



Reflecting and renewing

Over the years, the last week of April and the first weeks of May are set aside for workers to reflect, remember and regenerate for future action.

• Workers Memorial Day on a chilly April 28 took place while most unions were attending the state AFL-CIO convention in Madison, but it still produced a band of public officials at Zeidler Union Square Park and a notable taps ceremony (photo at right) to remember those who died on the job and in the military in 2008. **See Page 2.**



• May 1, a workers appreciation holiday in many countries, was marked in Milwaukee by a noontime march for immigration rights and the Employee Free Choice Act. The immigrants and Latinos behind the event learned a few days later of their growing economic and political power in Wisconsin and also saw special prayer events to condemn immigration raids that had devastated families in Iowa. **See Page 9.**

• The next day the labor council's annual summit pinpointed help for economic justice and why legislative progress in Madison was proving so vital. **Story on Page 3.**

• And that Sunday the annual Bay View Tragedy event highlighted more legislative accomplishments for labor while the main speaker, 9to5's Amy Stear, forecast the national attention for paid sick days building since the Milwaukee revolution last November. **Page 10.**

Obama's efforts at balance thwarted by hire power

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Comment

We're in an era of increasing narrowness in defining right and left. The changing of the guard hasn't been met by welcome and cooperation. The failures of economic and military polices are not openly admitted in order to rectify the nation's course. The party not in power contrives menacing motives for every action by the party newly in power.

The United States has actually had better eras, where both camps wanted the government to stay out of the bedroom, use taxes to safeguard us and improve the quality of life -- and saw opportunity not hatred in the tension between change and historic values.

As the US suffers through the meaningless and hostile polarizations that undercut corrective action, every poll shows the public longing for such sadly distant days.

To be fair, previous eras had considerable political tricks and divisiveness. What they didn't have was the rigid extremes within the mainstream. Nor the

array of cable channels to feed the fire, seeking ratings gold in conflict. Nor an Internet revolution and 24/7 news cycles that give anyone with a viewpoint a voice.

But that is where we are at, and it will take more than head-shaking and tst-tsks to improve behavior.

Behavior like ignoring the urgency of health care reform to score a useless political point. GOP senators held up for more than a month -- and thereby added months of delays in the choice of key administrators -- the inevitable approval of Kathleen Sibelius as secretary of health and human services.

Why? They simply wanted to denigrate her support of women's rights by criticizing contributions to her Kansas gubernatorial campaign by a physician who did abortions.

How out of touch that was became clear a few days after she was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate because

Obstruct continued Page 8



Bucyrus' beacon contract

A lesson for a tough economy



By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

"Greatest labor contract I've ever seen!" "Five years with those wages and benefits? That's the best I've heard of!"

Union leader after union leader so describe the five-year agreement ratified last December by United Steelworkers Local 1343 and Bucyrus International.

Note that there are no qualifiers, such as "best contract in the tiny window of an awful economic slowdown."

Or "best contract no matter how badly the rest of the US workforce is doing."

But surely, some skeptics will point out, Bucyrus agreed to such a contract because it was so profitable making and selling giant mining shovels and muscular drills in the international market.

That's our point.

The workforce, top to bottom, has proved essential to the success. Seizing opportunity not only requires dynamic executives and hardworking engineers but productivity and commitment up and down the line. In fact, sometimes your best practical engineers and executives are working on the line.

It's what successful companies know and too many businesses neglect or have forgotten.

Insiders suggest that before Tim Sullivan came along as CEO -- and even he engaged in hard study before appreciating the workers at the South Milwaukee plant -- there was tension and friction with management. ("Back then, about the only time we saw them was at a grievance hearing," Dewey Lewis laughingly agreed).

The plant's only female machinist, Mary Rooney, puts finishing touches on a giant steel wheel while Kevin Lampe (left) and Ron Passehl fix a production machine. BELOW: Dewey Lewis explains the work flow.



Now there is an agreement to fight together to avoid layoffs and make the workers central to solutions, even to the point "that Tim (Sullivan) has asked each of us to think of ourselves as salesmen for the company."

"And we do," noted Kevin Jaskie, who has replaced Lewis as the local's president. He is an expert on training while Lewis is knee deep in the production team.

The United Steelworkers are wired into every move the company makes as part of its embrace of "lean manufacturing standards." It also became clear to CEO Sullivan that if the workers weren't sharing in the gains, this wouldn't work. "By the time he approached us about the new contract (in late 2008), we knew his word was good," said Lewis, who is painfully aware that promises from the top hadn't meant much at other companies and for other units of union workers.

Today, the union and the company are benefiting not just from demand but also a global reputation for quality.

"I'd be the first to say this is a lucrative contract," said Lewis, who estimates an average of \$30 an hour for his members. "But you see how hard we work to earn it," he told a visitor touring the mammoth facilities in South Milwaukee that stretch over several blocks and are protected with security gates.

Some buildings are smartly refurbished antiques, actually wrecks a few years ago. Now they boast efficient work areas and such things as a nifty,

Bucyrus continued Page 4

MOURNING THE DEAD, FIGHTING FOR LIVING

It began with a remembrance of workers who died on the job in 2008. It began (from left) with a thoughtful tribute by Mayor Tom Barrett, followed by reflections from Bobbie Webber, president of Milwaukee Professional Firefighter Local 215 (also see photo below). Then came support from Judy Hoffman, speaking for Sen. Herb Kohl; Lois O'Keefe for Rep. Gwen Moore, and Hope DeVougas for Sen. Feingold. Also shown is Mike Balistreri, AFL-CIO community organizer who helped with the reading of the available names of workers who died on the job. Then (below right) came the emotional reverberating taps performed across Zeidler Union Square Park by two members of Local 8, American Federation of Musicians.



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Jack Norman confessed this was the first time he and his economic PowerPoint (at right) had been introduced by gospel music, but he liked it. So did the Summit crowd as Grace UCC Choir (including AFL-CIO community organizer Jay Reinke) stirred up Laborers Hall. Guests (union leaders, retirees and newcomers) also enjoyed breakfast at nearby tables (far right).



Summit nails best target

There was great advice all day long on helping folks in trouble, finding a job, joining a community network and working in the trenches to fight poverty and indifference. But that wasn't the centerpiece when the Milwaukee Area Labor Council held its seventh annual African American and Community Summit on May 2 at Laborers Local 113 Hall, taking the theme of "Economic Justice in Difficult Economic Times."

The centerpiece was an ingratiating detailed presentation by Jack Norman about keeping your eye on the ball.

Norman, research director for the Institute for Wisconsin's Future, a former council delegate, and still broadly known for his analysis as a Milwaukee Journal business reporter, unleashed a down to earth PowerPoint that reminded citizens how easily they are side-tracked into fingerpointing at the

school board, the county and the city while the big solutions lie elsewhere.

All have a role, but the purse strings are controlled in Madison by the legislature and governor, and Norman described how progressive power working together was already causing significant change by closing corporate loopholes, addressing shared revenue, exposing flaws in the tax code and just thinking more intelligently.

One of his examples was being improved as he spoke. Norman pointed out, to considerable laughter, how across the board cuts in state workers could easily backfire, such as eliminating one in four audit positions in the Department of Revenue - at the same time as experts estimate \$1 billion in taxes not collected have crippled state revenue.

Norman's argument - that long-term solutions should be sought even in short-term crises -

brought results a week later when the legislature's joint finance committee advised returning the department to full staffing by adding 30 positions.

But as Norman's presentation emphasized, this didn't happen overnight or easily but by concerted effort by citizens and officials. To help, check out www.wisconsinsfuture.org, call (414) 967-1682 or email iwf@wisconsinsfuture.org.



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Bucyrus

From Page 1

large in-house cafeteria. Some buildings look new, such as the free health clinic for the workers, which may expand to include their families.

Some are new buildings that set the standard of high-quality welding, shaping, cutting and assembly.

Chains bigger than pythons drape the sides of enormous vats where steel is heated, cut, flipped and pounded. Operator cabins for the future shovels are big enough to sleep four. Multiple ceiling-high units of shelves play host to incoming wires and metal snippets, all tracked since there can be hundreds of pieces in one weld.

And this is not the welding you do in the garage. New equipment combines respirators and oxygen lines. There are rooms to assemble the huge mining and drilling machines and the operator boxes, only to disassemble afterward for shipping. In several buildings there are large pits of dug-out sand and protective railings awaiting the arrival of new equipment.

There are railroad lines leading into the bays of the buildings to handle some shovels too big to move any other way, and sometimes to haul them to waiting ships.

There are yards the size of two Lambeau fields on both sides of one building. Overhead, one yard is monitored by a crane where a fly-by operator snatches slabs of metal with magnets. On the other side there is a stacking yard for finished pieces.

A reporter, wearing safety earplugs and goggles and trying to step close to the rolls of steel and the tractors and forklifts scooting around inside, also discovered the floors are carefully marked and colored to track parts done and parts to be finished.

Portions of the floor are also slippery - understandable since oil pours in a stream at some stations to lubricate the automated



Safety representative John Cooking with huge steel circles that four other steelworkers had just been lifting with chains and inspecting. The importance of safety has magnified throughout Bucyrus. **RIGHT:** Rolls of equipment and gleaming steel cylinders dot the multiple buildings the comprise the manufacturing hub in South Millwaukee.

machines that move up and down to cut the enormous teeth into the enormous steel circles.

Your eyes would glaze over if they had to memorize the job classifications so carefully covered in the contract. Chew on this, though:

The new contract at Bucyrus has a 125% pay clause to replace the old incentive system. The new contract also eliminates the two-tier pay system and has brought 500 of the new workers into a new pension plan that costs the company less on the front end but adds more for the workers along the way.

The local has also added positions at the company, including one full time union safety specialist and six union production system specialists along with six sweepers and three training jobs. Jaskie, who also teaches welders, points out that he and Lewis will soon be teaching a class to management on unions, their structure, responsibilities and history with an emphasis on labor relations at Bucyrus.

The history explains a lot and the safety specialist is important. During the tour Labor Press stumbled on a second-shift crowd doing voluntary stretching exercises to cut down

on injury. The exercises were outlined in one of the many charts that dot the walls of the building. Other charts outline work flow, procedure and essential information.

"Our safety is going back up but we still need to do more," said Lewis.

What blew up the union's safety statistics was success. The local more than doubled the number of its workers in the last two years, reaching into the community and relying on training centers such as WRTP to help out. Then Bucyrus has its own training regimen of about six weeks.

But the sheer numbers of newcomers became a safety issue, which led both the company and the union to emphasize the need for experts and change.

"I would love it if no one every got an injury on the job, even a sprain," said Lewis, "but everything we do here is hard, heavy and hot."

CEO Sullivan has spoken up at many meetings about why he decided to keep the company in Milwaukee though there was pressure to go overseas and doubts that he would find and train the new workers he needed here. But he stood by his beliefs and resisted some of the simplistic attitudes of his business colleagues.

Sullivan is also active in the United Way, and his steelworkers are among the dozens of unions that shine as top contributors.

But just to remind you that Sullivan is not a push-over for unions, he's also resisted opportunities to support the Employee Free Choice Act and he sits on the board of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce as well as the United Way.

On May 13 he was honored as Business Leader of the Year by the Harvard Business School Club of Wisconsin.

He believes in the steelworkers at Bucyrus because they survived every "stress test" imposed. The lean manufacturing

process has taken root here. International sales expanded and Bucyrus products bucked the national economic trend of sagging purchases and falling profit margins.

Clearly plant and personnel are key factors. One example is the latchless dipper door. Yup, quite a tongue-twister but also a moneymaker. Bucyrus thought of the latchless dipper door concept but needed the local and an efficient production procedure to solve the turnaround and manufacturing headaches.

The dipper door makes the creatures in "The Transformers" look like dwarfs. It replaced the manual latch door, a piece that gets heavy use and often breaks in the field. So Bucyrus can not only provide better new shovels but also add longevity through replacements. A big part of Bucyrus' business is running around the world to fix or improve equipment.

Such production concepts require respect and cooperation from all hands - design, engineers, floor workers, managers, and on and on. The union is confident that the new production process it helped create will bring down production time to a matter of days rather than the weeks of yore. And that brings down costs.

Not that Bucyrus and its workers now have an easy ride into the sunset. Lewis and Bucyrus executives fear that the slump in the world economy could bring some downturns. But the plus side is a system and innovations that can ride out the storms.

That's why last December, the local overwhelmingly ratified the contract that resulted from all these realities. It formalized management-labor cooperation in safety and procedures. It increased wages by 5% effective in January of 2009 and set additional wage increases of 3.5% in 2010, 2011 and again in 2012.

Other companies continue to head to Mexico, India or China in the mistaken belief that get-



ting three or four workers for the price of one will save money.

(The Journal Sentinel just did a large article regurgitating that myth regarding Chrysler's impending departure from Kenosha to Mexico.)

But the costs of workers, it is becoming clear, are a pittance to the salaries and incentives provided management and the attitude of rewarding the top while pinching the bottom.

Along with productivity, efficiency, skill and continuous training, global buyers in the case of Bucyrus want the quality and service inextricably linked to the reputation and results of Milwaukee workers.

There's another reason to stay in the US, Lewis points out.

"It's the forgotten component. Yes, you can go to China and pay a worker \$3, but you get what you pay for and those workers won't be able to buy your stuff -- they will barely have the money to keep a roof over their heads or feed a family."

American manufacturers, he suggests, have forgotten even what Henry Ford know - pay the workers so they can buy the products. Instead, too many of today's companies are cannibalizing America's future,

"I will never buy one of these huge mining shovels for my backyard," Lewis said, "but I make the money to buy the other things manufactured in America, and you rob yourself of the middle class ability to spend at your own peril."

"I sure hope other companies will follow us."



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Workers join exercise classes at the start of a second shift while modified tractors and fork lifts (below) scoot through several buildings. The drivers below are Greg Young (left) and Richard Sucheki.



TOP: The latchless dipper door is explained in the story on the opposite page. Its size is emphasized by comparison to a passing worker. The door is not just big, it's potentially an important moneymaker as steelworkers helped solve the production issues.

LEFT: A fixed overhead crane is attached outdoors to one of the buildings. It routinely travels back and forth picking up steel slabs with magnets to add to the manufacturing process.

RIGHT: Modernized welding stations and equipments are also evident in a newer Bucyrus building. Here welder Joe Kohhap was too busy to notice the lurking photographer.

— Photos for the Labor Press by Dominique Paul Noth. See more photo galleries at www.milwaukeeelabor.org



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Journalists who honor justice

The prestigious Sidney Hillman Foundation Journalism Awards have landed on some names familiar to Wisconsin. One of the chief winners interviewed leaders and rank and file of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council to understand labor's feelings about Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential primary here.

Another actually worked in Milwaukee.

The Hillman prizes date back to 1950 and now cover six categories. They are given journalists, photographers, writers and public figures whose work fosters social and economic justice.

The foundation is named for Hillman, former president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and a key figure in the founding of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which merged with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO.

One of this year's winners is Steven Greenhouse, the labor and workplace reporter for The New York Times, one of the few newspapers in the country to treat labor as a separate important beat. Greenhouse, who visited MALC's offices in 2008, is a co-winner of the book award for "The Big Squeeze: Tough Times



Steven Greenhouse during Milwaukee interviews in 2008.

for the American Worker." In a recent column he explained why the title exemplifies what is happening to America's workers:

"In many ways, corporate America is clamping down on its workers. Wages have been cut over the past few years. We've seen health benefits get worse. Middle-class Americans have health insurance while the typical worker has to pay twice as much for health insurance as was the case seven years ago."

The best way to loosen the squeeze, Greenhouse says, is to rebuild our middle class and "we need to focus far more on reinvigorating manufacturing. We've lost one in five manufacturing jobs since 2000, more than 2.5 million good jobs that paid middle-class wages and benefits."

Another Hillman winner, for her newspaper reporting, was

Nina Bernstein, who once was a leading reporter at The Milwaukee Journal before moving to Newsday and then to the New York Times. Over the years her stories (most recently on immigration deaths in custody) have also led to book contracts and television interviews.

Winning as well was blogger Marcy Wheeler, who writes the emptywheel blog at fire-doglake.com and has won attention for her investigative reporting as well as coverage of the auto industry crisis.

She was the first person to notice how a released Justice Department memo revealed that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had been waterboarded 183 times in one month. Her live blogging from the Scooter Libby trial in 2007 is widely regarded as one of the seminal moments in online journalism, the foundation said.

Calendar

For updated master list of events, visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org

Sunday, May 31

Speech by Bill Fletcher

Noted figure in labor and civil rights in 7 p.m. inspirational talk

UW-Milwaukee Fireside Lounge

Wednesday, June 3

Monthly Delegate Meeting

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

Thursday, June 4

Health & Hygiene Drive Finale

Special press conference

10 a.m., United Way, 225 W. Vine St.

Monday, June 8

Laborfest Planning Meeting, 5 p.m.

Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, June 24

Executive Board Meeting, 2 p.m.

Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Monday, June 29

Laborfest Planning Meeting, 5 p.m.

Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd..

Women pay price in retirement

By James Parks, AFL-CIO

Special to Labor Press

Women workers are less likely than men to have enough money to retire comfortably because they generally live longer than men and earn less on the job, according to a new report. It will take a three-pronged approach to

help women have a secure retirement, the report says: traditional pensions, supplemental 401(k)-type savings and Social Security.

"Shattering the Retirement Glass Ceiling: Women Need a Three-Legged Stool," released this month by the non-profit research group National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS), found that because of longer life expectancy, a woman with an annual income of \$50,000 would need to save \$1,000 more toward retirement every year than her male counterpart to have an equal retirement experience.

Yet, more than 45 years after the Equal Pay Act was signed, women in the United States still earn only 78 cents for every dollar men earn -- even with similar education, skills and experience -- and African American and Hispanic women earn even less. The wage difference makes saving money more difficult for many women.

Working women also have limited access to retirement plans through their employers. Men are nearly twice as likely as women to have retirement income from defined benefit plans. "The retirement gender gap is alive and strong," said Ilana Boivie, an NIRS policy analyst and author of the report.

Women still earn less, have less to save, and are less likely to have workplace retirement plans. And given that the global economic crisis has drastically eroded retirement readiness, it's all

the more urgent that a policy framework is put in place to give all women a shot at achieving retirement security.

One sure way to overcome the retirement gap is through union membership. A recent study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) found that for the years 2004-2007, union women were much more likely to have health insurance (75.4%) and a pension (75.8%) than women workers who were not in unions (50.9% for health insurance, 43% for pensions).

The NIRS research also shows:

Defined-benefit pension plans, which guarantee a specific pension payment each month, provide benefits and protections that are especially important for women, such as spousal protections and lifetime income.

Women are more likely to live above the poverty line in retirement when they have income from pensions. But just 23.3% of women have their own pension, compared with 42% of men.

Under the new administration, progress already has been made in moving toward more equal pay for women. President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law on Jan. 29 and established a White House Council on Women and Girls in March to provide a coordinated response to the challenges confronted by women.

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In Memoriam

The first planning meeting for a special Labor Day (at left) was actually held May 18 and more meetings are planned in June as the Milwaukee Area Labor Council cites the urgency to get moving. Yet several in the room also noted that this would be the first Laborfest in decades without Ron Salmon, who had been active in Milwaukee unions before there was an AFL-CIO council. And this year's is special, marking the 50th anniversary of the labor council. Ron was special, too, as many involved in Laborfest recalled. Aside from his years as parade marshal, he will also be remembered as the cheerful fellow at charity and holiday parties inviting folks to join his card game, as he did in the photo below from three Christmases ago.



A Laborfest without Ron

The remembrances flowed in during Ron Salmon's illness, even before the sad news of his death at age 81. Most of the stories had something to do with Laborfest.

Even years after health issues would have sidelined lesser men, Salmon was the familiar imperturbable parade marshal at 4th and Michigan. His tireless service and unflinching cooperation were remembered along his dedicated partner, Patricia, his wife of 60 years. The Salmons were among a handful of volunteers honored in a special Laborfest ceremony in 2005. His knowledge was called on even when he could no longer walk the parade or command its launch.

Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran, to whom the main task falls for organizing the Labor Day celebration - and quite a task this year, the main event of the 50th anniversary of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council - confessed it would be a lot harder without Ron. "He'd forgotten more than any of us ever knew about the details and the organization," she said. "He was the foundation we relied on."

The rock that was always there had been a member of Brewery Workers Local 9 for more years - 50 - than the labor council has been in existence. In attitude and calmness, Salmon worked tirelessly for the issues and organizations he was devoted to.

John Goldstein could only recall one occasion in all those years when Salmon lost his cool and raised his ever-present cane threateningly to get his union brethren back in line. That was one year at the start of the carefully organized parade - with Ron one of those who worked all summer long to arrange the details -- when the Teamsters trucks, the musicians on their flatbed truck and the Harley riders all took off at the same time -- aiming right at him. He belatedly, blew his whistle and pointed everyone back to their places, where they meekly returned. Outsiders never saw anything but the typically well-organized launch.

cane - and the year some unthinking wag stole it. But mainly all those who worked with Salmon remember the discipline and respect he engendered as he calmly without title took control of any event he was asked to help organize. And participants at the charitable gatherings and parties he helped steer also remember the avid card player who always cheerfully invited them into a game.

Goldstein, former president of the labor council who still spends much of his time in Milwaukee as national program director of the Partnership for Working Families, saw firsthand Salmon's years of efforts for the Solidarity Committee and how he received a special award for that work. Ron was always concerned with getting labor to march in the same direction whether there was a parade or not, leading unity efforts in the boycott of Schlitz and deeply engaged in work of the Interfaith Council for Worker Justice.

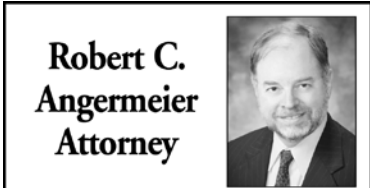
Goldstein and Cochran recall how he made sure the council participated in the brewery workers charity and educational events. And no one could think of Ron without thinking of Pat, his wife of 60 years who moved her bed downstairs to be with him in the final weeks of his illness.

Even outpourings of grief couldn't disguise the memories of his cheerfulness and his enjoyment of people. Ron was surrounded by family and friends when he died April 24, and labor helped remember him at a spe-

cial mass at Gesu Church a few days later. He had served there as an usher for decades.

A World War II veteran of the marine corps, he joined the Brewery Workers local in the 1950s and remained active in its affairs as well as at the labor council until his death. His large family - including very young grandchildren and active union members -- requested memorials in his name to the Milwaukee Rescue Mission, the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center or Gesu Church.

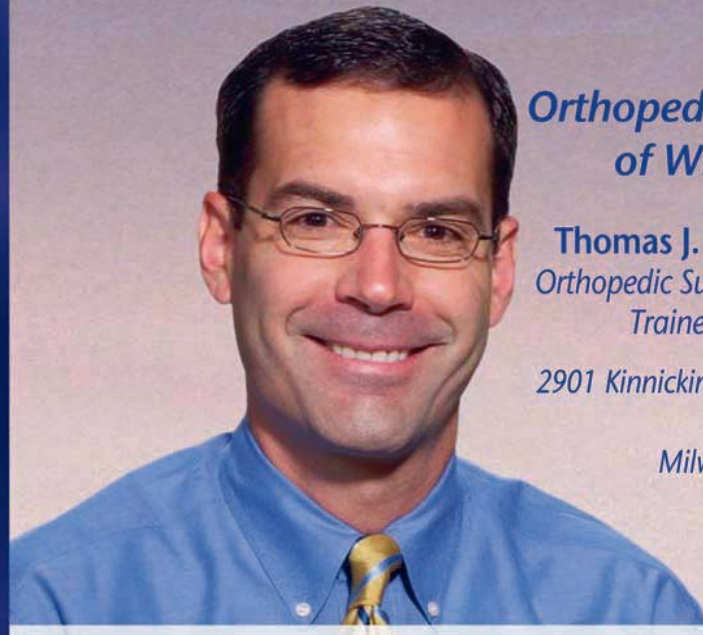
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Obstruct

From Page 1

the public complained. It came in the promise May 11 by health care providers -- yes, the same ones that are among the GOP's biggest contributors -- that they would slow the growth of health costs dramatically with the White House's help.

The plan in the next five years could save \$2,500 a year for a family of four -- a total of \$2 trillion for the country over 10 years.

That agreement is starter yeast to make it less costly for Congress to enact comprehensive health insurance coverage. The key issue still to be solved is a public plan to work alongside private plans, a complex issue. All the resistance to Sibelius did was delay progress in her department and extend the time needed to gather details, plans and support.

Historically both sides have played games with nominations, but in more balanced eras they have also cooperated.

One example often forgotten: It was a GOP dominated senate judiciary committee in the Reagan years that kept Jeff Sessions off the Supreme Court because of comments he today describes as thoughtless but others saw as racist. (It is hard to see the humor in calling the NAACP un-American.) Two GOP senators and the conservative Democrat who had sponsored him for the court made the difference, deciding the nation couldn't take a chance on such insensitivity.

The irony, of course, is that with Sen. Arlen Specter's bolt to

the Democrats, Sessions, three times elected as a senator from Alabama, will serve as senior GOP guy on the judiciary committee just in time for whomever Obama decides to nominate.

To this point Sessions hasn't joined the demonization of any choice Obama makes.

But let's see how he behaves once Obama does decide, which might happen just as Labor Press passes deadlines.

The opportunity emerges because Justice David Souter longs to return to the mountains of New Hampshire.

Souter serves as historic warning to the far left, which bitterly opposed his appointment by the first President Bush, only to watch even more vindictive attacks on his decisions by the religious right.

Yes, in another era Souter would have been regarded as a thoughtful moderate not the flaming liberal painted by the Limbaughs of the world.

The left, of course, has been upset since 2000 -- and even today with Obama -- over caution and compromise.

But the big-tent Democrats have been far slower to anger and not of one voice. They approved Bush Jr. cabinet choices they clearly didn't like because the president had a right to his own advisers, a viewpoint hardly returned by the small-tent GOP of today.

The Democrats have to be yanked by the neck to prosecute the concocters of torture policies or even to impeach a federal judge who, it turns out, wrote the most unjustifiable torture memo.

But the left has also understood the dangers of hanging yourself by being too rigid. It has

noted how anyone Obama picks gets an organized rope party. Upset they may be that some picks are too married to the status quo of D.C., military hardliners, Wall Street and corporate think, but they haven't launched the ax-wielding gauntlets of the far right.

A typical case in point is Christopher Hill, a top hotspot diplomat for President Bush, a highly regarded assistant secretary of state who led the US in six-party talks with North Korea. Then Obama chose him as ambassador to Iraq. For six weeks, Senate Republicans held up his appointment and questioned the same credentials they had praised when he served a Republican president.

In the same vein was the choice by Obama of Craig Fugate to head FEMA.

For weeks, to the mystification of Florida GOP colleagues, it was stalled by Louisiana GOP Sen. David Vitter, the same "family values" guy whose name appeared on a D.C. madam's client list. Seeing some bizarre political advantage, he held up the appointment of Fugate, the experienced disaster administrator whom Republican Jeb Bush picked to head Florida's disaster relief division.

Vitter did not relent until two weeks before the official start of hurricane season. And his GOP colleagues didn't stop him. Once you start this nonsense of opposing choices previously approved with bipartisan flavor, strange doors open.

Add the case of David Hayes, a respected environmental lawyer who served as Clinton's deputy secretary of the Interior Department and also led Obama's transition team on natural resources.

His nomination was smooth until Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, previously a senator noted for bipartisan cooperation, did the right thing for the environment and revoked 77 oil and gas leases in Utah.

Inflamed GOP Sen. Bob Bennett, taking advantage of the absence of three Democratic senators (including Ted Kennedy and John Kerry) and ignoring opposition by GOP senators Olympia Snowe and even John Kyl, forced a vote that failed because of remaining GOP sto-



Mary Beth Maxwell

lidity to seat Hayes.

Salazar immediately reacted. "This was a tired vote of bitter obstructionism," he told Congress. "It may be uncomfortable for some to watch us have to clean up mess after mess -- from corruption to lawbreaking -- that is the previous administration's legacy at Interior, but to cast a vote against such a qualified and fine person is the height of cynicism."

It is also no coincidence that the Hayes blockade occurred just as the oil, gas and coal industry announced it was doubling its lobbying efforts and spent \$44.5 million in the first three months of 2009 to fight Obama's plan for a clean energy economy.

In this climate, imagine what happens to genuinely progressive candidates! And here they come: Two labor lawyers who must go through Senate hearings to form a Democratic majority on the National Labor Relations Board.

Obama tapped two candidates with a track record of rapport with management.

Craig Becker and Mark Pearce do get high praise from union leaders for their experience in workplace issues as they hope to join NLRB veteran Wilma Liebman, who in the Bush years was the voice in the minority wilderness. She will serve as board chair.

Becker has also shown diplomatic acumen as assistant general counsel for the SEIU and the AFL-CIO while Pearce, a Yale grad, served 15 years at the NLRB before entering private practice.

News reports paint neither as an ideologue and emphasize that they have respect in the business and civic communities. Still, Congress watchers expect

a hard road from the GOP because both take seriously the reasons why the National Labor Relations Act exists.

Obama understandably has made several choices of top policy advisers that don't need Senate approval. It's a way to bring strong voices to the table that would otherwise be crippled by conservative attacks in this era.

The most prominent case is this pick as senior policy adviser for the new secretary of labor, Hilda Solis, someone to serve as her representative on the White House Task Force on the Middle Class.

His choice drew a strong letter of praise from AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. The choice also has a strong Milwaukee connection and local friends.

Mary Beth Maxwell graduated from Marquette University with three majors: political science, English and philosophy. Then came a remarkable career as manager, advocate, organizer and spokesperson on labor and human rights issues:

Field director for the United States Student Association (1989 to 1992), pushing Congress for bigger Pell Grants for low-income students.

Then field spokesman for what is now NARAL. Then national field director for Jobs With Justice.

Before the Obama's appointment she was founder and executive director for American Rights at Work. One of her board members was Solis.

She is also a single mother, gay and an outspoken advocate for the Employee Free Choice Act.

Sadly, it would not have been her notable public career but the personal elements and convictions that would have made her a lightning rod for any position requiring Senate consent.

Maxwell herself spoke about this narrowness last year: "The American people are tired of old-school conflict and fear mongering," she told an American Rights at Work awards ceremony. "They want us to sit down at the table and talk to each other."

She dreams of an era it would be nice to return to.

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A swelling crowd marched down the hill from Memorial Drive to line up at the stage at Veterans Park on May 1. The enthusiasm delighted the several vendors (below) keeping lunch flowing – a Latino-flavored entrepreneurship that is growing in Wisconsin, according to the US Census Bureau.

– Photos for Labor Press by Sue Ruggles and Dominique Paul Noth



Moral, economic forces march on

The May 1 march for labor rights brought an apologetic second story from the Journal Sentinel online, which had first claimed only a handful marched from Voces de la Frontera on the south side to Veterans Park on the lakefront.

But this was a Friday noon hour and the ranks swelled as the march gathered force, rising in some estimates to 30,000 toward the finale. It was not the mass of previous May 1 marches organized by Voces but particularly impressive given rumors that the march had been canceled, the bad economy, the threatening weather and concerns about the flu.

Vendors of food and drinks did brisk business with arriving families at the park. Mariachi music and major speakers rang out over downtown and Lake Michigan in support of both the comprehensive immigration reform promised by the new president and the Employee Free Choice Act fought for by unions.

The size forced the newspaper to retract its first hurried efforts and discuss not only the crowd but also the message organized by Voces.

"There isn't anyone or anything that can come between us on this issue." US Rep. Gwen Moore assured the crowd, as she

kept translators busy moving back to English from a preamble in Spanish and ratcheting up bilingual fervor for a legalized path and a level playing field and respect for workers.

State Rep. Pedro Colon spoke not just of the priority of "just immigration reform" at the national level but also advances possible in the state legislature on "a drivers' license so immigrants can live in peace" and of the need (not to mention the self-interest for the economy) of providing fair college tuition to good students brought to this country as infants and children.

There was both an economic and moral underpinning to the causes espoused on May 1. One became clearer a few days later when the US Census Bureau confirmed the role of Latinos as a major entrepreneurial and economic force not only in the US



but in Wisconsin, where they have increased by more than 48% since 2000. This mounts to more than 285,000 people and more than 5% of the state population. The businesses employing or run by Latinos have emerged as a positive force in the state, and major contributors to the tax base.

Humanity emerged as an argument for immigration reform May 12 in the ringing of church bells and the wearing of red ribbons in Waukesha and Milwaukee counties. Prayer services marked a lamentable anniversary of the largest raid on immigrant workers at the time.

Last year on May 12, ICE agents (Immigrants Custom Enforcement) descended on Postville, Iowa, with 900 agents and 500 hasty warrants. They arrested 389 people at Agriprocessors, the kosher meat packing plant where managers were later charged with fraud, sexual abuse of minors and other practices. But only five of the immigrants arrested had ever had criminal records.

All were hauled to a waiting meat plant of the government's own making (a makeshift prison and court center) and told to accept token criminal sentences for civil violations before being deported. Children were left behind, some with mothers in monitoring anklets, overwhelming churches in the neighborhood and devastating the businesses in the community.

The statistics tell a disturbing tale of families split asunder:

The majority of those arrested were men. Most were from Guatemala but around 90

were from Mexico, four from the Ukraine and three from Israel. Most were forced to leave wives and children, though 56 mostly women were released with ankle bracelets, for humanitarian or health reasons. Twelve of the arrested were minors. St. Bridget's in Postville is still supporting dozens of mainly women and children who can't leave, can't find work and lack homes.

Churches have led marches to Iowa. Newspapers including leading Jewish ones have revealed unsettling information about the plant and the government's behavior. Nationwide this raid has become a symbol of broken and contradictory immigration laws that are running headlong into family law and family values.

In Wisconsin, WISDOM and MICAHA, two coalitions of churches and religious groups under organizer Barbara Pfarr, conducted prayer vigils to mark the anniversary, one by the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Waukesha, the other at Milwaukee's St. Adalbert.



US Rep. Gwen Moore livens up the crowd and then (below) greets an old friend and follow-up speaker, state Rep. Pedro Colon.



Signs abounded on May 1 while (above) organizer Christine Neumann-Ortiz had a moment to smile after a hectic day.



An information update and prayer vigil for families torn apart by a raid in Iowa was conducted at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, the administrative center and retirement home for the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Leading the discussion were Sister Josephe Marie Flynn, SSND (left), chair of the Justice for Immigrants Project of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and Barbara Pfarr, SSND, director of the Civil Rights of Immigrants Initiative for WISDOM / MICAHA.

Ghostly echoes at Bay View

As keynote speaker Amy Stear (right) linked the Bay View Tragedy of 1886 to current labor issues, the past seemed present as Frank Zeidler's widow, Agnes (in wheelchair), attended while daughter Anita (left) read the names of the fallen as her father so often had.



Unintentionally the themes of the labor council summit May 2 (see Page 3) were echoed the following Sunday afternoon at the Bay View Tragedy ceremony. Something old was being tied to campaigns new at the memorial marker where workers died in the 19th century struggle for an eight-hour working day.

The keynote speaker, Amy Stear, Wisconsin director of 9to5, had been a leader of the campaign for minimal paid sick days for private sector workers in the city of Milwaukee, an effort that nearly 70% of city voters supported last November but that business groups have opposed with doomsday rhetoric, even suing to try to stop things. The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and other groups have looked more and more foolish and hysterical in their attitudes.

The outbreak of flu - it closed schools and now is under investigation since it affected hundreds of Milwaukeeans -- played into that sense of foolishness. Mayor Tom Barrett, who opposed the idea of the city standing alone in such an ordinance, pleaded with businesses to heed the spirit of the law while he resisted the letter of the law.

The flu served as a backdrop of a national scandal. It turns out that some 48% of private sector workers and 76% of low-income workers - many mothers who dominate the food chain industry - have no paid six days. Many are forced to work sick or not take care of sick children for fear of being fired. Meanwhile, news stories are full of food businesses that closed because they spread bacteria or illnesses traced back to workers who didn't stay home when sick.

Stear offered a general overview of the cause at the Bay View event - noting how support of an eight-hour day or opposition to forced child labor were also once regarded as radical concepts. But news stories would soon echo her common sense.

A week later Judge Thomas Cooper decided to take the months the law allows him before issuing a decision, acknowledging that the MMAC would appeal if he let the ordinance stand and the 9to5 would appeal if he tried to throw it out. He also had to be aware that national legislative action was underway, some of the looming laws built out of the Milwaukee case.

A similar law was passing its final legislative committee hurdles in Connecticut. A federal bill that the MMAC also looks silly opposing would impose paid sick days nationally and already tops 100 sponsors in the House. The Milwaukee ordinance would hold sway over this Healthy Families Act because it sets some lower thresholds on companies affected. But the federal bill actually incorporates some of the Milwaukee ideas from 9to5.

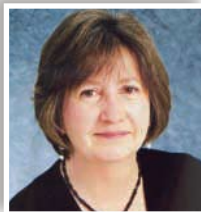
The Bay View event kept history present as it honored that 1886 campaign for the 8-hour day, when state militia fired upon 1,500 peaceful workers approaching the Rolling Mills, then Milwaukee's largest employer.

This annual event was attended by Frank Zeidler's widow, Agnes. One of his daughters, Anita, took the role Frank so often did of reading the names of the seven protesters killed in the tragedy.

Bay View history was also marked by emcee Stephen Hauser, by resident and history buff Ellen Tucker and by the songs of Larry Penn, who not only performed his "Ghosts of Bay View" but updated for current times a Woody Guthrie anthem about the unemployed.

Then 20th District Rep. Christine Sinicki, now chair of the Assembly's Labor Committee, emphasized the advice at the African American Summit-- keep your eyes on the prize in Madison. Finally, with both houses under Democratic control, bills important to labor were on the march after years of paralysis.

Among them: AB 172, requiring labor history be incorporated into public school instructional standards; a law to give UW faculty and staff the right to collective bargaining, and laws strengthening penalties for discrimination in hiring and on the job.



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They represent some \$400 billion in assets and they support the Employee Free Choice Act. No, you didn't read that wrong. No, they don't represent unions. It's actually a diverse coalition of investors who have stepped forward to tell lawmakers that the Employee Free Choice Act is the right move right now to protect workers and strengthen the economy.

In a letter to Congress, 26 leaders from the investment community say the act is critical and not just for the cause of human rights, but for business, too. The support of these business leaders is a valuable corrective to the anti-union spin and

Who's the new guy?



Justin Geiger

Don't be mystified by the new face and new voice on the phone at the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

They belong to Justin Geiger, whom the state AFL-CIO has hired as southeastern Wisconsin service area organizer. He will work out of the MALC offices under the direction of Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran - and he is eager to meet every local, learn about every protest and help out with every problem as he works to build the alliance of organized labor in this territory.

To that end, Geiger has been calling local leaders and offering his assistance. Of particular importance is working for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. Give him a jingle to set up a dynamic presentation.

Geiger is hardly new to all this. He began his organizing career in 2001 at Citizen Action of Wisconsin, doing both fundraising and door to door membership drives on healthcare legislation. In 2007 he moved over to Working America as a team builder and assistant director, gaining new members for this AFL-CIO enterprise in Michigan, Oregon, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

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disinformation promoted by corporate lobby groups, noted John Sweeney, president of the national AFL-CIO.

A spokesman for the investors -- Adam Kanzer, managing director and general counsel at Domini Social Investments LLC - said it was critical for a strong economy that workers become free to form unions and bargain.

The act will help stabilize the economy, both in the United States and abroad, by establishing a more balanced relationship between labor and management, Kanzer and the letter noted. Both made further points:

Today, American workers are producing more and receiving less. This is an unsustainable trend that creates material risks for employees, investors and the global economy. By more effectively protecting workers' fundamental human rights, the Employee Free Choice Act would help to reverse these damaging trends.

The letter from investors cited flaws in our current system for forming unions, starting from the simple proposition that it should be workers, not their bosses, who make the decision about whether, and how, to form a union.

The investors say that workplaces where workers are free to join unions are safer, fairer to workers, have lower turnover rates and deliver a better return on investment.

Where Obama stands

BARACK OBAMA IN TOWN HALL MEETING MAY 12 ON EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT:

One of the things that I believe in -- and if you look at our history, I think it bears this out -- even if you're not a member of a union, you owe something to unions, because a lot of the things that you take for granted as an employee of a company -- the idea of overtime and minimum wage and benefits -- a whole host of things that you, even if you're not a member of a union, now take for granted, that happened because unions fought and helped to make employers more accountable.

The problem that we've seen is that union membership has declined significantly over the last 30 years. And so the question is, why is that? Now, part of it, the economy has changed and the culture has changed, and there hasn't been a very friendly politics in Washington when it comes to union membership.

But part of it just has to do with the fact that the scales have been tilted to make it really hard to form a union. So a lot of companies, because they want maximum flexibility, they would rather spend a lot of money on consultants and lawyers to prevent a union from forming than they would just going ahead and having the union and then trying to work with and allow workers to collectively bargain.

So there's a bill called the Employee Free Choice Act that would try to even out the playing field. And what it would essen-



President Obama

tially say is, is that if a majority of workers at a company want a union then they can get a union without delay and some of the monkey business that's done right now to prevent them from having a union.

Now, I want to give the other side of the argument. Businesses object to some of the provisions in the Employee Free Choice Act, because one of the things that's in there is something called card

check, where rather than have a secret ballot and organize a big election, you could simply have enough employees, a majority of employees, check a card and that would then form the union. And the employers argue we need to have a secret ballot.

I think that there may be areas of compromise to get this bill done. I'm supportive of it, but there aren't enough votes right now in the Senate to get it passed.

And what I think we have to do is to find ways in which the core idea of the Employee Free Choice Act is preserved, which is how do we make it easier for people who want to form a union to at least get a vote and have an even playing field - how do we do that, but at the same time get enough votes to pass the bill. That's what we're working on right now. I think it's going to have a chance of passage, but there's still more work to be done.



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Choice words for Rove



Rep. Barbara Toles (top left) grabbed the bullhorn as the signs and chants paused briefly outside the Milwaukee Athletic Club May 19 while Karl Rove spoke behind the doors to Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce. Also speaking was Rep. Jon Richards. Meanwhile, Channel 4 interviewed Sheila Cochran (below) who helped organize the morning event attended by 150 members of a dozen unions.

Passage of the Employee Free Choice Act was virtually assured Tuesday, March 19, because Karl Rove came to Milwaukee to oppose it.

Rove, the second least trusted Republican -- even by other Republicans -- appeared behind closed doors at the Milwaukee Athletic Club after being grilled the previous Friday for several hours, also behind closed doors, by the special prosecutor assigned by the Department of Justice to investigate the firing of US attorneys during the Bush administration.

He continues to dodge efforts of Congress to testify in public. He's working overtime (alas without a union of supporters) to keep the inevitable tarnish away from his reputation as Bush's political brain. Paralleling the most disliked Republican, Dick Cheney, he's not shutting up when his colleagues ask. Rather, he selectively defends the status quo in labor relations.

More than 12 dozen union members gathered at short notice to decry his morning message to a handful of business leaders. They represented more than a dozen unions answering the action call from the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

Rove was brought to town by another entity deeply distrusted by workers -- Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, which has belittled the state while protesting the closing of the tax loopholes that supported them. They have proven so wrong so often in terms of economic practice, judicial jockeying and political tactics that embracing the Rove reputation provided just another confirmation nail in the coffin.

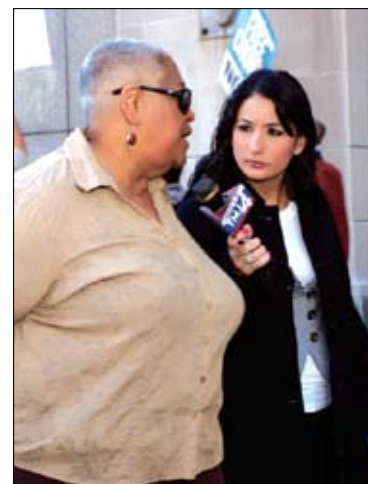
-- D.P.N.

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