserve your seat, contact: Annie Wacker

Phone: 414-771-9830
annieaflcio@sbcglobal.net

or
Doug Curler
Phone: 414-771-9828
dougafclcio@sbcglobal.net

Blog with AFL-CIO

Calling it a news blog, the AFL-CIO has set up a new service for working families.

Called AFL-CIO Now, it starts up Feb. 21 with frequent daily updates on economic, legislative, political, organizing and other news crucial to workers and their families.

AFL-CIO Now will replace a weekly collection of short news known as Work in Progress, which ceases publication.

To get the blog, visit the Internet web address below and sign up to receive it in your email box:

www.unionvoice.org/wfean/blogsignup.html



Cecilia Smith-Robertson speaking for Feingold at a labor rally.

Feingold shuffles office as well-known aide retires

For 13 years, a face familiar to the labor community has represented Sen. Russ Feingold at countless rallies and civic functions. But now Cecilia Smith-Robertson, who came out of the ATU, is retiring as the Democratic senator's Milwaukee office manager and southeast regional coordinator.

Her departure brings changes in Feingold's local staff and duties. Rebeca Lopez, who has worked for Feingold in Milwaukee since 2003, has become the new office manager and will focus on constituent outreach in northern Milwaukee



Rebeca Lopez

County as well as Ozaukee and Washington counties. Lopez, a graduate of Marquette, is a lifelong south side resident.

Returning from a legislative aide position for Feingold in D.C., Carl Hampton will coordinate for the city of Milwaukee. He is a graduate of the UW Law School, and a former public interest lawyer in Milwaukee.

Feingold, of course, is not running for Wisconsin election this year. But it has not escaped national notice that he sure seems to be running for something else.



Carl Hampton



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Joined

From Page 1

by unions also grew to about 17.2% of the state's workforce.

So even as Wisconsin lost a total number of workers from where employment stood in 2004, the number of union and union-represented workers increased.

This did not happen everywhere. In another strong union state next door, Minnesota, the erosion of workers lowered union membership from 17.5% in 2004 to 15.7% in 2005.

But nationally, unions gained 213,000 members. There are now nearly 15.7 million wage and salary union workers in the US.

Union gains, incidentally, did not stem from an increase in government workers. At 36.5% union, the rate for government workers was essentially unchanged from a year earlier; though public sector workers are by far the largest share of the union family.

The median weekly income in 2005 for a full-time union worker was \$801. That's 28.8% higher than the \$622 a week for non-union workers.

The union advantage is pronounced for women and minorities -- \$731 vs. \$559 a week for women, \$656 vs. \$500 for African Americans, and \$673 vs. \$449 for Latinos.

There were other aspects of this labor story that were missed. Rather surprisingly to everyone, the gains also come in what was regarded as a banner year for anti-union forces.

Law firms noted for opposition to unions had a busy and

As unions gain, enemies attack

You know organized labor is making inroads. Look at the nature of the gathering enemies. A reported \$8 million advertising effort funded by chambers of commerce and other business interests emerged in February.

That was two weeks after federal data recorded positive news for unions, and a month after unions and their allies were clearly making inroads in more than 30 states with the Fair Share Health Care concept. (This is legislation to penalize large corporations that offer such costly health plans that their workers and families are forced into taxpayer Medicaid programs.)

The counter-attack came disguised as a nonprofit grassroots organization. It has launched with street stagings, full-page newspaper ads and a website untruthfully called unionfacts.

Its operator has an entire page to himself at ConsumerDeception.com and his tactics were exposed last year in the Washington Post. Rick Berman is a lobbyist most noted for supporting food, liquor and tobacco interests and has been roundly criticized for misleading consumers. The typical tactic revealed in the news stories is creating shadowy nonprofit tax-exempt front groups for his clients, hiring himself as executive director - and then hiring his own public relations firm for a big fee to run the campaign. Sure enough, Berman is executive director of unionfacts.

profitable year and even saw one of their own elevated to the National Labor Relations Board. Peter Kisanow, a partner in a Cleveland firm that advises companies on "maintaining a union free workplace," was a recess appointment (when Congress was out of session) by President Bush, bringing the board up to full GOP-majority strength.

So how, with all the anti-union forces and their skills, did unions actually grow members and stop the decline? It's the reality of today's America. A 3% growth in the economy sounds good to politicians. But that doesn't even keep up with inflation. And it doesn't reflect what's been happening over time.

The answer to who is really benefitting was solidified in a report from the University of

Wisconsin's economic policy institute, COWS, and the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, using data from two decades (1982-2003) to makes its disturbing point.

The average income of the bottom fifth of families grew only 14.3% (\$2,519) while the top fifth grew 48.2% (\$36,000) over the same period.

If you look just at the top 5% of Wisconsin incomes, the difference is even more pronounced. It grew more than 67% for the same period.

So it's not just the poor who failed to share in the so-called "national prosperity." Middle income families saw their income rise only 23.4%, or \$9,343, in 20 years. It isn't only the gap between the rich and poor that is growing but also the gap between Wisconsin's middle and upper income families.

The Wisconsin disparity is reflected in nationwide figures as well.

The poorest one-fifth of families, according to those reports, had an average income of \$16,780 from 2000-03, while the top fifth of families had an average income of \$122,150 -- more than seven times as much. Middle-income families' average income was \$46,875.

Statistics are revealing, but honestly, working families know all this is happening without parsing numbers. They're living the consequences every day.

And there's a real desire to have unions to protect them, were it not so difficult under current law to organize.

The AFL-CIO has long commissioned polls that show most workers would unionize if they could. But given the source of the funding, the media has discounted the results.

Recently, though, a conservative think tank commissioned respected pollster Zogby to ask the same thing. Though the survey was also loaded with questions primed to reflect doubts about unions, the central result

was not what the anti-union think tank (the Public Service Research Foundation) wanted to hear: 63% of American workers would join a union if they could.

It is that sort of common sense that is likely to continue to drive unions forward.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

The states of the unions

Wisconsin's growth in union membership in 2005 put the state in the top 10, percentage-wise. The January report from the feds also revealed a lot about where union strength is and isn't.

All states in the Middle Atlantic and Pacific regions continued to report union rates above the national average and all states in the East South Central and West South Central had rates below it.

Thirty-one states had rates below the US average of 12.5% while 19 states had higher rates.

Five states had union membership rates over 20%: New York (26.1%), Hawaii (25.8%), Alaska (22.8%), and Michigan and New Jersey (20.5%).

The five states reporting rates below 5% were both Carolinas (2.3% North and 2.9% for South), Arkansas and Virginia (both 4.8%) and Utah (4.9%).



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Calendar

Wednesday, March 1

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO Delegates
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Thursday, March 9

TAKING BACK THE WORKERS' LAW

Forum With Author Ellen Dannin
Noon, Downtown MATC, Room S120
See Story on Page 6

Saturday, March 18

MARCH AND RALLY FOR PEACE

O'Donnell Park, Downtown Lakefront
Marches from SEIU office and Marquette University
to park and then Federal Courthouse
Rally Starts at Noon
See Story This Page

Monday, March 20

Faith Community for Worker Justice
5 p.m. Yatchak Hall (formerly Assembly Hall)
633 S. Hawley Rd.

Saturday, March 25

Senior Golf League Planning Meeting
9:30 a.m., Yatchak Hall (formerly Assembly Hall)
633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, March 29

Executive Board Meeting
Milwaukee County Labor Council
3 p.m., MBCT, 5941 W. Bluemound Rd.

Labor groups, brimming

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Comment

Media as well as rank-and-file attention was focused on the break-away of several unions at the AFL-CIO national convention last summer. Little publicity was given an unprecedented resolution that passed with support from all corners of the union universe.

The resolution hailed the sacrifice, duty and courage of "our sons and daughters, our sisters and brothers, our husbands and wives" in the military -- and then laid out the reasons to bring them home from Iraq as quickly as possible.

As 2006 unfolds as a critical year to bring troops home, members of several unions -- from steelworkers to teachers -- reminded the delegates of the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO at its February meeting of that resolution and outlined some ongoing actions.

They urged a reaffirmation of the AFL-CIO position. Their motion was approved by acclamation.

The position of the AFL-CIO on the Iraqi war last July was hardly radical, but it came months before polls indicated the majority of the country has shifted to a similar view.

This is hardly, as President Bush characterized it in his recent State of the Union speech, hindsight or second-guessing.

Recall the beginning. Millions here and around the world marched and spoke up against invading Iraq. Despite the snorting dismissal of them on conservative talk radio, they did not consist of just those traditionally opposed to the concept of war and those who mistrusted the Bush administration. They included experts on Middle East affairs and military power and analysts who respected -- as most Americans later would -- the work of the United Nations weapons inspectors.

Among the skeptics were some union leaders questioning not just the evidence for immediate invasion but the constant efforts to tie Bin Laden to Saddam Hussein. More mainstream voices spoke up as it became obvious how unprepared the administration was to protect troops against an insurgency that had been predicted. As the resolution noted, "The American people were misinformed before the war began."

That's when a committee of labor leaders and members formed as USLAW (US Labor Against the Iraqi War). The drumbeat of criticism -- joined by people who worked within the administrations or military command of Reagan, Carter,

March marks three years of Iraqi War

The month of March marks the third anniversary of the US military action in Iraq. If that seems too long, join the "bring them home" rally at noon Saturday, March 18, in Downtown Milwaukee.

A labor contingent will march from SEIU's downtown office to O'Donnell Park. After a prayer meeting, a march contingent from Marquette University will meet them and other participants there. A short rally will feature David Newby, president of the state AFL-CIO, and noted peace activist George Martin.

From there the participants will march to and circle the nearby Federal Courthouse and lay flowers on the steps to represent the fallen.

The action is being planned by the Milwaukee Coalition for a Just Peace, which includes Peace Action-Wisconsin, National Lawyers Guild-Milwaukee Chapter, USLAW, the Green Party and Catholics for Peace.

Clinton and both Bushes -- kept growing.

The White House then -- and even more forcefully now -- has sought to muffle and dismiss opposition by calling it defeatist, "cut and run," isolationist -- a tactic the media failed too often to challenge for its out-of-context quotes and personal attacks.

In 2006, political realities -- such as the upcoming fall elections -- have left the White House scrambling to cut down on troop presence but not make it seem a reaction to the critics or the worries of GOP incumbents.

None of this should disguise that years ago there were good ideas and thoughtful warnings trivialized and debunked, at considerable cost to America in image, money and, most tragically, in coffins and wheelchairs.

But to some degree, the administration posture worked, particularly the accusations that anyone opposing the war was showing disrespect for the troops. Within the public in general and unions in particular, that had resonance beyond what logic clearly told us. It played into the strong feelings of heritage and patriotism that historically kept labor on the side of soldiers wherever they are sent.

It is no mere rhetoric that children of workers participate heavily in military service and always have.

The operational heads of more than 60% of America's union membership are themselves military veterans. Traditionally, union criticism of the military was limited to the inadequate benefits for returning veterans and the failure of companies to rightfully return military members to the jobs and benefits they left behind to serve.

Many union members recall vividly the time of the Vietnam War when demeaning treatment and insults faced some of the returning troops. Many of them were part of those troops. That specter from the past has long been enough to make American workers equate opposition to a war with a criticism of the soldiers.

But President Bush managed to change that. The more he ignored legitimate concerns and hard evidence, the more he tried

to dismiss thoughtful opinions as un-American, the more he catered to the anti-democratic principles of close-mindedness and evasion, the more legitimacy he gave to his doubters.

There's still something of a battle going on for the minds of some workers and citizens.

Is it showing disrespect for the troops to urge bringing them home? Or, as one retired general put it, shouldn't we trust the public's ability to know the difference between "bad policy and good soldiers"? It's hard today to comprehend the belief that soldiers who believe in their mission and fight bravely lose any particle of honor if some leaders in Washington are wrong-headed.

Obdurateness in the face of wisdom bears an enormous price, and not just for Americans. Many thousands of our soldiers have been killed and injured, but there are thousands more Iraqis stuck in the middle who suffered the same fate.

The US has become mired in a moral dilemma. We have an obligation to repair the damage and give Iraqis a chance for a future, but common sense impels citizens to ask hard questions about a military action whose basic premise proved false and a civilian leadership whose understanding of Iraqi society is clearly childish and jingoistic.

And what sort of Iraq are we supporting? Another reality that stirred up labor last summer is how Iraq continues to be a no-man's land for trade unions, historically a force for secular democracy in Iraq.

Democratic movements require an active voice from the working and middle classes. Yet Iraqi unions reside in a limbo where they are attacked and ignored by the American administration and simply attacked and even killed by insurgents.

Their efforts at representation have also been thwarted by the new Iraqi government and the American contractors. A natural ally has been shunted aside, yet, as the AFL-CIO pointed out in its resolution, "The bedrock of any democracy is a strong, free, democratic labor movement."

Continued Next Page

with vets, renew call for rapid withdrawal

From Page 10

Along with reflecting the US unions' long solidarity with worker movements around the world "in their opposition to tyranny," the resolution supported the call "from members of Congress for .

NEA

From Page 1

its local per-capita payment commitments..

There will be national per-capita payments but national dues beyond actual cost of local participation will be rebated by the AFL-CIO.

Constitutional issues beyond basic behavior and compensation monitoring will be waived for NEA unions. All dues payment and rebates will flow through the NEA to the AFL-CIO.

Thus an NEA union is not paying full dues to both national union organizations yet the AFL-CIO is compensated for national support of local labor efforts.

Construction trouble

Even as news of the NEA deal was emerging, the national AFL-CIO had to face up to lingering unhappiness in two of its largest construction unions.

Both unions announced Feb. 14 they were leaving the Building and Construction Trades Department of the national AFL-CIO to form a new organization -- and they expected four other unions to join their "National Construction Alliance."

But both unions are not leaving the AFL-CIO, said Laborers International President Terence M. O'Sullivan and President Vincent J. Giblin of the IUOE (International Union of Operating Engineers).

That will happen "sooner rather than later" for the Laborers, said O'Sullivan, but

.. benchmarks in the key areas of security, governance, reconstruction and internationalization."

The resolution ended where it began, with supporting our troops. Our soldiers "deserve to be properly equipped with protective body gear and up-armored

"the jury is still out on that," said Giblin. Those were clear warning shot from unions whose membership top 1.1 million. Both presidents said their decision was entirely different from the Change to Win agenda.

On Feb. 15, Trades Dept. President Ed Sullivan refuted the two unions' details on how they were rebuffed on proposed changes in his department and urged patience and cooperation from all construction unions in the dispute.

Details of the new alliance were sketchy but will be announced March 1. Both unions cited the need to push union construction power, which has fallen from 40% in 1973 to 13.1% today. "These are kitchen table issues, building block issues," said Giblin, "and they're not moving."

He revealed commitments from two AFL-CIO unions, the Bricklayers and the Iron Workers, and two disaffiliated unions, the Carpenters and the Teamsters, to work in their new alliance.

O'Sullivan envisioned new local councils to negotiate with developers -- "but not in Milwaukee," said John Schmitt, the business manager of Laborers Local 113 who attended the LA discussion of the new construction alliance.

Schmitt said the leaders knew that the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council AFL-CIO "was doing a great job" and would continue that role.

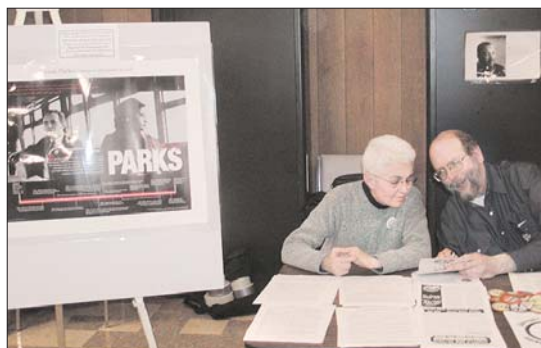
vehicles. And they deserve leadership that fully values their courage and sacrifice. Most importantly, they deserve a commitment from our country's leaders to bring them home rapidly."

The reaffirmation of the resolution at the February delegate meeting dovetailed with new determination among ever-more citizens to make their feelings heard, despite derision from die-hard Bush supporters that the White House is unlikely to listen to the sentiments of the lowly mortals known as the citizenry. (That attitude that may have been part of the problem in the first place.)

In Wisconsin, more than 20 cities have put the Iraqi question on ballots in the form of advisory referenda -- simply to encourage citizen opinion.

USLAW has now allied with a number of mainstream and liberal organizations to organize a massive April 29 demonstration in New York City, preceded by local rallies and discussions.

The protests will not only call for a swift orderly withdrawal of American troops. They will petition the government to shift our national treasure to the many problems at home such as the



Flanked by displays of Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King at the Washington Park center were Sue Ruggles and Steve Watrous of USLAW, signing up people for Iraq war petitions and protest events.

aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

This would not be a puny shift. A trillion dollars may eventually be spent on Iraq under the current course and billions have already been lost in waste and corruption. Whatever Saddam ripped off from the oil for the United Nations program is beginning to pale in comparison to amounts of US funds that have been derailed into bribes, theft and even financial support of the insurgents, a pattern that seems to involve Iraqi officials as well as outsiders.

Once again, the solid rebuilding work of American troops has been undermined by the shaky oversight and ineptitude of leadership.

For firsthand accounts of what's going, USLAW has arranged for any union or local interested to have guest speakers at the meetings from Iraq Veterans Against the War and Military Families Speak Out.

For more information on the rallies and speakers, contact Sue Ruggles at 414-688-3772.

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(414) 283-8444

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For more information about the VIP Clinic or services provided, please contact Theresa Young (262) 896-6432

