



Janitors go visible Downtown Page 3



Mocking Bush's labor court - See Pages 14-15



Special Report: A skills theme park

RIGHT: Labor Press joins Milwaukee apprentice candidates and teacher Doug Stegeman on a tour of the operating engineers' rigorous Wisconsin training center. See Page 8-9

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Welcoming more unions, immigrant workers

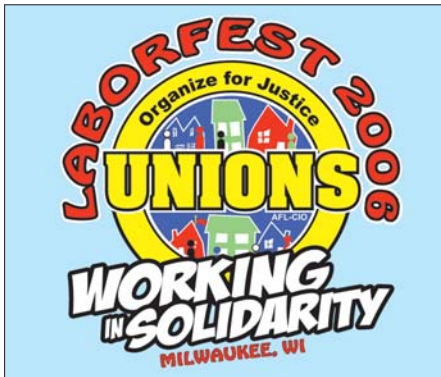
The people who really make Milwaukee work will expand the size and meaning of the Laborfest parade through Downtown and the free family party at the Summerfest grounds on September 4.

Several bridges of solidarity have formed that could easily quadruple the size of Laborfest.

One bridge is the return to full membership in the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO of the Change to Win federation of unions. Membership has rebounded from the 8,000 lost last summer and the MCLC has even added to that, with new locals joining the council (such as Painters Local 579), an affiliation with the Alliance for Retired Americans and new cooperation with unions outside both federations.

But the chunkiest growth in Laborfest was outlined July 10 at a major planning meeting between the MCLC and Voces de la Frontera (Voices of the Frontier), the South Side workers rights center that this year organized two massive rallies in the Milwaukee community as well as voter registration drives and citizenship preparation.

The unions' traditional celebration of the national



workers holiday, Labor Day, is themed "Working in Solidarity." That same Monday, the national immigration rights coalition has called for a national action day of solidarity and understanding.

The solidarity missions will now meet and mingle at Laborfest. Under evolving plans, thousands of immigrant workers will stream into the parade as marchers while thousands more will join as spectators. All will fold in with the paraders' arrivals at Summerfest for the free music, children's area, games, speeches and prizes.

The Laborfest blending is at this writing unique in the US. Yet it strikes the union sponsors as the most natural thing in the world and it is likely to be emulated across the nation.

"We need to embrace each other in our common cause for workers rights and family unity," said Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the MCLC and principal organizer for Laborfest.

"No immigration policy is possible without goodwill, without reaching out among our people. We need greater levels of cooperation and understanding on a personal level as well as to influence government attitudes."

Said one Voces organizer at the meeting, "This is a special opportunity for immigrant workers to understand

Laborfest continued Page 6

My Zeidler - and yours

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

In 40 years as a journalist with thousands of interviews and commentaries on the famous behind me, I've kept very few mementoes of the positive responses from the subjects. Blame my distrust of celebrity motivations.

In my abnormally small but very cherished file, though, are two letters from Frank Zeidler, both demonstrating how carefully he read my articles, both adding a relevant anecdote.

He never gave a fig for fame or what I would write next. He just liked ideas and a platform to express them.

When Zeidler died July 7 at age 93 of congestive heart failure, the outpouring of tributes reflected how many others felt a personal bond with him:

College students at a university he helped start and where he reigned as a living google of history.



Frank Zeidler 1912-2006

Faith leaders from ecumenical groups he helped start.

Citizens who rely on public services he helped start or expand.

Public TV viewers, at a station he helped start.

Elected officials, who say he is their role model.

Neighborhood, peace and UN supporters in organizations he helped start or further.

And the labor community, which can claim a special affinity.

Weeks before his death, Zeidler's last major appearances

were at labor events - the Bay View Massacre remembrance on May 7 where he was an annual participant as health permitted, and the Wisconsin Labor History Society anniversary May 13 at Turner Hall where Zeidler, indifferent to the oxygen tubes that were now his constant companion, answered questions for an hour and never missed a fact on events stemming back 70 years.

No wonder this society has named its scholarship awards in his honor.

No wonder Turner's - a debate hall he frequented during his formative and active political years - seemed to come alive at his presence.

When Zeidler was first elected mayor in 1948, unions were grass-roots-fractured (as opposed to top-dogs fractured as seems the case today). They were not all behind him.

But key players were, along **Zeidler** continued Page 10

Doyle, key family issues top agenda for Labor 2006 walks

Union member to union member, labor volunteers will be out in force in neighborhoods starting Aug. 5 focusing on one issue in the November 7 elections and a couple of key candidates.

The race at the top of the discussion is returning Jim Doyle as governor of Wisconsin. Where applicable, the volunteers will also talk about a local race of major importance - for instance, in Wisconsin Senate District 5, the multiple reasons to have Jim Sullivan replace the erratic Tom Reynolds.

With this mass door-to-door effort, the state and Milwaukee labor councils activate Labor 2006, which is shaping up as an intensive political campaign of crucial importance to working families.

Doyle and Sullivan have already locked in labor council endorsements, as has Peg Lautenschlager to return as attorney general.

Some other important races have a September 12 primary but some candidates have just finalized, given the July 11 filing deadline.

The Milwaukee COPE (Committee on Political Education) as well as the state AFL-CIO decision process will be spending July interviewing and recommending key candidates in local races. Most

Labor 2006 continued Page 5

More political coverage
on Pages 2, 4 and 5

One bad night be darned, Peg is best for AG

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Wisconsin must be swimming in articulate progressive women with political skill and proven government leadership experience.

OK, maybe not. But two of them, frequent allies in the past, will be trying to knock each other off in the Democratic primary Sept. 12 for attorney general.

Incumbent Peg Lautenschlager has the backing of the state AFL-CIO and its collective political process — including the Milwaukee County Labor Council — while Kathleen Falk, a respectable third behind Jim Doyle and Tom Barrett in the 2002 primary for governor, has the support of individual unions plus, like Lautenschlager, notable Democrats.

The main story: Why is there even a race in the first place?

Falk in interviews openly admits that it was not some burning desire for the job that brought her in — after all, she can go right back to serving as Dane County Executive — but the pleas of fellow Democrats, including Doyle.

Lautenschlager, they told Falk, was not re-electable because of one night two years ago, when she had too much to drink and rolled slowly off the highway. Compounding the fear factor was that the video of her inebriation and arrest, an episode Lautenschlager herself called

Comment

“the worst mistake of my life,” looms as the centerpiece of the GOP’s TV advertising.

A hidden motive to woo Falk (it’s never been openly discussed) may have been Lautenschlager’s stubborn streak, a determination to run her own constitutional ship and ride above the waves of gubernatorial-legislature politics.

As Lautenschlager has pointed out, she has more relevant experience than anyone in the race.

As she has been too diplomatic to point out, the hardest job in Madison may be running the AG’s office under a governor who did it for 12 years in a hostile environment. See Page 4 for an idea of how deeply the GOP detested Doyle.

Two months before the race, though, it looks like the worried Dems badly miscalculated.

In fact, if Lautenschlager triumphs over Falk as seems likely, the issue of her political skill and electability goes out the window.

The Republicans have their own primary fight, a Tweedledum-Tweedledee affair built on excessive playing to a conservative base with an increasingly narrow stridency about law and order.

They’re attacking issues of drugs and funding that are not, need we point out, primarily in the hands of any attorney general

but in money decisions by their own party. Their campaign barely addresses the broad constitutional functions of the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

But Falk is as vulnerable as Lautenschlager to this constant GOP pooh-poohing about consumer protection, worker rights and environmental laws.

More and more voters who look at Lautenschlager’s actual administration and prosecutorial skill will concede that her mistake has emerged as an isolated incident.

That means, in terms of political traction, Falk has slipped into a whirlpool. Lautenschlager’s extra glass of wine is front and center in all Falk’s media interviews. Whether she brings it up or not, it’s her main reason for being in the race.

There is now cynical, even desperate advice from Falk’s camp to use the video in the primary campaign — the theory being that the Republicans will anyway, so why not beat them to the punch? But even the current level of attack seems to have created a negative image for Falk more than for Lautenschlager.

Part of the coolness to Falk’s candidacy stems from Democrats who have a tradition of loyalty and voters who respect rebounds from personal problems.

Several points to something Lautenschlager herself hasn’t played up, a personal event that speaks more directly to her char-

acter and will.

That, bluntly, was her battle with breast cancer. She was open about the illness, hiding neither her hair loss nor her steps to total remission.

Is this personal health problem worthy of being balanced against the state’s “top cop” having too much to drink?

Actually, several voters have told me it’s more revealing about how she handles challenges and recovery. It does point up her unflagging fighter’s determination (did fellow Democrats really expect a cancer survivor to buckle under mere political pressure?). Poetically as well as politically, it speaks longer term to voters about how she addresses human frailty and her quick empathy with the problems of everyday families.

Lautenschlager also has walked a difficult line quite well in Madison — between a GOP-controlled legislature pestered her for petty decisions and a governor who used to have her job and must have strong ideas about the office’s image and priorities.

She’s responded with her own core values and independence, lending the weight of her office selectively to direct prose-



Peg Lautenschlager has to beat back a September 12 challenge within her own Democratic primary on her campaign back to the attorney general’s office.

cution, litigating to win wages for abandoned workers, pushing to stop consumer fraud and protect environmental concerns. Not surprisingly, she also has increased attention to women’s rights.

One would like to believe that Falk, whose obligation to Madison power politics explains her presence in the race, could carve a course equally independent and focused.

But why risk finding out when the proven progressive is already there?

Labor feeds the homeless July 30

Serving the community with a union flair — and a bit of barbecue sizzle — will be back in force at 4 p.m. Sunday, July 30, at St. Ben’s, 9th and State St., in labor’s annual participation in the community meal program that has become noted for its size and organization.

Volunteers are needed to pass out brats, beans, potato salad, fresh fruit and dessert for the ever increasing numbers of homeless and hungry. Contributions are also needed to help pay for the food, which typically serves 500 to 600 guests, and the barbecuing supplies.

The Community Services Committee of the Milwaukee County Labor Council and the AFL-CIO field mobilizers handle the event. To lend your services, contact field mobilizer Annie Wacker at (414) 771-9830.

Volunteers are encouraged to sport union identification. Charitable contributions should be made out to Labor Community@Work and sent to Suite 106, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee WI 53214.

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Basic needs put janitors on march for new contract

This summer, the Downtown workforce often called invisible won't be. It will be marching in broad daylight, accompanied by signs, drums, elected officials, community partners and the broader union community.

Launched with a parade of several hundred June 15 down Wisconsin Avenue to the Grand Avenue, Justice for Janitors continued July 7 with a full-throated rally at Turner Hall and another big march.

Expect the custodians — more typically dead-of-night cleaners of entire floors or daytime basement dwellers in office buildings — to follow the sun through Downtown streets until they land a master three-year contract better than the one that runs out July 31.

Simultaneously, SEIU has started an intense campaign to organize CleanPower, a non-

SEIU's Michael Thomas (right) and organizer David Somerscales (below) are among the union leaders pushing Downtown's attention to the plight of office custodians, who are engaged in a tough negotiation for a better contract. Meanwhile, SEIU is driving to organize a non-union force in the market, CleanPower.



union office-cleaning company entrenched in Madison and the Milwaukee suburbs and encroaching more and more on Downtown.

CleanPower tempts building owners through its subhuman wages, a technique that presses down all of Milwaukee's living standards.

Union organizers report CleanPower's wages at \$7 to \$8 an hour with no benefits and are collecting accounts of how managers threatens workers with firings for insubordination if they point out they were shorted in pay.

Downtown — where vacancy rates have fallen and workforce numbers have risen in the last three years — some 350 custodi-



ans in SEIU Local 1 operate under the master agreement with five companies.

The base pay is \$9.45 an hour — still under poverty level for a family. Those families also have to come up with a couple of hundred dollars each month to make up the difference in company family health coverage.

A related key issue will be that 100 of these Local 1 custodians are limited to part-time

work (under 30 hours a week), which takes away any health coverage at all. It also forces a turnover in a union workforce that prides itself on stability and good service, because part-time workers simply can't live at such low levels.

"Part time work is full time slavery," state Sen. Spencer Cogg's told the janitors crowded into Turner Hall, where they were also cheered by a film

about Justice for Janitors gains in Houston and Miami.

Union negotiators will focus on the health coverage gap and on better wages for a workforce that is 60% female, 70% Latino and 25% African American.

Contact organizer Dave Somerscales at Local 1's downtown office, (414) 223-0090 or somerscalesd@seiu1.org, for upcoming events and to help with the justice campaigns.



State Sen. Spencer Cogg's (above) was one of the elected officials who joined janitors and their families (below) for speeches and a video at Turner Hall before heading back out into the streets for another march.





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Doyle's command of middle sends foes over the edge

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Analysis

In personality as well as stump style, it would be hard to find two Democrats more different than Jim Doyle and Bill Clinton. Yet in terms of bile and frustrated hysteria thrown their way by the GOP, the two Democrats are a nearly perfect match.

This, mind you, is beyond the normal GOP attack machine - the sort wielded against a long-time ally on veteran concerns and conservative fiscal policy such as Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) when the former war hero dared to point out that the emperor had no clothes in Iraq policy and pressed for a change. That's standard operating procedure - demean the other guy rather than discuss the issues.

With Doyle, however, the vitriol bubbled when he served as attorney general for 12 years under a Republican governor -- and it still soaks into every decision he makes as governor, even those the GOP legislature agrees are smart.

That legislature has acceded to his central budgetary efforts and quietly let hundreds of bills go through that the governor championed. You wouldn't know it because they keep trying to embarrass him into headline-making vetoes of fringe issues -- concealed carry, excessive voter ID and a string of concerns that make for good talk show agitation but advance basic problems not a whit. All of which vetoes are greeted by doomsday rhetoric and sneers.

I think I know why Doyle has produced this Clintonesque level of bashing. Like the former president, he has co-opted them -

- proving better at administration, leaner on spending, better for business, better on health care and better on public education than they ever were over 16 years of control.

He has embarrassed them, pointing out the ruination being caused by their cuts to education and local government. He has brought in corporate seed money, modernized training, helped companies create new jobs and walked nimbly through the roadblocks thrown in his path by the opposition party. So the state has moved forward - ahead of the national average by many economic measures.

That's turned the GOP into Rumpelstiltskin, shaking in rage that Doyle solved the riddles they threw at him.

Here's a \$3.2 billion deficit we created - try and fix that, governor.

Remember those millions in tobacco money you helped set aside for health care as attorney general? We spent it.

Remember our promises to counties, cities and school districts on shared revenue? We broke those deals. Dig your way out of that.

Well, you know what? He did.

Robbed of a rainy day fund by the GOP governors and legislature, he found ways to use other revenue streams, including federal ones, and tweaked fees (which is quite different than raising income or corporate taxes).

He got what Tommy Thompson couldn't - billions more from the



Tireless in putting his agenda before influential voters, Gov. Doyle has made multiple visits to the delegate meeting of the Milwaukee County Labor Council - and in June had both construction trades workers and contractors applauding him during ceremonies at the Marquette Interchange (below right).

tribles for their casino operations.

He angered unions by cutting the state workforce, yet he pushed legislation that emphasized prevailing wage and more middle class jobs.

He didn't succumb, as the GOP certainly did, to an unworkable and unwriteable tax freeze scheme that would rob local and state government of innovation and really "freeze" in place a bad taxing structure. But he kept taxes down anyway.



It drove the opposition party into apoplexy. Worse, at least to partisan political insiders, he proved equally adept at raising money for his campaign, sometimes from the very sources the GOP used to rely on.

Now the amount of money flowing into political campaigns is shameful for all sides.

But also shameful is seeking to make a scandal out of a few thousand in contributions while the cozy chums of the Tommy Thompson regime cost the taxpayers millions in private contracting and lawsuit settlements about undue influence. From road work to welfare work, some of those chums are now languishing in prison.

Whatever Doyle's missteps, he is not even remotely the tax and spend fiend described daily on the radio shows fed by GOP "talking points" lists.

There he is characterized as in the "hip pocket" of the tribes, the teachers union and the public service unions - yet all these groups have reasons to be angry with him.

He's cut the state workforce,

made a deal on voucher school expansion and resisted interference in his and the federal government's decision process on rival Kenosha and Milwaukee casinos.

The Milwaukee County Labor Council supported Doyle on his vetoes and his tribal approach, but on other issues unions can only dream of having him in their hip pocket.

Even as conservatives exhort him, liberals think he is too moderate. As for corporate Wisconsin? Well, their leaders always think they will get more from a GOP governor (more corruption, more incompetence, for sure) but for many their heart isn't behind their money flowing into the Republican coffers. Many corporate leaders, however grudgingly, acknowledge that Doyle has been good for the business climate.

And, a truly Clintonesque moment, that enrages the GOP further. Particularly when you compare Doyle's accomplishments to the weakening they're throwing at him in November.

In the US Congress, Mark Green has been a backbencher, dutifully voting on cuts in Medicaid, student aid, and child support programs while voting for tax cuts for the wealthy, free trade agreements, tax benefits for outsourcing, against an increase in minimum wage -- in short, a record that made him Tom DeLay's most reliable unthinking ally.

Now he pretends to a moral fiber and independence he never showed. Nor does he have any experience as an administrator. Even the GOP faithful are going to find it hard to close their eyes and swallow this snake medicine.

On proven ability, there is no contest -- even if Doyle does not have that Clinton rock star popularity. What he does have is masterful ability as a bureaucratic infighter, a hard-nosed confidence in his solutions, a reputation as not a guy to cross.

In private, it turns out, he has a quick penetrating wit and genuine emotion about the needs of the people. His lifelong devotion, starting in the Peace Corps, has been to public service. Still, he's not an easy guy to get to know or to figure out. On the stump he is no spellbinder and certainly not a chick magnet. He's just very smart, very capable and very focused.

What he does believe, as Clinton often seemed to, is that government can be bent to do public good and solve domestic problems.

Doyle takes policy and government seriously. In choosing Green, the GOP clearly doesn't. They want a toady. They don't want someone who can stand up to all sides and make things better. Which Doyle has been doing in spite of the GOP control of the legislature.

They've just got to hate that.

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Doyle found audience gratitude at a recent "affordable health care" event in Milwaukee that pushed his initiatives.

Doyle's labor record explains union support

Individually and collectively, unions haven't always gotten everything they wanted from Gov. Doyle - or have been startled by the deals he made to achieve some key advances.

But on a great number of issues of importance to workers and their families, Doyle has come through time and again since 2003.

A partial rundown:

Trades Power: Blocked from deeper changes by the Republican controlled legislature, Doyle nevertheless has improved prevailing wage standards by making them part of his Grow Wisconsin economic initiative and creating Project Labor Agreements on state projects (even while President Bush barred such PLAs on federal building projects).

He also stepped in to stop the use of prison inmates in private construction and ordered more contractors to employ construction apprentices on public works projects. He thwarted deep cuts in technical education training and found money to expand labor-management partnerships in manufacturing.

Health Care: Doyle not only protected SeniorCare (prescription drug coverage) and promoted attention and access for the program, he has also moved to expand BadgerCare to virtually every noncovered child. He used his veto to stop flawed health bills that cut coverage for working families in the pretense of providing health saving accounts for the well-to-do.

Health care, Doyle said, along with public education, will be a centerpiece of his second term.

Fighting the White House: Doyle refused to give up protection of Wisconsin workers in the new free trade accords approved in D.C. and he maintained the state's rules on overtime even as the Bush administration issued weaker regulations. And while the White House dallied, Doyle moved ahead on a major energy efficiency and renewable fuels bill that reduces reliance on foreign oil and attacks greenhouse gases. He also used administra-

tive skills and negotiation to raise Wisconsin's minimum wage \$1.35 an hour above the federal mark.

Corporate Accountability: During the painful Tyson Foods strike in Jefferson, Doyle ordered state agencies to avoid that company's products. He made law a clawback provision for companies that received taxpayer assistance for new jobs and then tried to move the work out of state. He vetoed excessive limits on corporate liability for faulty products as well as an overly strict standard on punitive damages for severe injury or death on the job.

Privatization: Unions will seek further efforts, since private companies tend to be far removed from public scrutiny and have cost state taxpayers millions of wasted dollars.

But Doyle has moved Wisconsin in a better direction, using his veto pen as well as administrative rules to halt privatization of public services. He also vetoed bills that would hogtie state employees in such contracting cases by taking bargaining power away in privatization issues and overtime away from home care workers.

He also vetoed bills that would have eroded fair employment laws and weakened efforts to rehabilitate former inmates through work.

Labor 2006

From Page 1

final endorsements should be decided in time for our August newspaper and for fall Labor 2006 events.

But there's quite a bit for union members to discuss with each other on Saturday Aug. 5. And there seems little question that the side that generates the most turnout will win.

Workers have good reason to be motivated: health care, wages, jobs and competence. The union walkers should get an engaged reception.

The state AFL-CIO has divided the state into zones, and Milwaukee is Zone 1.

More volunteers are being sought for the Aug. 5 door-to-door action here, which will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. that Saturday.

Volunteers will pick up material and instructions from the Iron Workers Local 8 hall, 12034 W. Adler Lane, Milwaukee, WI 53214.

The Zone 1 coordinator is Sue Ledbetter. To contact her and be part of the effort, call (414) 526-3781, or email sledbett@aflcio.org.

Zone 1 extends to the Racine area, where there will be another walk Aug. 19 from 8 a.m. to noon, gathering at the Racine Union Hall, 1840 Sycamore Ave., Racine, WI 53406.

Get your union friends in other state regions involved as well. Here's how:

Zone 2 (Madison/Janesville) - coordinator Danica Sorensen, (608) 216-4060, email dsorens@labor2006.org.

Zone 3 (La Crosse/Eau Claire) - coordinator Miguel Morgia, (715) 410-0260, email mmorgia@labor2006.org.

Zone 4 (Green Bay/Oshkosh) - coordinator Lois Stranckmeyer, (920) 216-3827, email lstranck@labor2006.org.

All these zones have walks planned Aug. 5 and Aug. 19, with more on the way. Many have important local contests as well.



Calendar

Wednesday, July 26

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

Wednesday, August 2

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

Saturday, August 5

Labor 2006
Member to Member Walk 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.,
Iron Workers Local 8,
12034 W. Adler Lane, Milwaukee

Monday, August 15

Labor in the Pulpits
Speakers Picnic
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, August 30

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



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Union festival opens arms to immigrant worker community

Laborfest

From Page 1

more about this world of unions and what they bring to the table in character and social commitment."

Voces chief community voice, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, also noted how many unions and members had marched and spoken up during the spring rallies, the first of which on March 23 brought tens of thousands to the staging center of Laborfest, Zeidler Union Square Park at 4th and Michigan.

Cochran and Neumann-Ortiz said the Milwaukee concept was only possible because both groups have already demonstrated massive skill at discipline and organizing.

Both have worked well with city and county officials and the Milwaukee police department's community units. Both boast veterans in crowd control and events organizing. Both rely on grassroots volunteers. Both have brought disparate elements of their communities together for common purpose.

Mutual committees will spend August solving major logistical details to combine volunteers and timing, so that traditions of Laborfest will remain intact while welcoming immigrant families and issues into the endeavors. Both the MCLC and Voces will bring sponsors, bilingual publicity and financial acumen to the enterprise.

Volunteers needed

as never before

But volunteers will be needed as never before, said Cochran, who issued a challenge to all unions and affiliates to provide even more

helpers as parade and crowd marshals, grounds workers and food ticket-booth volunteers.

All kinds of volunteers are needed, but a special call is being made for bilingual expertise since both the crowd and the streams of arrival will be different than ever before.

Staging areas readjusted

The MCLC has also known for months that it had to change some traditional staging patterns around Zeidler Park for the 11 a.m. parade. The need to keep hotel entrances open has wiped out Michigan St. alongside the park as an area for the big rigs and construction vehicles so vital a part of the parade. New areas have been developed.

Cochran emphasized that this also means that all the vintage American cars and motorcycles that lead off the parade must be in position by 9:30 a.m. Marchers in the parade must assemble by 10 a.m. and pay special attention to the signs of where their locals gather, since this will also be different than in the past.

Voces will work closely with the unions on where to stream its marchers into the parade and how spectators will move from observers into Laborfest partygoers.

The basic parade route remains unchanged — east on Wisconsin Ave. from 4th St., south on Milwaukee St. and into Summerfest at Chicago Ave.

The bus union, ATU, will still have the traditional free shuttles to carry parade participants from a free Summerfest parking lot (now named Lot P) to the parade starting point from 8 a.m. on. See map on Page 12.

It is also working on a free shuttle to handle the elderly and



Long before the mass marches in Milwaukee, the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO and Voces de la Frontera have stood together on halting exploitation of any segment of the working community. Last summer, Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran (left) joined Voces organizer Christine Neumann-Ortiz at a Cathedral Park rally that decried elected officials attempting to create a divide among communities of color.

children coming directly from the South Side to the Laborfest grounds.

Food tickets will, as in the past, be sold ahead of time to locals, but MCLC is seeking more volunteers and bilingual clarity on the grounds in what is expected to be a swell of business, likely involving more vendors than in the past.

Raffle tickets already on sale

Tickets for the Harley raffle will not only be sold ahead of time and at the labor booth at the Wisconsin State Fair -- see Page 12 for details -- but will also be available during Laborfest.

The festival on the grounds

officially runs from noon (parade's end) to 5 p.m., but raffle participation, as well as food and drink ticket sales, stop at 4 p.m. Raffle winners are announced at 4:30 p.m.

Elected officials and candidates (many of whom are running in the September primary and November general election) are also being invited.

Cochran points out that all Milwaukee families are as usual invited to the event and this year will provide all of Milwaukee a special opportunity to meet a wide array of neighbors.

Music and dancing will be present as never before. See Page 12.

The Miller Stage, as this summer's festgoers already know, has been repositioned a bit south and west, facing out toward the lakefront.

Nuts and bolts of loads of attraction

WE Energies union crews will operate the bucket truck rides for charity (\$1 donation suggested) unless, as has happened in the past, they have to head South for hurricane electrical repairs.

Volunteers from the Milwaukee public school teachers union will again supervise the children's area with playground attractions, stage shows and roaming clowns and magicians.

Look for boxes throughout the

MORE LABORFEST MUSIC! SEE PAGE 12

grounds separated for children (toys and wagons) and adults (restaurant and hotel packages) to drop complete names in to qualify for the free raffles. Winners must be present at the 4:30 p.m. drawing, though presence is not required to win the Harley motorcycle and the cash prizes in the separate purchased-tickets drawing.

Some traditional offerings will get reinvigorated attention this Laborfest.

The blows suffered by the American auto industry have added special meaning to the Laborfest Cruise & Car Show and the American-made pre-1986 autos that head off the parade. These were the glory days of American car-making and there is renewed interest in their styles and longevity.

But please note some big changes in the parade assembly area and entrance that particularly affect the vintage autos. (Cars must be in place by 9:30 a.m., enter 4th St. from Wells St. and assemble north of Wisconsin Ave. on 4th).

The required early setup has also made almost mandatory pre-application (\$6 entry fee rather than \$8 on Labor Day itself). The first 100 cars signed up receive a special dash plaque and all cars in the parade will be on display during Laborfest at the north end of Summerfest (which is formally named Maier Festival Park).

Larger crowds, several newcomers and more displays are also anticipated for the Union Industry Tent, where unions highlight not only their products and services but also stock and staff informational tables.

Adult bingo will be placed in the south part of the grounds to free the Potawatomi stage for music and dancing.

Laborfest T-shirts can also be ordered in bulk with customized logos by locals. The union-made T-shirts range in price from \$8.75 to \$10.75 depending on size. They will also be available on the grounds.

And once again, Labor Day will be on the air and union members will be invited to chat with the hosts from WMCS 1290 (AM). The station will broadcast in the morning starting at 6 a.m. from the gazebo at Zeidler Park and then be on the Summerfest grounds in the afternoon.

Full-color posters of Laborfest are also available.

Delegates to the MCLC and union officers are receiving and distributing all the forms for the event, but they can also be received by calling the MCLC at (414) 771-7070, or fax to (414) 771-0509. MCLC offices are at 633 S. Hawley Rd. — enter the side door on the west side of the building.

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A grim panel of community leaders and elected officials absorbed the testimony of Superior Linen workers July 6 about working and safety conditions at the hospital and nursing home laundry. Visible left to right: State Rep. Josh Zepnick, clinic nurse Steve Ohly, Voces de la Frontera's Christine Neumann-Ortiz, State Sen. Jeff Plale, State Rep. Christine Sinicki, the Rev. Joe Jackson and businesswoman Alice Thompson.



Airing company's dirty laundry

When workers at Superior Linen plants in Cudahy and Madison rip open the huge plastic bags of laundry received from hospitals and nursing homes — the start of a process of washing, drying, ironing and return trip — out spill clothes, underpads, gowns and sheets embedded with blood, feces, human waste, floor trash and used surgical instruments. Even after going through the tunnel wash, the material can still smell of excrement as it heads to the dryer.

Loading that dryer, Carlos felt a pinprick and discovered he had been poked by a hidden hospital needle. His boss said, in effect, it's just a scratch, the clothes are clean so just keep working.

Carlos did, though the company had not completed the promised series of Hepatitis B shots. Inoculation concerns are expressed by other workers, as is the shortage of gloves and other protective supplies. They're tired of having their health concerns dismissed even as they routinely see intermingling of the supposedly clean and the definitely dirty.

Such testimony from a half dozen workers at a public forum July 6 at the Oak Creek Community Center, "leaves me numb," said the Rev. Joe Jackson, one of the panel of community leaders and elected officials gathered to learn about the underbelly of our health care system.

It's described as a badly distended belly:

- Hospital and nursing home gowns and sheets loaded into dirty carts after supposed cleaning.
- Newborn baby clothes dropped on the floor before being shipped back to the hospital.
- Workers asking for respect and concerned about quality, yet hearing both concerns dismissed.
- Pregnant workers told "rapido, rapido" instead of being given lighter duty, supervisors standing behind workers yelling at them and "treating us like animals," said Raquel Patino, a nine year veteran speaking through a translator while nursing her month old baby girl.

It was not easy to speak up in

public, Patino told the panel. Noting that her husband also worked for the company, and bringing along his testimony to be read into the record, she worried that if the company retaliated their whole family would be out of work.

Sitting next to her was proof — Silvia Serna, who has filed NLRB complaints that the company concocted warning notices and then fired her after she spoke to management about the problems and started wearing union buttons.

The NLRB is awash in other complaints — workers in Madison and Cudahy being told that their union interest would bring federal immigration raids.

Serna and other workers said Superior Linens, while never paradise at \$8.25 an hour, took a turn for the worse when new owners James Baumgartner and William Nicklas came aboard.

Now UNITE HERE is involved, helping the largely Latino workforce of 140 at the two plants get their stories out and advising workers of their rights.

The union organizing made things better, the workers said — a few safer machines, a bit more protective equipment (masks, gowns and gloves).

But union attention also sent management into a spin cycle — anti-union sessions and complaints now filed at the NLRB recording management interrogations about union activities, plus threats to close the plant if the workers organized, followed by promises of better pay if only they didn't organize.

"Who are you with? The company or the union?" one worker was told. Said another, "I had never even seen the owners



until the union got involved — and then they came in to talk to us."

Asked if the working conditions were ever monitored, one worker told the panel the company always got a phone call in advance if there was going to be an outside inspection, "and then the bosses would come in yelling for us to clean up."

Responding to the public complaints and the NLRB charges, the company in a letter has called "unfounded" the allegations of unsafe and unclean environment.

But the panel — including state representatives Josh Zepnick, Pedro Colon and Christine Sinicki and state Sen. Jeff Plale — were openly skeptical, particularly since eyewitness accounts backed up the workers. Nor were the complaints over the top. If anything they were understated hesitant remarks from private citizens thrust into a public forum.

As bad as the wages sound, or the monthly \$300 cost of company health care at such salary levels, or the imposition of overtime without advance notice, that's not what the workers focused on. It was the recontamination, the lack of respect, the faulty equipment and sketchy safety processes, the unclean laundry sent back and the pressure to get the laundry done regardless of quality or sanitary priorities.

"This sounds like Cudahy and Madison in 1915, not mod-

ern times," noted Plale.

Fellow panelist Steve Ohly, who directs community health operations at several free clinics, said, "I'm a professional nurse, yet I've poked myself with a needle, particularly when working in stressful conditions. I can only imagine this happens a lot more than workers dare to speak up about."

The panelists promised to produce a report with recommendations but they were openly contemplating what sort of steps should be involved.

Ohly volunteered to write letters to all of Superior Linens' clients (some of whom were also in the audience). The elected officials said they would contact OSHA, which has strict rules about commercial laundry procedures, as well as the state's departments of workforce development and family services.

The packed house at the Oak Creek Community Center — family, the curious and even clients of Superior Linen — was sobered as well by testimony from a series of workers, including (left to right) fired Silvia Serna and mother Raquel Patino (with translator Meredith Stewart).

Another panelist, Voces de la Frontera's Christine Neumann-Ortiz, urged the officials to investigate what public money is supporting the use of Superior Linens by nursing homes and hospitals.

Several in the audience suggested that if mothers of newborns in hospitals and families of surgical patients knew about this, the community would be quickly outraged.

The capstone of testimony was unsolicited when Peter Calil asked to speak. Introducing himself as a long-retired (since 1988) union guy, Calil said he had heard about the hearing at a restaurant.

"You see, I'm 78," Calil said. "I know the time is coming when I and my six daughters have to think about my going to a nursing home. I've accepted that."

"But now that I've heard these workers. I'm not so sure. I don't think anyone can be."

-- Dominique Paul North

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Near Coloma, Wisconsin, there is an unusual theme park covering nearly 400 acres. It sure ain't Disneyland, as one visitor pointed out. No swift monorail glides you from attraction to attraction. Instead you pile into Jeeps or jerky work trucks and climb at extreme angles over bouncy, rocky, muddy paths that can only jokingly be called roads.

When you pop out of the shrubs, every clearing holds a new test. Laid out on one practice field is an Alaskan Pipeline of hurdles -- stretches of huge tubes that apprentices learn to bend and connect. On an enormous grading range, rows of heavy equipment teach workers how to bank, rake and smooth roadbeds.

The crane runway and landing field teach how to maneuver loads as big a buster bomb, or pick up items as small as a quarter.

Two hills away, Wisconsin's Local 139 has even created a lake and parked a tugboat to teach the fine points of dredging, a setup so impressive that the International Union of Operating Engineers now uses it to train workers from across the nation.

Among the visitors who got the full tour, there were murmurs of amazement at the range of heavy equipment and the range of skills required.

There was even an itch to get in the driver's seat - and immediately a stern warning from the veteran teachers, who pointed out the costs of the tank-like treads on the various cranes and the huge tires on the excavating behemoths.

"I guarantee, you break that equipment it will be repaired and back on the job in one day, but you never will be," instructor Woody Wickersheim told one candidate who had a hot-rod gleam in his eye.

"The theme is safety, safety, safety - and after that, we get to safety," Wickersheim added. He was grinning but he meant it.

There are other unions that run tight, disciplined apprentice programs, licensed by the state, but Local 139 prides itself on the arsenal of its center and the ferocity of its standards. It also makes no bones about the hardship. Willie D. Ellis, a business rep and organizer for the union (and also president of the MCLC), had the tour group hop out of the dry trucks, don hardhats and hear instructions in the rain.

"This is the sort of weather we work in," Ellis pointed out, adding with a smile, "Even better than most days."

In all weather and seasons, an apprentice has to ride, in effect, 400 hours in the courses and equipment training at this center while reaching 6,000 hours of work to become a journeyman. They earn while they learn, starting at \$17 an hour plus benefits but moving up quickly into the \$20 plus range, and then into the \$30 journeyman status. Their training is further subsidized.

As journeymen, the rides are free, including new skills and courses to keep up with new technology and techniques, in an era when lasers and GPS are used to grade highways and anchor buildings.

The union also offers a class for graduating apprentices and established journeymen about how to be an effective mentor on the job, underlining its commitment of six journeymen for every apprentice.

"We get calls all the time from non-union contractors who want to train their workers here," said teacher Doug Stegeman. "But it's no. They have to join the union and adhere to all the requirements. Which is why our work is topnotch."

This theme park is formally known as the Wisconsin Operating Engineers Training Center, located 50 miles due west of Oshkosh. It's paid for out of union dues. Its core is not just hands-on training in the needs, skills, equipment and maintenance that underpin our state's highways, bridges, buildings and other projects. It is also candor about the requirements and rigor of the work

Local 139 has put hard effort into recruiting minorities and women. But it won't exaggerate to sell them, and it won't buckle on standards. Maybe the fork lift operators at your local warehouse store aren't certified as the rules require, but every union construction site enforces this. Maybe OSHA hasn't yet imposed certification on crane operators, but the operating engineers do, and the training is intense.

This workers' theme park also goes the extra mile to simulate reality. Every few weeks, a crew from the Carpenters union joins the crane training. The carpenters do their tasks while crane operators swing loads 30 feet over their heads. It's like live ammunition in boot camp. But that's what goes on at the Marquette Interchange - a mesh of diverse unions operating with pinpoint accuracy - so that's what goes on in Coloma.

The director of the training, Dan Sperberg, related to applicants how it was years before he made money as an operating engineer. Right now there's a construction boom and trained apprentices are in demand. But "slow patches can always come again," Sperberg warned.



One union's heavy-duty survival course



Meet the apprentices

I went to Coloma largely to learn more about Local 139's statewide efforts to add minorities to these important construction jobs. My chauffeur and tour guide was MCLC President Willie D. Ellis, who may have taken a slightly perverse delight in proving how quickly a normal training day could tire me out.

But I learned why statistics and bureaucrats don't really reflect the intense process and complexities -- and why finding and keeping good workers can be so tough, and yet so rewarding when you succeed.

On that rainy Tuesday in May, there were about 160 applicants from around the state and a dozen established apprentices already at work completing more training hours. The candidates, some encouraged by contractors to apply, others hoping for letters of acceptance to take to contractors, arrived by car and motorcycle, but 16 were bussed in from Milwaukee's Big Step pre-apprentice program. About 35 of the 160 were minorities and women. A number were military vets, apprentices from other trades or even refugees from non-union construction backgrounds.

While they were arriving they had to dodge a large rig constantly backing up and maneuvering around the parking lot as one apprentice practiced for his certified truck-driving license.

There were too many visitors to cram even into the large main hall of the new training center. (This efficient newer building has an unusual monument on the front lawn, a water pipe made out of wood and laid by workers back in 1890.) So several of the Milwaukee visitors crossed the parking lot to the old classrooms, attached to the busy garage where heavy equipment was being maintained and reconstructed.

In both buildings, the would-be apprentices were engaged in far more than filling out forms. The teachers were hitting them with hard truths and blunt answers.

As the Big Step visitors took a thorough tour of the grounds, an interesting nature-nurture dynamic was slyly evident. The men, reared on Transformers and Tonka trucks, oohed and aahed over the construction rigs they could learn to operate. The women were generally more observant and less demonstrative eyeing the huge equipment and weighing the challenge. Several teachers said they would rather have that caution as a balance to enthusiasm.

On rural road jobs, a contractor may send in some female relatives to be trained as flag persons - and when the road job ends, the women depart the union. "But these women from Milwaukee - I guarantee you they will stick," said Ellis.

I talked freely to several apprentices attending classes, all men and minorities in this case, all who found this career at least a decade after high school.

Both Johnny Bell and David Powells kicked around other Milwaukee jobs before grabbing enthusiastically onto the Local 139 program. Both always knew they had mechanical interests and a desire to build things, both never really "felt exposed to it in high school."

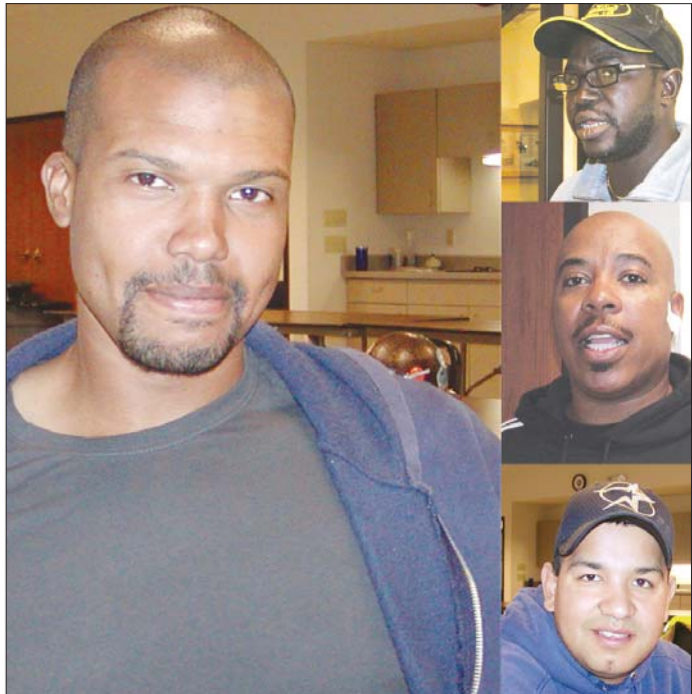
That may sound odd, since one actually attended Bradley Tech and several trades unions are committed to high school presentations (the operating engineers actually bring a crane simulator video game to career days). But it was clear, talking to both apprentices and candidates, that urban schools need to step up awareness of what construction jobs offer, and do it all the way down to middle school.

Take Javier Emons, who grew up just outside Milwaukee. His father is a union iron worker, but both Javier and his twin brother spent their early working years as low-paid landscapers. Today Javier is an operating engineer apprentice and his brother is an iron worker. "I love it," said Javier, "and I wish I had grabbed hold even earlier."

Bell said getting into unions "depends on who you know," but then revealed he had simply showed up and was readily accepted. But that "you have to know someone" attitude still infects a lot of young people. It's natural for union members to encourage relatives into the trade, but for minorities there are fewer members in the construction field to begin with, so it's a larger hurdle to make these natural candidates aware. And the unions can't gain traction on their case without knowledgeable remarks from school and community leaders.

LEFT: A field of pipelines awaits apprentices in Operating Engineers Local 139. Here's where they learn to bend and link these massive sections. AT FAR LEFT BELOW: Big Step candidates and mentors from Milwaukee scramble aboard one of the major training cranes that dot the ground. BELOW LEFT: With both apprehension and anticipation, candidates look past their teachers (including Willie D. Ellis at right) at the massive assortment of heavy machinery they would have to master. BELOW RIGHT: While all these visitors scattered throughout classrooms and across the grounds, operating engineers continued to work in an attached garage, repairing and maintaining equipment used for training and for on-the-road projects.

Stories and photos by Dominique Paul Noth, Milwaukee Labor Press



Among the Milwaukee area apprentices at Coloma were Johnny Bell (left) and (top to bottom) Mamadou Sow, David Powells and Javier Emons.

A different kind of help - and roadblocks - came Mamadou Sow's way. A Senegal native who speaks several languages, he worked in Germany before returning to Africa to serve as a guide to American tourists. Impressed by his enthusiasm and leadership abilities, the tourists encouraged him to emigrate to America. With all the right cards, papers and attitudes he got an offer for an apprenticeship.

Unfortunately, this was 2001. The security clampdown on foreigners kept him in limbo for a year. Sow is cheerfully forgiving and understanding of the delays and bureaucracy and today is clearly making up for lost time as he advances toward journeyman status.

"This is the sort of work I was meant to do and an opportunity to learn I didn't have in Africa," Sow said. Immigrants, he agreed, often have a better grasp on the power of the American dream than do the native-born.

After the candidates left, the teachers talked about what made a good apprentice, and how it was far more than physical endurance. Math, reading and leadership skills play a big part. So does mechanical inclination.

I noted that few of the apprentices came directly out of high school. "Part of it is maturity," said one instructor. "And frankly, part of it is today's high schools. I mean, I had shop class and learned early that I was interested in how machinery worked. How many kids today even have a shop class?"

"Another difference," added Ellis, "is whether they're looking for a job or for a career." "I think that's a big part of it," said Doug Stegeman. "This is a great life, but only for some. There's a reason why the pay is high, because the expectations are, the requirements are. It's not for everyone. You have to honestly lay it out, or you're doing everyone a disservice."

And ongoing costs are hidden, other teachers pointed out. Be prepared to pay for your own food, lodging and transportation -- and if the job is in the boonies, "and the contractor wants you to work seven days a week, you do it."

The teachers' tales from the trenches were about getting up early and eating on the run, committing to years upon years on the road, dropping in and out of new crews, going back to class to add skills, staying cool despite provocations on the job or when you're stuck with an unfamiliar climate and culture in an unknown community hundreds of miles from home.

Expect physically exhausting work, the candidates were told, and prepare to come back to Coloma often for more training.

After years on a road crew, noted one instructor, "you may feel in a rut or worry that your body will wear out, so then you can come back here and master something new -- like overhead cranes."

"But every job has its own physical price," chimed in Stegeman. "I don't know a crane operator who doesn't have some knee problems."

Hard honest talk. Definitely not Disneyland.

A typical theme park may measure success on how many come to visit. At Coloma, the measure is the ability and commitment of the few who survive.



To learn more about the Operating Engineers Local 139, its applications and training classes, its basic requirements and its Coloma facility, visit www.woetrainingcenter.org or contact the training center at W11584 State Hwy 21, Coloma, WI 54930, (715) 228-4911, or information@woetrainingcenter.org



While state applicants fill out forms and get the lowdown from center staff, Big Step visitors in another building (right) receive candid advice from Dan Sperberg, director of training.

Zeidler

From Page 1

with the vestiges of the Socialist clean-government heritage, and that gave him the foot soldiers he needed.

Support became universal because of how he ran the government for 12 years — not because he was a pushover. Zeidler even opposed some union initiatives of that era and he was a purist about the dangers of unions accommodating too much to industrialists.

But his open access, his devotion to workers and public welfare — in short the way his heart combined with his head — put working families behind him.

The wealthy remained suspicious and derisive. The people who worked for the wealthy trusted him. This was a split that continued most of his life.

The media is a perfect example. The reporters at City Hall never had a mayor so open and understanding of their needs but editorially both the Sentinel and Journal attacked him.

In his death, he was embraced for his principles — a focus on public welfare, helping the unfortunate, pristine clean and efficient government, fighting for peace, building bridges among ethnic and minority groups, equitable distribution of



On May 7, voice strong and full of humor in his talk, Zeidler attended — as he so often did — the Bay View Massacre ceremony honoring the 19th century fight for the eight-hour day.

wealth. All wonderful ethics, the editorialists said — except maybe for that wealth thing. Zeidler would have chuckled.

It's startling how many of the battles Zeidler fought 50 years ago remain today — the danger of privatizing public parks and services, the grab for lake water, a state legislature hostile to urban needs, an "iron ring" of suburbs

eager to gain advantage from the city's economic engine but walled off from paying for the problems their attitudes helped cause.

But actually, no other mayor — including two who admire him, John Norquist and Tom Barrett — has moved so far as he did on most issues.

Zeidler nearly doubled Milwaukee in geographical size during his tenure — annexed neighborhoods — and put Milwaukee's population at its highest level ever. He was pragmatic as well as principled. He was a detail hawk, yet articulate in distilling the essence of an issue.

The second volume of his account of his years in office (actually written in the 1960s) will be available next fall from milwaukeepublishers.com. The municipal building next to City Hall is named in his honor. Incidentally, the downtown park devoted to workers, Zeidler Union Square Park, is actually named for his brother, Carl, a Milwaukee mayor who died in World War II combat.

Carl was a quite different political fish but Frank always claimed it was name recognition that put him in office. He also credited a different time after the war that aided his push for afford-

able housing, public education, libraries, transportation, water and sewer services.

Zeidler's candor and humility always downplayed his own importance.

But history keeps elevating him. He was darn good picking administrators, running government, avoiding public debt and fighting for common welfare. There was never a breath of corruption around a Zeidler administration — perhaps because he was trying to do right, not build an empire or a political machine.

Nor did he trade on his family values. They were just there as he and Agnes raised six children and remained in the same church and the same Riverwest duplex for 60 years.

In our conversations, he actually focused on his failures. He felt it was a mistake to abandon electric trolleys. He broke through ethnic enclaves and encouraged cooperation but was deeply bothered that the Milwaukee he loved drew a line at such communal embrace with the growing African American and Hispanic populations.

Zeidler believed in human goodness inspired by intellectual rigor. He would happily argue issues, tactics and philosophy with kindness and seriousness, laced with subtle humor. With one exception I never heard him say a bad word about anyone. The exception was his successor, Henry Maier, whom he clearly felt was egocentric and a false progressive.

He was also unusual for dabbling in literature, poetry and music. He delighted in arguing both sides of the same issue, as a way to clarify thinking.

Yet he dismayed some personal fans. He clung to his Socialist credentials though the party was not a notable political force even when he was first elected. He felt he had made a commitment to its basic principles as a young man and believed his life demonstrated that you could hold these values without being a fanatic.

(It has been little noted that a mayor committed to world peace thrived in Wisconsin's McCarthy era and also created a model of urban civil defense. He did that without panicking the populace or playing the nuclear fear card.)

As day would come, Zeidler always believed, when the US would return to cooperative common good rather than demonizing political labels such as conservative, liberal or progressive.

I hope he's right. When Zeidler began his career, Wisconsin was not a national joke about dairies and beer but noted for the "Wisconsin idea," which brought together grassroots and multiple parties to focus on how progressive government could serve the people and buttress the average citizen.

The month Zeidler died, a year of planning to reclaim these progressive roots was unveiled as One Wisconsin Now — OWN, available for information and email newsletter at onewisconsinnow.org. The idea is to create think tanks and coalitions to not merely back sensitive political candidates but also to develop essential strategies around many of the issues that consumed Zeidler: safety nets for the downtrodden, fairness for workers, shrewdness on public spending, models of legislative cooperation.

Yet OWN was immediately dismissed as a new name for the "old left" or an attempt to emulate the Republicans in knee-jerk party obedience.

Our society's need for simplistic labels continues even though Zeidler's remarkable life demonstrates the value of discourse and debate to fashion better policies.

Longevity did have something to do with his growing reputation — because he never lost that amazing memory, depth of logic and feeling, and continuous curiosity about the future. Personal sadness at his passing has to be balanced with thanks that his mind never failed as his body did. It is a conclusion we all wish for.

I was particularly struck by what wasn't said in newspaper columns that noted how Zeidler simply couldn't be elected in our current political age — not photogenic, no money, driven to explain himself in full essays not soundbites, humorous but dry. In contemporary contests, he wouldn't stand a chance.

The columnists were quite right.

But an America that can't elect a Frank Zeidler is quite wrong.



As the current mayor listened, Zeidler spoke Nov. 1 at the unveiling of a new portrait in the municipal building that bears his name. Union members were among the community contributors funding the honor.

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Mild poke at Springsteen draws national media

The three dozen union members who sang folk songs and politely handed flyers to patrons June 13 outside the Bradley Center were dumfounded when this became the leafleting heard round the world.

It was 24 hours of unexpected fame. The Associated Press and other wire services fed the union unhappiness at the Bruce Springsteen concert to newspapers in New York, San Francisco and even Paris. TV stations picked up the local feed and more than 90 Internet news sites ran stories, several adding their own reporting.

Most stories carried the explanation from stagehand Paul Friday, a spokesman for the Milwaukee entertainment unions known as MASH (also including actors and musicians): "We're not really protesting anything. We just want people to know Springsteen's taking the music of a very pro-union campaign into a venue like that."

Nevertheless the headlines and TV teasers used phrases like "Springsteen being booed tonight" and "Springsteen under fire."

The media may have hyped the issue, but Springsteen's management also couldn't take the leafleting for what it was — a minnow trying to tickle a whale's conscience.

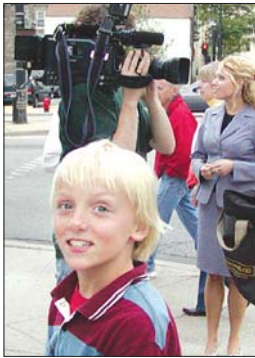
From the start the issue was subtle and then became frustrating for local unions. Members brought it forward — that Springsteen's people had booked into a facility unions have struggled to organize against executive interference. Not just the stagehands and MASH, but SEIU and other unions can recount stories in the 1980s and 1990s of management warning their workers not to organize.

Still, the local unions hardly ever protest individual artists whose people booked concerts into the Bradley (including Springsteen). The focus was on the attitudes of the management.

What was different this time? Springsteen had put the name of a civil rights classic and the name of a labor icon in the title of his tour as a selling point: "We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions."

While happy that Hurricane Katrina and other factors had stirred the working-class roots in this working-class rock star, the rank and file firmly believed the name in the title, Pete Seeger, would never have lent his reputation to such a facility in such circumstances..

So letters went off to Springsteen and Seeger, who are members in fine standing of the American Federation of Musicians, asking them to rethink this. It turns out that Springsteen was in Europe at this point. Seeger's family did bring



Too young to know Seeger, this concert fan did understand the benefit of hanging around TV cameras.



Dave Lussier (back) and Paul Friday at the MCLC delegate meeting.

a shock to Bradley patrons (it is not anyone's idea of the best place for a music concert) and certainly shocked the Arena, the Milwaukee Theatre and the Marcus performing arts center and amphitheater, all union facilities, all of which were dark the same night and all of which are masters of concert configuration.

A Bradley spokesman said it was the workers' choice not to be unionized and speculated that the good wages and good benefits at Bradley were why they resisted unionizing efforts (which apparently also came as a shock to these workers).

The story spiked in exposure and then dissipated.

While the unions were surprised at the attention, and the spin, one Springsteen insider wasn't. That insider said a big music star's entourage would be immediately suspicious that any complainer was simply trying to "make hay" off of Springsteen's reputation. The thought that Seeger's reputation was more important to some people than Springsteen's never entered the thinking.

But, as Friday said, "We didn't put Pete Seeger's name in the title."

the issue up to Springsteen's management but Seeger at 87 is pretty much retired from show business politics and his camp didn't want to step on Springsteen's decisions.

Springsteen's management didn't have a clue what the unions were upset about, even though from non-Milwaukee sources there were rumblings that Springsteen was using these folk, civil rights and labor songs for party-time music without fully buying into the still potent ramifications.

As the MASH leaders related at a meeting of the MCLC delegates, since there was no official response they had decided on the informational leafletting -- and printing out the lyrics to "We Shall Overcome" for sympathizers to sing along with Bruce.

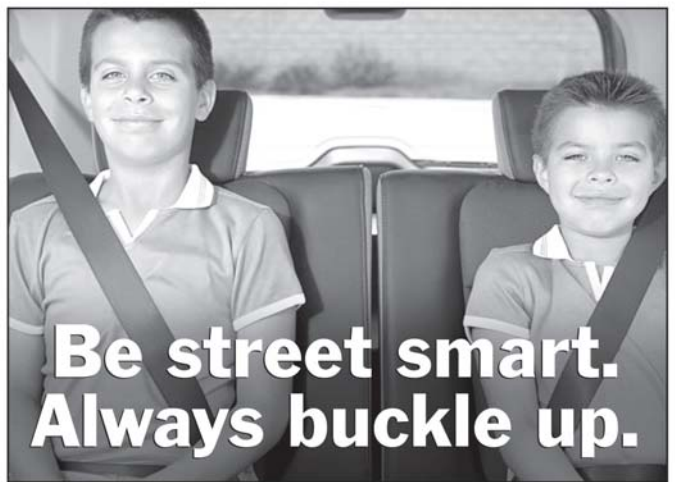
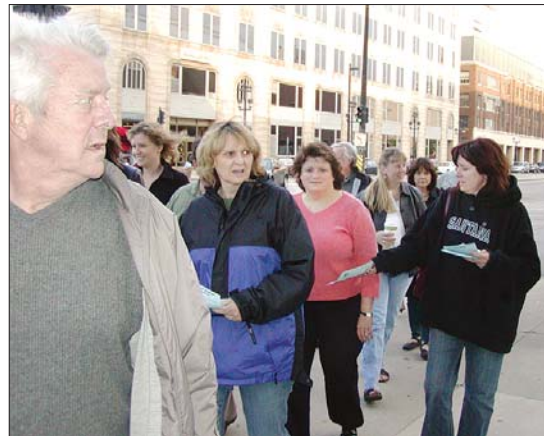
The choir of the Faith Community for Worker Justice -- see story on Page 13 -- lent their voices to the 4th and State event, and MCLC delegates helped hand out the leaflets.

For reasons no one understands, Springsteen's management, though aware weeks ahead of the issue, waited till the last minute to respond and then deferred to the Madison booker and to the Bradley Center, both of whom were quoted in the stories, though their explanations weren't checked.

The booker claimed that Springsteen's required configurations led them to the Bradley Center, which probably comes as



Bikers circled in and so did the media as the Faith Community for Worker Justice choir got airtime outside the Bradley Center July 13 over their presence at the Bruce Springsteen concert. BELOW: Theresa Valentino of Stagehands Local 18 found arriving patrons confused, in denial or quite accepting as she offered them flyers about the demonstration.



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At Laborfest, more bands will play on



A collage of images from recent performances by Resonance the union band making its mark on the Milwaukee music scene. At Laborfest, the group will take over the Potawatomi stage. BELOW: A perennial favorite, Spider George and the Web, will swing out its broad array of music on the Miller Stage.



Laborfest is thinking big, and that extends to its music - an orchestra in the parade and two big professional bands operating on two stages during the festival itself.

Two of the elements are familiar favorites, but one is brand new.

Resonance, an eight-piece jazzy band that incorporated just this year, will take over the Potawatomi Stage.

Capable of various instrumentations with trumpeter, trombone, drums, guitar, piano, drums and lead vocals from Jeff Shoemaker, the band also features alto saxophonist Jeremy Scott, who has his own CD out, "Movin' On," and is also an ordained minister. Only age 24, Scott is already a 12 year veteran of jazz and gospel.

Pianist David Brady, along with Shoemaker, bassist Nick Buendia and trumpeter Jon Thompson are the managing partners. Several of the members have been friends since high school jazz camp. They are all members of American Federations of Musicians Local 8 (as are the other music groups at Laborfest) and actually offer discounts to union sponsors.

Resonance is on its way to establishing a notable presence on the music scene -- which is the success of a Laborfest perennial, Spider George and the Web, formed back in the mid-1980s.

As regular festgoers know (or also have discovered at Summerfest, the Potawatomi casino and Festa Italiana) this large group led by George Busateri tirelessly rocks the house. It advertises that it plays everything "from Sinatra to Santana." But that's modest. With Busateri handling lead

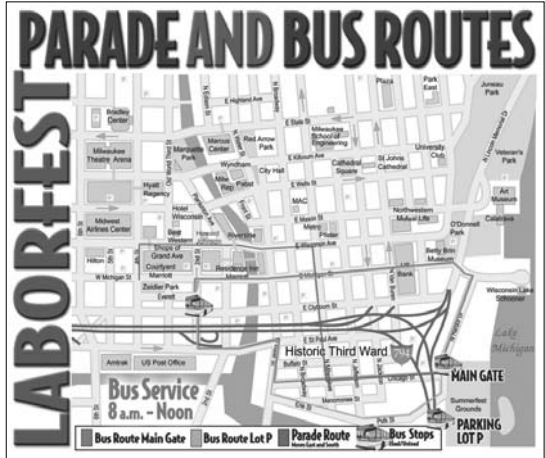


Music will again float down Wisconsin Ave. for Labor Day as the entertainment units provide a collective presence.

vocals and a mighty brass section, Spider George jumps everywhere from big band to Motown to salsa to Golden Oldies.

Back in the parade, Local 8 will collect its orchestral members

to again swing show tunes along the route. They will be part of the MASH float. MASH is the group name for union action of an aggregation of stagehands, actors and musicians.



Laborfest Harley model will show up at State Fair

Once again, organized labor is putting its best face forward - and offering the public its first opportunity to win a Harley Davidson motorcycle - at the Union Label Booth in the exhibition hall of the Wisconsin State Fair, which runs Thursday, Aug. 3, through Sunday, Aug. 13.

Staffed by labor volunteers (and often one union or local decides to handle the shifts for one day), the booth gives away free

products that are union-made in America and passes out information about the services and skills of union workers.

Locals and international unions are still being encouraged to add key rings, pens and other items to hand out to people stopping at the booth.

And stop they will. On display will be the same Harley motorcycle model that will be raffled off at the end of Laborfest

(along with eight cash prizes ranging up to \$500). It's a 2007 Harley Sportster 883 and tickets are \$3 each or two for \$5.

Union members and retirees who staff the booth from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. receive admission tickets to the state fair and work in three or 3 1/2 hour shifts.

There's still time for locals and unions to sign up for shifts, add products or a display and enjoy the opportunity to interact with fair visitors.

There's also time to help defray the \$5,500 cost of the Union Label Booth (largely fair rent and insurance). Tax-deductible contributions can be made to LaborCommunity@Work, the 401(c)3 established by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO.

To sign up or contribute, contact Robin at (414) 771-7070 or aflciorl@ameritech.net.

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Faith at work for Labor Day pulpits

On or around Labor Day, the Milwaukee metropolitan community finds more than 100 speakers from all walks of life and work speaking from the pulpits of more than 100 congregations.

Each year there is a fresh topic and the speakers are encouraged to personalize their views.

But interestingly, the topics are related to something all the major religious texts have in common — the dignity of human endeavor, the worth of work.

This annual effort known as Labor in the Pulpits works through ministers and pastors who are open to community voices (several of whom decide to deliver the message themselves). The event is built around the national holiday that honors workers but it adds an often-neg-

lected faith connection.

This year's message is something like a spinning wheel, combining related subjects that resonate not only within all religious doctrines but in all manner of current public debate.

"Jobs, Justice and Poverty" is the title, at a time when the relation between these three elements seems to deeply trouble our national conscience.

Are jobs alone the answer to society's dilemma, or do jobs that block justice lead inevitably to poverty? How should those who hold good jobs respond to those who are in poverty? (We don't all have Warren Buffet's money, but do we have some of his ethic?) What defines justice in a society that thinks mainly of jobs as the avenue to respect and material comfort?

Religious teaching does

A full list of participating congregations, times and speakers will be available on the Internet after Aug. 20. Go to www.wisafclcio.org

address all these issues, yet they are also matters of individual thinking.

The speakers are definitely individuals. They range from elected officials to immigrant workers, from skilled trades people to teachers, from union members to retirees. All faith groups will hear from their own members or trade off with others at the major services in churches, mosques and synagogues. Bilingual speakers are also available.

This is also the most public demonstration of the year-round commitment of the Faith



Joanne Ricca of the state AFL-CIO (back to camera) discusses labor topics with (from left) Jennifer Schuett, intern for UNITE HERE, faith organizers Bill Morris and David Heckenlively and religious intern Annie Lauer.

Community for Worker Justice, whose volunteer members research specific problems facing a local workforce, hold forums, speak to public officials as well as church groups and even have a choir that performs at protests

and worker and religious forums.

The faith group also employs a religious intern for the summer to help with worker concerns and organize the Labor in the Pulpits events.

This year's intern, Annie Lauer, who will be a senior in the fall at Notre Dame University, will be adding faith centers and speakers through Aug. 14.

On Aug. 15, the faith community will hold a special picnic for all the speakers, handing out supportive material and bringing in some notables from faith centers to offer advice and inspiration.

If you want to play a part — as a speaker, or adding your church, or volunteering time or money to the Faith Community — call Lauer at (414) 771-7541 or email mclclfaith@ameritech.net.

Unions are solution, not problem

By Richard A. Levins
Special to Labor Press

The process of devolving from a middle class society into a banana republic is well under way. The signs are everywhere.

Wages, even for college graduates, are falling behind inflation. The number of families in poverty is growing. The middle class debt load is off the charts and the personal savings rate is below zero.

The costs of a college education, of health insurance, of energy for heating and driving, and of pharmaceuticals grow out of reach for ever more Americans with each passing day.

What economists call the "income distribution" is, from a middle class perspective, as bad as it has been since the Great Depression. During the Roaring 20's, the split between rich and poor grew exceptionally large, leaving relatively few in the middle class. In the decades following the Depression, things began to change for the better as income and wealth became more evenly distributed.

But now we are back to where we were as the nation stood on the brink of its greatest economic catastrophe ever. The very rich are richer than ever, but the rest of us are falling behind at an increasingly rapid pace.

What caused these changes in the balance between a middle class society and neo-Feudalism? The history of labor unions in America gives an important clue.

Private-sector unionization was legislated during the Depression. Union membership grew into the mid-twentieth century, then began a slow decline that continues today. Remember the income distribution numbers: a weak middle class in the Depression, a strong middle class in the decades following,

and a weakening middle class now. The way these income distribution numbers generally track those for union activity is no coincidence.

Unions equalize power in the marketplace between those who work for a living and those who own something for a living. Those who work for a living are the stuff of which the middle class is made. Those who own something for a living fill the ranks of the very wealthy. When the balance of power is with labor unions, the gains from production stay with the middle class. When the balance shifts as it has today, the very wealthy take an ever-larger share from economic activity.

As the very wealthy become even more so, they do not spend money in the way middle class people do. After all, how many houses and cars, no matter how fine, can one have? Once people have more money than they can possibly spend on goods and services, they no longer use it in ways that stimulate the economy. Instead, they use the power their money brings to get more tax breaks, less regulation, more support for globalization, and policies that favor capital over labor. The middle class continues to weaken.

In spite of all this, we are told not to worry, because the United States is becoming what some politicians call an "ownership society." Instead of supporting unions that bring decent wages to working people, we are advised to buy shares in the corporations that profit when wages are falling. Meanwhile, we ignore the most important part of our economy -- we are a great market for goods and services.

The trouble with all strategies that trade good jobs for cheap toasters is that they eventually erode the market for the goods and services being provid-

ed. A handful of hyper-wealthy individuals along with millions of people living on the economic edge are not the sound, stable market needed for growth. Only the middle class, with buying power widely distributed, can provide that. And that is what we are losing.

Rebalancing power in the economy is essential if the middle class is to thrive. Doing this, however, will require more than our government alone can rea-

sonably be expected to deliver. We must act together in the marketplace as well. The way to do that is the way we have always done it -- to join and support the unions that built the middle class in the first place.

The author is professor emeritus of applied economics at the University of Minnesota. His book "Middle Class * Union Made" (June 2006) is available from Itasca Books at www.itscabooks.com or 1-800-901-3480.



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Robbing our rights

By JOHN SWEENEY and SHEILA COCHRAN

Editorial

The day the Milwaukee labor community staged a mock kangaroos court to explain the Bush labor board, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel also ran this as an op-ed piece received from the president of the national AFL-CIO and the secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO.

Vanishing retirement security. Rising health care costs. Gas prices north of \$3 a gallon. Workers in every industry are feeling the crunch of an increasingly harsh economy.

As if it weren't difficult enough for working families to make ends meet, the Bush-appointed National Labor Relations Board is poised to issue a series of decisions that could take away the one avenue to economic security left for America's workers: the freedom to form and join unions.

This summer, nurses, construction workers, painters, welders, electricians and others who have exercised their freedom to have a voice on the job are bracing for the latest assault on their rights. The NLRB decisions have the potential to affect workers in every industry. Rulings in three cases collectively known as "Kentucky River" could strip hundreds of thousands of workers of their union protection, while many more could be blocked from joining a union.

At the heart of the issue is an effort to reclassify many workers such as nurses as "supervisors." Unlike employees, "supervisors" do not have protected rights under federal law to form and join unions, and employers often try to classify workers as supervisors in order to deny them their right to union representation.

Any skilled or experienced worker who sometimes directs or assigns the work of those less skilled and experienced is vulnerable under a broader interpretation of "supervisor." For example, head or "charge" nurses, who direct less-experienced nurses and aides, could be deemed "supervisors" under the new rule.

The implications of losing union protection run deep. For example, if workers lose their protections as "employees" under federal law, they may be fired or otherwise disciplined for union activity. They'll lose the freedom to choose to join or remain a member of a union.

These decisions come at a critical time for America's workers. Big Business has exploited weak labor laws, and its allies in Congress and the White House have done nothing to stop it. With the current composition of the labor board, corporate America has become increasingly aggressive in its tactics to further erode workers' rights.

When faced with organizing drives, a quarter of employers fire pro-union workers, more than half threaten to close a work site if workers succeed in forming a union and three-quarters hire professional anti-worker firms to help suppress workers' will -- using both legal and illegal tactics, according to research by Kate Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University.

This labor board has been an active partner with Big Business in denying workers their freedom to form and join unions. As a body composed of presidential appointees, the board reflects the administration's priorities. And given this board's past decisions, those priorities are clear.

In the closing months of 2004, the board issued a series of decisions that stripped workers of their legal protections. In July

2004, the board ruled that graduate teaching and research assistants were not employees, making them ineligible to form a union. That September, the board targeted disabled workers by ruling that if they are receiving rehabilitative services from their employer, they are ineligible to join a union. That November, the board ruled that temp agency employees, though performing the same duties as regular employees, could not organize without both employer and agency permission.

The Bush-appointed board, unlike previous boards, has refused to allow oral arguments in any of its cases. Even the "Kentucky River" cases have not been opened up for oral arguments, despite the extraordinary importance these decisions hold for the future of America's workers.

With storm clouds gathering, workers are not about to allow their rights to be trampled without a fight. We must urge our leaders to end the gross workers' rights violations that are eroding our nation's once-powerful middle class.

In a democracy, the people have the right to be heard. With working families struggling to keep afloat in an economic climate that's becoming harsher by the day, their union protection is a beacon that helps guide them through the storm. They're not going to sit quietly while the Bush administration engages in an all-out assault on one of the far-too-few protections they have left.

Pointed humor clarifies impending NLRB disaster

ON THE COVER: Milwaukee attorneys jumped at the chance July 13 to don the wigs, robes and pompous attitudes of old-line British magistrates to debunk the Bush labor board. (From left on the cover) Maryann Robbins, Allan Freed and a comically nasty Jeffrey Sweetland ad-libbed within the MCLC skit and ruled that all the workers before their bar were using independent judgement and hence should be deemed supervisors and robbed of union protection. It was funny but, alas, not all that far-fetched.



Playing a union lawyer, Mark Sweet (who is a union lawyer) was gagged into silence by the kangaroo bailiff as he tried to defend nurse Bobby Staples. Again, funny, but not that far-fetched. Oral arguments have been denied in these NLRB cases. Inside the kangaroo was another nurse, Chris Rasch. Other union "team leaders" promptly ruled "supervisors" were IBEW's Stanthia Grier as a construction foreman and AFL-CIO field mobilizer Mike Balistriere as a custodian who ruled nothing but his keys.



Atty. Barbara Zach Quindel couldn't wait to get out of her wig and her Bush mode of thinking, much to the delight of fellow "judge" (and MCLC president) Willie D. Ellis (partly hidden at left)..

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A brass quintet from AFM Local 8 played as the skit crowd congregated in Bay View. Humor was the weapon, but the audience was sensitive to the reason for the setting -- the marker where workers were shot in the 19th century supporting basic rights at work. Today, the courts and administrative rulings are the weapon of choice, but these bullets can also be devastating.



Region choice applauded even as NLRB goes weird in D.C.

The morning after camping it up as bewigged vaudeville judges mocking the National Labor Relations Board, the same lawyers joined the throng in the federal courthouse's most beautiful courtroom to applaud the investiture of Irving Gottschalk as permanent director of the NLRB's Milwaukee-based Region 30.

The tributes were sincere — and “about time” as several speakers commented. Even the formality of the setting didn't deter outbreaks of humor and affection. In fact, Gottschalk choked up surveying the family and colleagues who traveled far to pack the swearing in by Federal District Judge Terence Evans.

Among the dignitaries were Dennis P. Walsh, who is one of the few longtime NLRB veterans on the board, and the NLRB's independent general counsel, Ronald Meisburg.

If you're confused as to why the NLRB can be mocked one day but honored for its local appointment the next, consider: The Supreme Court decision that opened the door to overly broad definition of “supervisor” came only by overturning a decision by

an NLRB regional director.

In that 5-4 Kentucky River decision, the majority view was expressed by Justice Scalia, while the minority dissent that took Scalia to task like an errant schoolboy was from the same justice who wrote the recent Hamdan decision, Justice Stevens.

The purpose of the National Labor Rights Act that the NLRB two-pronged system administers is, basically, to protect worker rights — not union rights or company rights. Its scope was weakened by the Taft-Hartley Act. Now Bush's ability to control the 3-2 majority appointments has, many observers would admit, turned it from neutral to activist-weird in supporting business views. (The board has responded to nationwide union protests with an “in your face” press release as final decisions are expected in late summer.)

The Bush control almost led to Milwaukee losing its region. Three years ago it took active complaints from unions and lawyers (plus both Wisconsin senators and Rep. David Obey) to keep Milwaukee from being folded into the Minneapolis region.

Gottschalk, a 30-year veter-

an of the NLRB noted for his steady hand and fair dealing, was serving as acting director when Region 30 was destined for disappearance.

As Meisburg pointed out at the courtroom ceremony, this is an efficient busy office of 25 people, handling 500 detailed complaints annually of unfair labor practices, deeming roughly 35% of them necessary for further action. But Milwaukee was also settling 95% of those cases without having to go through drawn-out litigation.

This efficiency along with the objections caused the Bush administration to change its mind — and once it decided to keep Region 30 it was a natural overdue conclusion to make Gottschalk permanent.

He is admired as a pro steeped in the law's sense of protection and committed to balanced, impartial investigation. Gottschalk is honor-bound to carry out the decisions of the board, but the nuts and bolts of worker complaints continue to be handled locally.

As lawyers for both companies and unions commented at the crowded reception at the Pfister Hotel afterward, “This is a man we can work with.” -- D.P.N.



A packed courtroom of union leaders, legal colleagues and family watched and applauded as Irving Gottschalk was sworn in as new NLRB Region 30 director by Federal Judge Terence Evans. Gottschalk's wife, Reesa, held the Bible.



Midwest group honors Labor Press



Editorial Assistant Lynnda Guyton receives one of five awards won by the AFL-CIO Milwaukee Labor Press for entries in the Midwest Labor Press Association annual contest. Presenting the awards at the MLPA banquet held in Grand Rapids, Michigan in June were Paul Beinhorn (left), president of the association and Michigan's state vice-president and Fred Bivens, who coordinated the weeklong conference. Lynnda is also Wisconsin's MLPA state vice-president.

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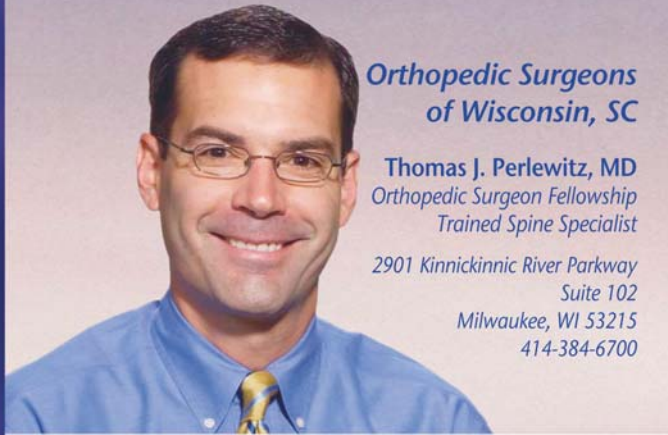
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