



Question answered, so it's Miller Time again

LEFT: What began last January with home-made signs evolved into a sophisticated multimedia campaign with federal discrimination complaints and in-your-face demonstrations. Now the 'Miller Women' as they became known have received pension assurances, ending a black eye for Milwaukee's most prominent brewery. **See Story Page 5.**

RIGHT: Milwaukee schoolchildren helped deliver dozens of boxes of hygiene and paper products to homeless shelter vans on June 7. **See Story Page 4.**



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Summit inspires a labor future

At age 61, Noel Beasley noted, there's "way less of my time as a labor leader ahead of me than behind me."

But age "has made me assess what should be the measure of success," said Beasley, an international vice president of UNITE HERE serving as keynote speaker at the June 9 summit of the Milwaukee County Labor Council.

"And that really comes down to how many future labor leaders I have helped encourage out of our ranks more than what I have done."

"That should be the way all union leaders measure their service."

But is it? As Beasley noted, without naming names, it's not how some union leaders apply the success ruler. So he framed a simple question: Is union leadership measured by personal power attained or by the collective advances of workers?

"I vote for the collective," said Beasley, "and that requires (keeping the pipeline full) and that's the most important way to measure our leaders."

Beasley nailed the central lesson of the gathering - how do you find and bring along future leaders of trade unionism, committed to the ideals of hard work and the larger need to bring "voice to the voiceless," which is how one panelist, Fred Royal Jr., UAW leader and now board member of MATC, framed his role.

So the theme -- "Pathways to Growth & Leadership" -- was neither some abstract intellectual exercise nor a primer in ego.

Summit continued Page 8



Sam Carmen embraces MCLC leaders Sheila Cochran and Annie Wacker at the crowded farewell party in his honor thrown June 13 by the teachers union he has served since the 1970s.

Carmen takes a bow

Executive guided MTEA through massive changes

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Even before he entered Cornell University at the end of the 1960s, Sam Carmen knew what he wanted to be - a union member. That's not, he admits ruefully, a professional career goal you hear many aspiring to today.

But back then, the famous college in Ithaca, NY, was sprinkled with what Carmen calls "Roosevelt refugees" - professorial thinkers and former activists who had led FDR's New Deal efforts. They quickly corrected the young man's naïve view - "I just wanted to join a union" - steered him into a bachelor's of science, labor and industrial relations degree and warned him that he would have to work up from

the bottom of the staffing in any union organization.

Carmen did. After stints with the garment workers and AFSCME, he was hired in 1979 by the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association for various staff duties. In 1986 he became chief MTEA spokesperson in contract negotiations with the Milwaukee Public Schools and in the mid-1990s was chosen as the big administrative dog -- executive director of one of Milwaukee's largest unions with four divisions (teachers, educational assistants, substitute teachers and bookkeepers).

He also completed the Kellogg Management Institute at Northwestern University, joined the board of Wisconsin Citizen Action and other community ini-

tiatives and became a central player in educational reform efforts.

Among the skills he developed, both colleagues and opponents say, were being tough while quietly genial, mixing passion with pragmatism, and proving a trustworthy partner as well as a good poker player.

When he retires at age 56 this June, he leaves a union with some 8,600 members, a quarter of them men and more than a

MTEA continued Page 6

PIC adds friction to transition

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

"Transition is a bitch, ain't it," joked the laid-off Jewel worker coming out of the HIRE Center on National Ave. in June. She had just been warned that - because of the move of workforce authority and funds from the Private Industry Council to the mayor's office July 1 - some retraining for dislocated workers was up in the air right now.

HIRE Center employees who had to pass on that news were also being told their own jobs wouldn't last through summer. Some even got layoff letters based on instructions from current PIC executives, who insisted there would be no rescue from state and federal funds.

Yet those same government sources said PIC had no authority to say that and there was indeed more money for dislocated worker programs flowing into Milwaukee. The state Department of Workforce Development (DWD) provided Labor Press with numbers confirming that. A spokesman was "confident that continuity in services will be maintained."

The confusion was mucking up what should have been an intelligent cooperative process. It often seemed that to stick it to the new team, the old team was doing out bad news, forcing the

Sykes continued Page 10

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Unionize state fair

Union-made giveaways, union donations and union volunteers are all gathered for the Union Label Booth, an annual attraction at the Wisconsin State Fair, which this summer runs August 2 through August 12.

Buy Union/Buy American is the theme but it's not the only draw. You can also buy Harley raffle tickets since the union booth is one of the first opportunities for the spanking new motorcycle raffled off at Laborfest on Sept. 3. The bike will be on display at the booth.

But the initial need is to run the booth smoothly. Willie D. Ellis, president of the Milwaukee County Labor Council and also chair of the Union Label Committee of both the MCLC and the state AFL-CIO, points out that success over the past few years has relied not just on the giveaway items generously supplied by locals and their internationals but also on cash donations.

State Fair rental costs, entry tickets and insurance are among the expenses that run the yearly bill for labor to about \$5,500. The opportunities outweigh the expense since the booth draws a lot of visitors and also promotes union campaigns and Laborfest. The Harley bike on display has always been a big attraction.

Moreover, volunteers who receive entry tickets to the fair run the booths working four shifts - 9 a.m. to noon, noon to 3:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., and 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

With one notable exception - NO STICKERS, bumper or otherwise - the booth accepts all manner of union-made items, trinkets and promotions (pencils, key tags, rulers, and so forth). Any contribution made in support of the booth is tax deductible under the MCLC's new 501(c)3 status, Labor Community@Work. To donate checks or items, or to sign up to help run the booth, call Robin Lundgren (she keeps the schedule and handles the tickets) or Ellis at (414) 771-7070. The booth also accepts some displays and campaigns from unions.

Yes, another crowded election

When Ryan McCue won April's race for Cudahy mayor, he had already determined not to do double duty (or double salary dipping) by staying on the Milwaukee County Board. His resignation propelled a summer special election to make sure voters in St. Francis, Cudahy, South Milwaukee and portions of Oak Creek had a voice as the supervisors wrestle through a budget in the fall.

Not so coincidentally, whoever wins the seat has a big leg up as an incumbent running next April. It's an important seven months on the job.

At first it looked as if 8th District voters could safely wait until Aug. 7 since only two candidates announced. But then there were three, requiring a July 10 primary.

And now there are six - all running on July 10, encompassing virtually every suburb and ranging in occupation from lawyer to landscaper to pub owner. All apparently support the county parks but it will take forums and probings to determine much more about them. The top two vote getters advance to the Aug. 7 race. As they will appear on the ballot, the candidates are Walter Kopplin III of Oak Creek, Patricia Jursik of Cudahy, Christopher Kujawa of South Milwaukee, Lee Maehl of Cudahy, Michael Rusch of St. Francis, and Ralph Lisowski of South Milwaukee.



Breakfast With Gwen

"Don't you think those sausages and eggs were worth \$2,500?" joked Rep. Gwen Moore Monday June 18 at a breakfast gathering catered by the Milwaukee County Labor Council to encourage union leaders to get their federal PAC money in by the June 30 deadline.

Moore, Milwaukee's strong voice for working families in the US House, actually got few of those breakfast goodies herself (lower right) as she regaled a crowded Yatchak Hall with tales and concerns from D.C., where she was flying back later that morning.

She's part of an aggressive House that has passed most of labor's agenda, including the Employee Free Choice Act, which as we went to press was likely to be rebuffed or stalled in the Senate, where the Democratic margin is razor thin and threats of presidential veto have blocked the House at many turns.

But not all turns, as Moore pointed out, praising Sen. Kohl for pulling off a "coup d'etat"

for keeping funding alive for SeniorCare.

Yes, five of Bush's veto threats are aimed at labor bills, but accommodations are still possible on three major areas of great centrality to union organizing, she said.

Those are health care, trade and immigration reform - "as long as we don't cater to the extremists," she said.

Moore made the gathering more about issues than campaign contributions, but changing the political future was much on her mind.

Asked why despite the House's aggressive moves forward, public polls show low ratings for Congress, Moore noted, "That has to be Iraq" and the failure of the Senate to move ahead on getting troops home and addressing the moral consequences for the US of the invasion.

Can that change? In front of the crowd, she ticked off the days Bush has left in the White House - it's heading toward 500. Enough said.



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A healthy volunteerism

There was almost no room for the audience that Thursday morning at Yatchak Hall. Twenty-four tables were packed with paper products and toiletries, most with another packed box under them. A side table dripped with donated clothes.

There was also no time to count. Obviously there were thousands of donated and purchased items, a careful division of shampoos, toothpastes, toilet paper, mouthwashes and more to equitably serve the needs of the families protected within 24 homeless shelters. There were even some fancy health cosmetics nestled in the supplies.

Just how much in gifts, or how much in money, had been contributed to keep Milwaukee's shelters afloat - well, no one was sure in the mad dash to the finish line.

Speakers and an audience of nearly 100 adults and children were still able to crunch into the



front quarter of the assembly hall June 7. After the ceremony all turned into volunteers to help cart the supplies out to the wait-

ing vans that filled the parking lot.

It was quite a finale to the annual Health & Hygiene Drive of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO. The reward was that months of needs had been filled by the months of collecting, buying, sorting and packing -- not just by organized labor members and leaders but by public school children.

The weeks of prelude were as interesting as the final ceremony. At any given hour before June 7, you could peek into Yatchak Hall and find a lone

Packed in almost as tightly as they had packed the health and hygiene cartons, the finale audience enjoyed Annie Wacker's genuine surprise (at left) when Lois O'Keefe, on behalf of Rep. Gwen Moore, presented her with a congressional citation.



labor leader at work checking off items and filling boxes carefully. Or a group of rank and filers bringing in and then helping label and arrange tables upon tables of gifts.

You would find sixth and seventh grade students and their teachers on field trips from a variety of schools helping to arrange the products.

You would see cartons and shopping bags of donated goods crowding the entrance to the labor council offices or stacked in hallways at 633 S. Hawley Rd. These were from union people who had bought extra items on their own or joined in a local's own drive or special event.

You would find Teamsters from Local 200 delivering the results of shopping at union supermarkets, which the AFL-CIO Community Services used to fill gaps in the supplies.

At the ceremony, one of the leaders of the United Way community campaign, Bucyrus International CEO Tim Sullivan, spoke of the meaning of this project, now in its 18th year. It has reduced the expenditure of the homeless shelters through volunteer and charitable completion of their health and hygiene needs.

Representatives from MPS

who had long been involved also spoke, including Aquine Jackson and coordinator Sue Saller.

But Sullivan was even more impressed by the turnout of the children and the sense of young volunteerism they represented.

Three of the students spoke - Alysse Conerton of Mitchell School, Jordyn Favre of River Trail School and Rashida Backer of the Milwaukee Sign Language School - and all described involvement as a transforming experience. They had grown in awareness of the underside of the community - of children and families that had even less than they did - but they had also discovered how at a young age they could provide practical help.

The chief organizer for the drive, Annie Wacker, an AFL-CIO field mobilizer as well as vice president of the MCLC, thanked everyone -- the children, the volunteers, even the custodians who helped move the products -- and then had the tables turned on her in a surprise arranged in part by MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran..

Representing Rep. Gwen Moore, Lois O'Keefe presented Wacker with a congressional citation for her work in leading the campaign.

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Finally! Miller satisfies its union women

The ornamentation the "Miller Women" had been wearing -- a necklace dangling a giant metal screw -- has been laid to rest. So have two amusing YouTube videos poking fun at the Miller Brewery management from South Africa Breweries. Departing as well is the web site that allowed hundreds of sympathizers to choose by gender which homemade signs to carry in a "virtual picket" outside Miller corporate headquarters.

All that ended May 31 when the members of Local 35 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) ratified what, by Labor Press' count, was the company's fourth "absolutely final offer." It was a culmination over months of a series of ever disintegrating corporate stances that more than anything spoke to the effectiveness of the union campaign combining humor and outrage over the gender-insensitive behavior toward an older, largely female clerical staff.

Call it face-saving, call it compromise, but what finally emerged from Miller was a five year contract retroactive to 2006, a three-year delay in its pension freeze, a sizeable multiplier in the final years of the pension and a sizeable increase even for pension members when the company converts to 401(k) retirement plans for everyone in 2010.

The deal "keeps whole our largely older and mainly women members," noted Local 35's business manager, Judy Burnick, whose bargaining team was thrashing out the final details only hours ahead of the vote. The deal was ratified 65-6.

Of all the unions at Miller, only Local 35 was predominantly women - and older women at that, counting on their negotiated

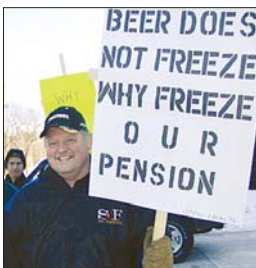
benefits to plan for retirement without being a burden to their families. Its 118 members average 53 in age and 20 years of service.

Yet only Local 35 faced an immediate pension freeze demand from Miller management. To borrow an old tobacco slogan, these women proved they would rather fight than quit, and fellow unions, even those male dominated ones, absolutely agreed and joined a series of innovative and constant picket actions to embarrass the top management.

The Miller Women were legally as well as Internet savvy. Individually and as a union, the mothers and grandmothers of Local 35 filed discrimination complaints and went on news shows excoriating management for deliberately targeting their retirement expectations.

Public officials, from Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton to Rep. Gwen Moore, encouraged the brewery to return to its worker friendly image and recognize how, to paraphrase their polite language, the management was looking like male chauvinistic jerks.

The union even offered a low-cost out - joining the existing machinists' pension plan - but



Catchy signs and even YouTube videos marked the months of effort to get a better contract.



Judy Burnick, business manager for OPEIU Local 35, came directly to the June MCLC delegate meeting to announce the ratification and to thank the dozens of unions that marched with the Miller workers.

Miller refused even though its image was taking a national hit. Instead it started putting forward new "absolutely final" offers.

The ratified deal reflected major concessions by the brewery and some concessions from the union. It runs through April 30 of 2011 with 8% wage raises and substantial increases in merit pay over its life.

Millions of dollars more for members was pledged in delaying the pension freeze until the end of 2009 while increasing the multiplier in pension contributions by nearly 20%, from \$59 to \$70 a year. That translates into substantial pension increases for current employees.

The company will contribute \$2.25 per hour into a 401 (k) plan for new employees effective immediately.

When the pension plan freezes at the end of 2009, the company will pay \$2.70 per hour (\$5,616 per year) into the 401(k) plan for every employee, including those who have the pension.

Other agreements in the contract provide increases in life insurance and accident and sickness benefits, new health care options with caps on deductibles, and several improvements in early retirement provisions. For the company this reduction of retirement age raises the likelihood of more workers taking early retirement, with guaranteed retiree health coverage until at least 2011.

For the union, "we achieved

our major objective, which was to protect the pensions of our members," said Burnick. "We also obtained a substantial defined employer contribution plan for future employees who will not have a pension."

Union members admit they are still disturbed that they ever had to go through such lengths to get a foreign-owned company to recognize the basic injustice, but they also said from early on they expected to give up some desires to keep the retirement income earned in decades of service.

Noted Burnick, "We didn't get everything we wanted but we are certainly a hell of a lot better off now than we were with management's so-called 'final offer.'"

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MTEA

From Page 1

third minorities.

He recalls how he took over as executive director in "a triple witching hour."

The MTEA had just affiliated for strength with the WEAC/NEA (state and national teacher associations). It was dealing with Republican control in Madison, Gov. Tommy Thompson and the mandated QEO, which allowed the soaring costs of benefits to wipe away living gains for state teachers. Simply put, the QEO imposed an economic percentage cap in contract negotiations that allowed school districts to handle benefit increases while leaving crumbs, if that, in actual wage increases.

The Milwaukee schools were coming to the end of the troubled reign of Superintendent Howard Fuller. "People forget how much support he originally had from teachers because of his reputation as a progressive and a civil rights leader," recalls Carmen, "but from the first contract talks he went to the dark side."

(Fuller pushed voucher schools and other privatization efforts while blasting the union for its standards, then picked up his marbles and resigned when union-supporters were elected to the school board. But he didn't go home. He continued to push voucher schools, which today are back in the budget spotlight for



The hundreds of well-wishers moving through Villa Filomena on Marshall St. June 13 reflected the diverse paths Sam Carmen (left) has negotiated as executive director of the MTEA. Above he was greeted by both colleague and occasional adversary, MPS Superintendent William Andrekopoulos. Grabbing him for a chat (above right) was Democratic Party leader Linda Honold while Rep. Jon Richards awaited his turn. **More Photos opposite page.**

how much they do take away from the MPS and cost Milwaukee property tax payers. The state formula leaves Milwaukee property tax payers absorbing \$2,950 for every voucher student - 18,500 of them -- compared with only about \$2,000 for every MPS student.)

The inheritance of all that, Carmen recalls, were tougher contract negotiations than ever and a media trend to "blame organized labor" for entrenched and expanding social and poverty ailments within the community.

The union teachers were expected to be everything - cop, nurses, babysitters, social work-

ers and educators - and faulted for not curing everything.

"Even today," Carmen noted with more sadness than anger, "there is proclivity on the part of mainstream media to blame organized labor -- they have made a conscious decision to remain uninformed."

Looking back, Carmen said, "We tried to do a hard sell that we always thought was principled. Our fight for health care benefits, we always felt, was what workers in the private sector should also expect. We said, 'Look, this is what you should have, too.' But since they didn't, they reacted emotionally to what we wanted them as taxpayers to support."

The union may not have surmounted that psychological hurdle, but Carmen helped lead from 1993 on a veritable "transformation within the union."

"It was a dramatic shift," Carmen said, that now builds reform agendas and teacher improvement projects into every discussion, contractual and otherwise.

It was not, Carmen said, "politically motivated but an effort to engage with the school administration, post-Howard, in member driven initiatives aimed at real school reform."

"Finally we could move our focus beyond the narrow role of wages, hours and working conditions. Almost every gain or initiative we are involved in today webs off that original decision to



use our professional knowledge in cooperation with the administration, the business community and a host of community partners."

That underlies the much discussed current alliance of the school board, administration, business community and union to develop economic and education improvements for the MPS. As the problems of urban education grow nationwide, it is the sophistication and professional standards pushed by union teachers that reflect the nimbleness needed, not just handing off kids to the person sitting next to you in the church pew.

The insistence on breaking out of the box that managers like to put unions in - only interested in wages and dues - also brought unity among the teachers who had long felt they had a much larger role to play as a union in improving schools.

Carmen points to one result, the Milwaukee Partnership Academy, "which I think will be around for decades in a leadership role."

MPA works closely with UWM and labor, education and business groups on comprehensive teaching and learning prototypes from kindergarten through educational bachelor degree (K-16) to create a seamless urban response to needs and techniques in quality teaching and learning.

That's quite a mouthful, but Carmen puts it succinctly. "Look, one of the most admirable things about the trades and their unions is their apprenticeship programs and constant learning efforts. They take responsibility for the next generation of experts in crafts."

"As a teachers' union, we have to do the same."

"That is why you now see built into our contract negotiations such things as teacher assistance and mentoring programs. I think some segments of the busi-

ness community, who are not happy about dealing with organized labor, may continue to beat us up, but a lot of other groups are finally getting it and seeing that this emphasis on quality, preparation and high standards is exactly what our society needs."

MTEA's elected union president, Dennis Oulahan, has already announced Carmen's replacement, to take over in July - Tom Morgan, who once taught in the MPS system and for the past 18 years has led the teachers' union in Rockford, Illinois.

Carmen has no hesitation in identifying the major issues Morgan and his union face.

"It's absolutely intolerable the way that schools are funded in this state," said Carmen, "the inexorable shift of resources away from people who have needs."

Under the current system, said Carmen, "the poorer you are, the more disadvantaged you become. Fourteen years ago with QEO, it was inevitable that Milwaukee would be the most affected." But the problems are deeper than that. There is inequity and imbalance in not just the funding but the measures of needs and experience.

"Some say voucher systems are good," notes Carmen, "But really, we just don't know, do we?" Even today, the voucher schools don't have to meet the same testing measures, access to all and training levels required of MPS. "We have a system where \$100 million a year in (voucher) education is unaccountable," said Carmen, and he and others outline a tax system that doesn't meet the realities of where the resources should go and how best to pay for them.

"This is what breaks my heart," he said.

Carmen will take some time off to relax, read and enjoy his family, but look for him to continue to be involved in school reform - and, starting in February, "regime change at the White House."

He didn't reveal the preference of who he would work actively for by then, "but isn't it nice to have a number of progressive presidential candidates to choose from?" Those Roosevelt refugees of yore would be grateful to know he is not talking about the GOP field.

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Cochran saluted by NAACP

Sheila D. Cochran was sidetracked in early June with news of an honor she had not anticipated. The NAACP informed the secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, that she will be presented the prestigious "Keeper of the Flame" award at the group's national convention in Detroit July 7-12.

The award, associated with Benjamin Hooks, the NAACP's executive leader from 1977 to 1992, will be presented to Cochran on July 11 at the annual labor luncheon - likely to be an even more mammoth gathering in Detroit than it was two summers previous in Milwaukee, where the luncheon overflowed the Pfister Hotel's Grand Ballroom.

In 2005, when Milwaukee was the host city for the convention, Cochran gave an impromptu speech at that luncheon criticizing some of the NAACP's sponsorship practices and the "made in China" tokens presented to union participants. Absorbing her remarks were NAACP leaders, including Julian Bond and the retired Hooks.

Several NAACP leaders noted it was criticism they needed to hear. And apparently, other key players in Milwaukee and national NAACP circles nomi-

nated her this year for her work as a lifelong community activist for union causes and minority rights.

The "Keeper of the Flame" honor selectively goes to officers of NAACP branches, elected officials and civic activists.

A few notable national union names have also received the tribute - such as Clayola Brown, an AFL-CIO international vice president and currently president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI).

Cochran has been a member of the NAACP most of her adult life, but in Milwaukee she is best known for her union leadership roles (in her home union, the UAW, and then as chief operating officer for the MCLC) and as a former member of the MATC board, an appointee to governor panels on wage and workforce issues, as a monitor of voter rights and as the

current board president for Wisconsin Citizen Action.

Detroit will host a very busy NAACP 98th convention, centered at the COBO Hall Convention Center, expected to draw 8,000 attendees and built around the theme of "Power Beyond Measure."

Forums for presidential candidates from both major parties are being planned. A "Funeral for the N-Word" will be held by religious leaders.

Planned speakers include Rep. John Conyers, Detroit Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick, Methodist Bishop Philip Robert Cousin Sr. and even Homeland Security czar Michael Chertoff.

Entertainers include the Temptations, the Spinners, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas and Patti LaBelle.

Full information on the convention can be found at www.naacp.org.



Notable community, education and union leaders swirled around the patio at Carmen's farewell party. Visible above is Robert Kraig (center), once state political director for SEIU now active in Citizen Action of Wisconsin. **Below:** The state superintendent of public instruction, Elizabeth Burmaster, and the chairman of the MPS board, Peter Blewett, chatted with Bama Brown-Grice (center), who made a valiant grassroots run against big money last April for the at-large seat on the MPS board.



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Summit

From Page 1

strokes. This was a people about people summit. Process and opportunities were available through the participation of constituency groups, but what dominated were stories, human and basic, compressed into four hours on a Saturday, bracketed by breakfast and lunch.

The 5th annual African American Labor and Community Summit turned out to be a series of personal journeys, recounted in anecdotes, summed up in hard-won lessons.

"On your own you can do nothing, and they want us to do nothing," noted Lauro Bonilla, president of UW Local 1103 which faced frequent Tramont efforts to drive wedges between its African American and Latino members. But Tramont failed, the workers hung together and the local recently won a good contract protecting both basic worker rights and benefits.

"The management will always tell you all the union



Noel Beasley (right) and Sam Gallo of UNITE HERE

wants is dues," noted Grace Maizenette, a two-decade veteran of UAW Local 469 at Master Lock and an activist in LCLAA. "But the union is my family, and it is the union that allows me to have dignity. Just because we work hard and faithfully does not mean the company can think they own us - this is the strength of unions for the working class."

New members with high hopes, retired members who built the paths, emerging leaders, established leaders - all partici-

pated. All had different stories - one of the laborers joined the union at age 18, another had to overcome prison and drug addiction -- all were proud of what they were adding to society and their own self-worth, and all were wary that unions and society could quickly backslide on diversity and social gains.

In fact, Beasley was hardly alone. Other established leaders present universally worried that "we can't just be praised as figureheads but judged on whether we are bringing many, many others along," noted Sheila D. Cochran, the organizer of the summit and chief operation officer for the MCLC.

Cochran may be told it is an honor to be Wisconsin's highest-ranking black female labor leader, but she made it clear that she would be more comforted if this didn't strike observers as unusual.

National labor federations have also become aware and aggressive of late that they have

to open more leadership roles for people of color and women, who represent the major growth opportunities and the major needs of the union community.

Other veteran black women leaders reflected the same message. Paula Dorsey, president of AFSCME District Council 48, a longtime president of her local and an acknowledged leader on political campaigning, said nothing gave her joy as much as "bringing two young leaders, in their 20s," into union activity.

And nothing distresses her more, she said, when unions emerge in the public eye only when "we have to defend our bad members" to protect the rights of good workers.

"We know the people who are slipping up and we have to call them out to straighten up," said Dorsey.

Martha Love, now known as a Democratic Party leader, entered county AFSCME ranks more than 30 years ago as a welfare recipient and rose through union positions to community prominence. Today she runs her own consultant business ("I still can't believe anyone wants to consult with me," laughed Love) but



Grace Maizenette and Alicia Treadwell



Paula Dorsey of AFSCME

nothing makes her angrier than people who assume she's "forgotten where I came from."

Pointing out others in the room who helped her journey, Love said "You can't come up this way through union ranks and ever forget or abandon those realities, and that is the strength of our roots."

Mary Jo Avery recalled that when she joined her CWA union, "no one else looked like me" - a black African American women. Now retired, now a member of the MCLC executive council and president of the Milwaukee APRI after serving leadership roles in her local, her big worry is the other minorities at CWA and similar unions. Attacks on minorities, the usually cheerful Avery admits, bring out the bulldog in her. "Don't let them beat you down, because they will try," she warned.

Newer labor leaders, actually the center of the conference, shared the concerns of the old-timers. Alicia Treadwell, now treasurer for Local 150 of SEIU, has been around from the start of the organizing campaign for home care workers, back-breaking work that is largely invisible to the community.

"I refuse to be invisible," said Treadwell, amusing the audience with tales of how everywhere public officials turned during hearings, they would see her and fellow home care workers, who are dependent on public officials for unionizing efforts and wage scales.

If home care workers don't show up every day, the elderly and infirm get sicker and even



Panelists Jose Galvan and Mary Jo Avery



After his panel, UE's Lauro Bonilla (red) joins the table where simultaneous Spanish translation was available.

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Terror? What terror?

"You have to always remember how many shoulders you stand on," noted William Earl Johnson, who to many in attendance is one set of those shoulders.

Now retired, he was the first African American business manager for Local 113, and he also drew the summit's biggest laughter when he explained in an aside why the 9/11 attacks didn't propel him to a new fear of terrorism.

"I was not freshly distressed," Johnson explained. "I grew up in the 1930s and 1940s in Alabama."

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die. Yet the value of this work is taken for granted by society and the courts.

For evidence, see Page 11 for the consequences of a power Congress granted in the 1970s, when no one envisioned as anti-worker a labor secretary as Elaine Chao.

"So we can't be shy, and I'm definitely not," said Treadwell. She recalls how fellow labor and religious leaders, particularly MICA, helped support the campaign, but how so much of it relied on being present and speaking out. "Stay on the battlefield -- that gets things done," said Treadwell. "I have an attitude. I'm the big dog and I like to bark."

John Swan, the soft-spoken Local 113 laborer who began at age 18 and 11 years later helps coordinate groups of workers, credits his union membership and lessons in minority activism for helping him fulfill the American dream of family and comfortable income, but he's not resting. Looking around the Laborers Union Hall, where the summit took place, he cites one of his future goals as "running the place," which brought a grin from his mentor who does run around keeping the hall humming. Nacarci Feaster, secretary-treasurer of Local 113 and also an MCLC board member.

Cynthia Roberson has another goal. A two year apprentice in Operating Engineers Local 139, she is working with WRTP and her church to start a Women in Trades group to get more women to understand and value advancement in construction and related skills.

WRTP was also key for Minnie Joy, who came out of prison and drug addiction and heard about the MTrans program in 2005. She passed the training and has advanced quickly in the laborers union.

"I've learned to show up for work every day, to do the best I can and to value myself every single day and lead my family," said Joy. "My friends always tell



Main panelists (from left) Minnie Joy, Cynthia Roberson and Fred Royal

me about the things they have put up with at their jobs, but I have to tell you. The bosses don't try that with us because we have a union. I thank God every day not just for the wages but for the motivation."

"I'm not a union leader," added Joy, though her story inspires all who hear it. "But I think I'm getting ready."

Jose Galvan is a union leader, though he recalls that as a younger man his instinct when facing problems was to "thrown down."

Today he negotiates and solves problems as president of the Milwaukee chapter of LCLAA, which provided simultaneous Spanish language translation for members of the audience.

Galvan, who admits it sometimes bothers him that today he "thinks in English" while staying in contact with his Spanish heritage, also noted: "In unions, the only way to advance is by respecting the commonality of people and the value of hard work and families."

Union as a journey out of

poverty and into dignity was also much in the memory of Diane Wagner, a 30-year veteran of IBEW Local 2150.

When she started, she recalled, she would stand at the bus stop looking like she belonged and delighted when someone in a car would pull up and say, "Do you want a ride to work?"

"I didn't have money for the bus," Wagner admitted. "I was waiting for that ride." What she has learned in three decades is "keeping the faith" and fighting for union diversity from the inside, through election victories and losses.

That is also the three-decade experience of Bobbi Webber, who recalls the pain when his union publicly supported keeping minorities out of the firefighters and when its first meetings were in the South Side enclaves that he had marched with Father Groppi to open up. "You wouldn't believe how often I heard the N-word at those meetings," said Webber.

Yet Webber persevered and fought from the inside. Today he

is the first African American to lead Milwaukee Local 215, International Association of Fire Fighters. He is also chairman of the MATC board.

Summing up the collective wisdom from the various panels he moderated, AFL-CIO field mobilizer Jay Reinke noted how often it came down to "Showing up and standing up."

But there were variations.

Beasley and other speakers

also noted that unions had to be more flexible about standing up. Not every worker can enter a labor monastery and devote their entire lives to the cause, but all unions should be open to identifying member gifts and member constraints, to respect not criticize "those who do what they can."

Beasley brought chuckles of empathy when he recalled how he was so zealous about his labor work that he expected to come home and find "all my belongings piled on the lawn." His family didn't throw him out, but his point was apt.

"If a member can spare four hours a month for a phone bank, bless him and embrace him," said Beasley.

Constituent groups participating in the summit included the APRI (A. Philip Randolph Institute), LCLAA (Labor Council for Latin American Advancement), CBTU (Coalition of Black Trade Unionists), CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women), ARA (Alliance for Retired Americans) and AFRAM (SEIU).

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Sykes

From Page 1

new team to handle the resulting panic.

The situation was not helped when PIC CEO Gerard Randall assured all who asked in radio interviews that his organization would continue to be around and active — without delineating what its future role would be.

To this point, PIC's main purpose has been dispersal of federal workforce money and oversight of workforce buildings.

What Randall did not state in interviews was that all this goes away July 1.

The new power is actually Donald Sykes, appointed by Mayor Tom Barrett to head the Workforce Development Board for Milwaukee County, working

in close cooperation with six surrounding counties. The new conduit has been approved by Gov. Doyle and all relevant state entities, as well as by the US Department of Labor.

Sykes assembled a transition team drawn from the top of labor, business and education organizations, including corporate CEOs, and those participants in turn have assigned their own experts to work with Sykes.

But acting as the current workforce board until July 1, PIC has already outlined the entire fiscal 2008 budget (July 2007 through June 2008) while imposing its own numbers and continuing to pay — or not — for existing programs and employees.

It has even budgeted partial salaries for the next year for its own key executives, confirming

its intentions to remain involved certainly through the summer.

Advance discussion between PIC and the mayor's office has been haphazard or confusing, with PIC insisting on its own centrality while the mayor's people worked behind the scenes.

"That (PIC) budget is just an investigative document," said Sykes in a Labor Press interview June 14. "It's certainly not cast in stone, but the last thing we want to do is jump too quick."

What that means is that there is a new omelet in town but the cooking process and which eggs will be broken will last past July 1.

"One complaint I've constantly gotten is that the people submitting proposals haven't felt involved," said Sykes, "so I'm taking the next several months to talk to all of them, to assure them that services are in place and to let them know that we are interested in what they want to accomplish, so they feel invested in the process."

"There will be changes," Sykes added, pointing out that beyond retaining the successful existing services there is a mandate to develop new ones.

"Realistically it will take several months to change things for the better and make sure everyone gets their say," said Sykes.

"We're keeping the good stuff in place but we're looking to expand way beyond that, too. With stuff that is too close, like summer youth jobs, we're staying with what's agreed, but everything else — well, it will be different."

Sykes points out that the rules are complicated. For instance, the mayor's transition board is just that. The city will have to create a new Workforce Development Board to meet fed-

eral regulations. The state has an oversight role as well, even while Sykes and the mayor are aggressively pursuing private as well as government funding sources — something PIC had trouble doing.

It's not just the technicalities within funding rules that are dauntingly complex. So are the processes in a transition where "PIC's name is on everything," said one labor member of the transition group.

Now or can Sykes' team simply move in where PIC was. PIC signage is everywhere, and the mayor's office is constantly uncovering programs and organizations listing PIC, not the Workforce Development Board, as the key player.

For instance the PIC building at 27th and North Ave. is a likely site to establish new offices and training satellites, particularly given its large and largely vacant youth center. But the building is actually owned by an LLC (limited liability company) bearing Randall's name and underwritten in mortgage guarantees from the county and state.

One idea within the Sykes team would retain HIRE Center service on the South Side but expand its executive offices and some training opportunities to 27th & North. But mortgages and leasing deals? No one wants to take over that.

Another issue is technology. The city has a capable IT division and the ability to establish job training services for home computers as well as in person. That could provide cost savings, a professional veneer and notable modernity for workforce development. But even that requires bringing together a complicated, diffused fiefdom of PIC servers and self-promotion.

To this point, reflecting the preference of Barrett to walk gently into conflict and talk things through, Sykes has preferred geniality behind the scenes — "That's my instinct as well," he chuckled — to solve problems and to reassure those involved that, within months, all should be clarified.

The continuing efforts of PIC to impose its own rules and faces well past July 1 have led to a fast-fade in the original hope for a seamless handover of services and buildings. It may also turn the mayor's office aggressive, where it had previously shrugged off the problems and behavior as hiccups.

Many sources at the state, federal and city levels were not ready to speak on the record but were distressed at the fragmented information that has leaked out from PIC's leaders. They said the information was wrong or incomplete.

PIC shut off program funding months ago saying it was out of money, despite the requirement to budget through the end of June. The state auditors are working with the city to under-

stand how this empty purse can be. The analysts want to make sure that money intended, for instance, for dislocated worker programs hasn't been siphoned off for other adult and youth programs or in management fees and salaries.

Since PIC was the workforce development board it was asked to lay out expectations for the new fiscal year as a working document — though it was warned to not initiate new programs or cut approved ones.

PIC's outline cut its own staff but also continued partial salaries for several key executives in workforce programs it is losing control of. Its executive vice president, David Wilson, told the HIRE Center it was unavoidable that HIRE would lose a fourth of its workforce starting in July — two eliminated PIC

positions (job coordinator and program assistant), two and a half out of the



Donald Sykes

LETC (the case manager program provided by the AFL-CIO) and one and a half out of Job Services, another HIRE consortium partner.

Some of those jobs may reflect retirements but they are not listed as being replaced even as HIRE's budget writers believe they have convinced the feds and the state DWD (which has discretionary funds) to provide more dollars because of more company closings.

"I asked but was told there was no more DWD money to help avoid this," said Alba Balthodano, director of HIRE, in an interview.

But the DWD disagrees, offering verification that hundreds of thousands of dollars more were heading for HIRE programs.

Sykes, working with the state on audit and process, has indicated similar concerns about the money trail.

While transition announcements could be made in July, the actual shape of the transition and the money may take months longer to become clear. While still short on details, the new workforce development powers are urging the community not to believe all it's been hearing. They expect more money and better use of existing money to become obvious by the fall.

Many hope that a Memorandum of Understanding that the PIC board was supposed to approve after we went to press would clarify the process of debts, obligations and money PIC took in hand for the city.

"We'll lock some transitional stuff in by July," said Sykes, "but in the fall we want to line up an exciting year of changes."

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OT for home care? Not in this regime

About a week after a closely split decision allowing female pay discrimination, the Supreme Court turned unanimous. Liberals and conservatives upheld the Labor Department's right to wield an old labor regulation. Only in this case the department used it to deny overtime pay to some one million home care workers.

This is a rule that the executive branch could fix if it wanted to, noted AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

The decision, written by a usually liberal member of the court, agreed that a 1975 regulation exempting home care workers paid by third parties from minimum-wage and maximum-hour rules was a valid exercise

of the power given to the Labor Department by Congress.

The ruling has some complicated wrinkles, and may have been affected by lobbying from home care companies that feared billions in retroactive pay issues should the Supreme Court uphold a federal appeals court that attacked the resolution.

That appeals court has seen justice in the claim of a 73-year-old Jamaican retiree who brought the case against the Long Island Care at Home, a private company.

The high court decision indicated it simply upheld the existing rule, though back in 1975 the Labor Department was envisioned as responsible to worker issues, a situation that seems to have changed.

Moreover, there has been a sea change in so-called "companionship services" for the elderly and infirm, and it is a change that will get more intense as 70 million baby boomers are on the verge of retirement. Keeping the elderly in their own homes with trained help has emerged since 1975 as a major social boon for the country, as well as a thriving business for corporations.

"It's a sad reminder that the Department of Labor's wage and hour regulations are hopelessly outdated to deal with a service economy," said Sweeney.

"Decent homecare services are crucial and expensive, yet transferring the social cost to the backs of the poor, underpaid domestic workers is not the way to go. This creates a subclass of working poor. President Clinton worked to fix the loophole, yet

all efforts were dropped under President Bush."

Still the court stuck with the regulation the way it was written, pointing out that Congress itself didn't offer a change earlier this year when it finally raised the federal minimum wage.

But Sweeney pointed out that the "decision makes clear that the Department of Labor has the authority to fix the oversight."

The impact of the ruling may vary state to state, since some have set their own higher minimums and most home-care situations, involving Medicaid/Medicare funds combined with client ability to pay, set their own pay ceilings.

It was not only unions that roundly attacked the refusal of the high court to go along with the decision of an appeals court

"The court's ruling is another blow to struggling, low-wage women," said Nancy Duff Campbell, co-president of the National Women's Law Center.

"It means that home care workers, who are overwhelmingly low-income women of color, will continue to be unfairly treated despite providing essential services to our growing elderly and disabled population."

Calendar

Wednesday, July 4

CELEBRATE Independence Day!

MCLC offices closed

No July delegate meeting

Monday, July 9

MCLC Executive Board

2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Tuesday, July 10

Laborfest Planning Meeting

5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, July 25

MCLC Executive Board

2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, August 1

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO

6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Trapshooting

After nine weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee County Labor Council league, here are the results by team, reflecting wins, losses and ties:

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Local 75 8-1-0

Wire & Fire CWA 4603 ... 3-5-1

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6 Volts to Lightning

IBEW 494-1 3-6-0

Class A

Blind 6-3-0

APWU Local 003 5-4-1

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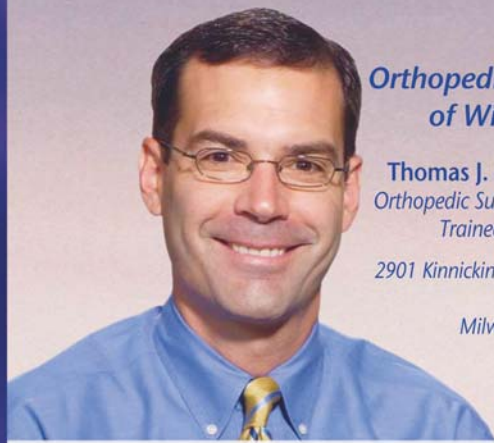
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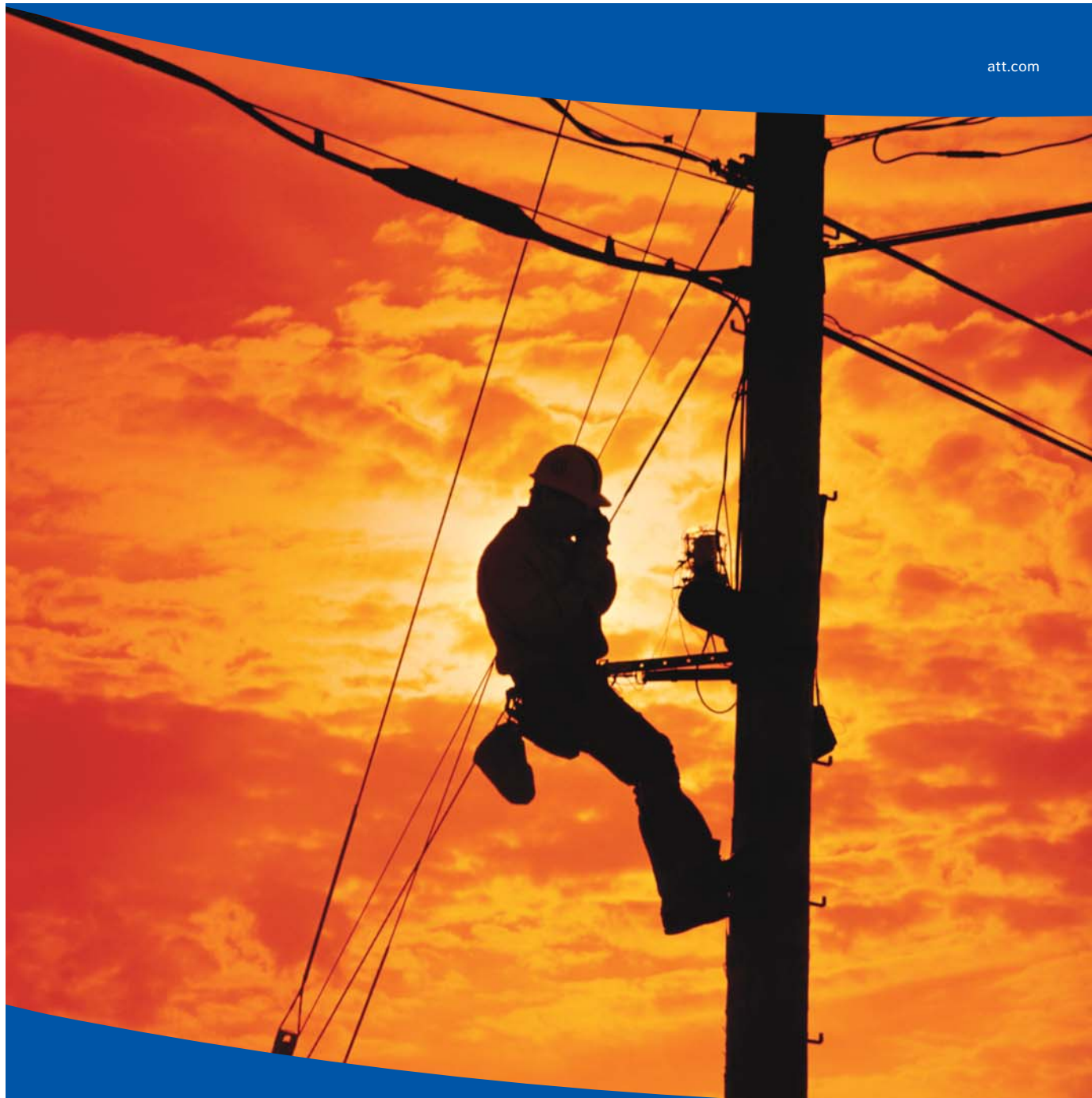
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