

# MINUTES OF THE TNG-CWA Human Rights and Equity Committee

October 11, 2008

PRESENT: Michael D'Souza, Chair; Randy Gilliam; Vernon Clark; Matthew Olson; Natalie Hill; Carl Younger; Melissa Nelson, TNG-CWA Director of Collective Bargaining; Sheila Lindsay, Chair SEC HRE Committee; Bernie Lunzer; Arnold Amber;

ABSENT: Olivia James; Fareed Mohammed; Sherri Borden Colley; Joe Lapi; Lucy Witeck; Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe;

MINUTES PREPARED BY MICHAEL D'SOUZA.

Checked by Melissa Nelson

## **Boston School Outreach**

Carl Younger reported that the Boston local has confirmation from the Quincy School board for a union outreach programme. (See attached email from Carl.) Carl reported that this is likely to be a half-hour session in class. He said the comic book, *Tom Riley's Nightmare*, tabled at the CWA convention in Las Vegas may be useful in these presentations. Bernie Lunzer said he'd send copies to Boston.

## **January forum**

Bernie reported on the planned TNG-CWA, Nabet and Print Sector forum planned for Baltimore in January. He said the meeting would likely start the second weekend in the New Year. The standing committee on Human Rights and Equity will hold a one-day face-to-face meeting the day before the forum. At the forum itself primary topics include organizing, collective bargaining, training and alternative ownership. Bernie said he was looking for ways to plug in a human rights component in each of these discussions.

The committee agreed to meet again on Saturday, November 22 at 13:00 eastern.

The committee adjourned at 13:40 Eastern.

email from Carl Younger:

Hi all. The union in the classroom program has been approved.

GREAT NEWS !! The Boston Newspaper Guild's proposal to the Quincy (Massachusetts) Public School System to form an educational partnership to educate students on our Newspaper Guild union as well as unionism in general has been approved !!!

After extensive contact over the last 6 months plus with a multitude of contacts and point persons within the Quincy Public School system including Keith Segalla, Director of Programs and Gina Scanlan, Department Chair , Quincy Public Schools - Career and Technical Education, we received word today that our partnership idea/proposal has been approved and will move forward.

Our initial efforts will be speaking with students at the High School level on all things union - day to day efforts, challenges we are faced with, samples of grievances, big picture items and more.

In the future we hope to gear some of our efforts towards younger students - perhaps as young as grade 2 or 3 - who hasn't forgotten that visit they received from a non-teacher adult who visited your classroom to tell you about their jobs (Police were great at this years ago). Maybe bring the students a BNG T-shirt along with the information. We'll find a way to make it fun and informative - hey, who says grade school is too early to begin introduction of union knowledge and activism.

Attached below is a syllabus Carl Younger crafted, from which we will glean some of our major talking points.

Quincy High School has a long and successful program and track record of educating students in career development and technical and trade program education.

One of our many goals with this partnership is to raise awareness of The Boston Newspaper Guild and TNG while also fostering union knowledge and participation among youths at the local level.

When we speak with the Quincy High School students, Carl and I will draw heavily on our combined 60 plus years (wow, that looks bad in print - eh, Carl ?) of union membership and involvement.

We will also rely on Carl's Harvard Trade Union Program experience along with his CWA Minority Leadership Program experience, to inform the students of historical and economic impacts of unionism.

We plan on incorporating a heavy dose of current events into our speaking program also.

We are extremely excited about this opportunity to have an impact on the future of unionism.

Sincerely,  
Dan Totten

Outline of proposed program on Union education in the classroom.  
Carl Younger

Introduction: Who we are and what the Boston Newspaper Guild is all about.

The Boston Newspaper Guild (BNG -TNG/CWA local 31245) is the employee union for the Boston Globe newspaper.

We proudly represent nearly 1,000 employees including reporters, editors, page designers, advertising salespeople and advertising sales support persons, ad-designers, circulation managers, accountants, marketers and information technology specialists, security guards, shippers/receivers, nurses, secretaries, and more. Our members produce Pulitzer Prize-winning, nationally-acclaimed work for the daily and Sunday Boston Globe Newspaper.

We are affiliated nationally with The Newspaper Guild(TNG) and the Communications Workers of America (CWA).

The purpose of the Guild shall be to advance the economic interests and to improve the working conditions of its members; to guarantee, as far as it is able, equal employment and advancement opportunity in the industry and constant honesty in news, editorials, advertising, and business practices; to raise the standards of journalism and ethics of the industry; to foster friendly cooperation with all other workers; and to promote industrial unionism within the jurisdiction of the Guild. -- Article 1, Section 2 TNG-CWA Constitution.

Definitions:

AFL-CIO: American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization, an umbrella group for most independent unions in the U.S. AFL-CIO's main job is to push for pro-labor laws, coordinate policies of independent unions. AFL-CIO unions represent some 80 percent of U.S union members

Arbitration: Legal hearing at which a dispute between management and union is decided by a federal official. Both sides must abide by the arbitrator's ruling.

Collective bargaining: The process by which employers and unions representing their employees reach agreement on contracts or conditions of employment. Right of workers to join in such talks is guaranteed by a series of federal laws, especially the 1935 national labor relations (Wagner) act.

Contract: A legally binding agreement between an employer and union on behalf of union members who work for the employer. Wages, sick leave, vacations, overtime, and other conditions of employment are spelled out in the contract.

Free rider: Union term for a worker who enjoys wages and fringe benefits won in a union contract but who does not belong to the union and who pays no dues to the union.

Fringe benefits: Items of value beyond salary, to which an employee is entitled in exchange for his or her work. Examples: paid health insurance, vacations, holidays. College tuition, pensions. Such benefits were pioneered by labor unions. Employees may pay a share of the cost.

Grievance: Procedure by which unions representatives meet with management in an attempt to reconcile a dispute between one or more union members and management. Most disagreements are settled at this level

Landrum-Griffin Act: 1959. Law making misuse of union funds a federal crime, requires annual reports of union finances and activities allow U.S. supervision of union election.

Local: a branch or subdivision of a union in a city, town or region. Locals have their own elected officers and by-laws. They negotiate and administer contracts of union members who work in their geographic area.

Lock out: Action by which management prevents employees from coming to work or "locks" them out. Aim is to force workers to accept management pay offer or work rules

NLRB: National Labor Relations Board and independent federal agency created in 1935. It supervises union elections, hears union or management complaints of unfair labor practices, and can order violations ended.

Right to work: Law in 20 States, it bans "union shops" which require all workers in a place of work to join union if a majority vote for it. Unions say it violates principle of majority rule, and weakens union strength.

Scab: Union term for a person who crosses a picket line to go to work at a place of employment that is being struck by union members.

Strike: Work stoppage by employees intended to convince management to agree to union contract proposals. According to the U.S. Dept. of Labor more than 98 percent of all contracts are achieved without strikes.

Taft-Hartley Act: Passed in 1947, it outlawed closed shops in which only union members may be employed provided up to 80-day "cooling off" periods before a strike can be called in some industries, and toughened rules for union elections.

Unfair labor practice: Any violation of labor law. Example: firing an employee because he or she belongs to a union. Latest federal data show more than 38,000 unfair labor practices suits filed each year.

History: Information about the evolution of the labor movement in the U.S.

Up to the 1800's most people lived on farms and most goods were home made for personal use or in small work rooms attached to houses, for sale to locals and friends. With the invention of water powered mills, clothing and household items were able to be made quickly and cheaply for mass consumption. Factory owners sometimes built whole communities to attract people to work in their plants but as demand for quality products increased so did the desire for increased profit margins. Factory communities soon became overcrowded and working conditions deteriorated rapidly. Competition from cheap English imports and other mills caused mill owners to cut cost by increasing workloads, overcrowding living quarters and to reduce or eliminate many social functions. Wages were the next targeted as mill owners told workers they would have to work harder for less pay and without any improvement in working conditions. Because of the large amount of people looking for jobs and the willingness of European immigrants to work for less, it was soon realized that the only hope lay in collective action, union organization and the threat of strikes.

Skilled workers whose talents were hard to replace were better able to form unions to protect their wages and quality of life but unskilled laborers were not as lucky. Companies frequently used spies to spot and report back any sign of union activity. Workers who tried to organize other workers were fired. Secret organizations were soon formed.

One of them was an organization whose leader was Terence Powderly. Powderly, the son of Irish immigrants, headed the Knights of Labor which reached peak strength in 1886 of over 700,000. Unlike other organizations of that time he welcomed women and blacks in its ranks. He worked with the noted American bishop, James Gibbons, to persuade the pope to remove sanctions against Roman Catholics who joined unions.

The rise of different types of Unions like the AFL headed by Samuel Gompers, who believed in concentrating on "Bread and butter issues" like wages and better working conditions soon replaced the knights and evolved into what unions are today.

Social Improvements: Information regarding Quality of life before and after the advent of trade unions in the U.S.

Labor unions were formed out of necessity during the industrial era. At that time employees worked up to 16 hours a day 6 days a week for little pay. Children also worked in factories instead of going to school to gain the hope of future economic well being. Many workers received serious injuries in factories with little or no safety precautions.

Workers who complained about long hours and harsh treatment were fired. Workers who would band together to complain were beaten or killed by local law enforcement. Respects of individual human rights were almost non-existent

Collective and political action helped to improve conditions.

January 5, 1914, Concerns about violence in other companies a desire to attract skilled workers motivated Henry Ford to increase employee pay and offer them a five day work week. When asked why he was willing to pay his employees so much he answered "I want to make sure all my employees can afford to buy one of my cars".

March 15, 1917, The Supreme court approved a 8 hour work day to avert a national railway strike.

June 25, 1938, The Wages and Hours (later Fair Labor Standards) Act is passed, banning child labor and setting the 40-hour work week. The Act went into effect in October 1940, and was upheld in the Supreme Court on February 3, 1941.

June, 1942, the War labor board, a commission created to arbitrate union management disputes issued the "maintenance-of-membership" rule that all new employees would be covered by any existing union contract, and therefore sanctioned the closed shop. When Montgomery Ward refused the rule, Attorney General Francis Biddle sent in soldiers and President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the Army to seize the executive offices of Montgomery Ward and Company.

December 5, 1955, the two largest labor organizations in the U.S. merged to form the AFL-CIO, with a membership estimated at 15 million.

Social decline: Information regarding the current economic conditions in the wake of U.S. union density decline.

Union membership in the private sector reached a low of 7.8 percent in 2005, while 36.5 percent of government workers, including state and local in addition to federal, were unionized, according to a new report from the Evergreen Freedom Foundation.

For over two decades one of the chief motivations of corporate America has been to increase productivity and profit margins.

Improvements in productivity can be achieved in many ways, new technology, better training methods or new ways of using current technology.

One of the oldest ways to increase productivity has always been to make people work harder and longer without spending more on labor, this has been one of the major pushes for corporate America.

An economic strategy of has been to create an environment in which workers are in a constant state of insecurity about their jobs thus motivating them to work harder and longer hours with no more and sometimes less compensation.

Outsourcing is the monster under the bed that corporations are using to gradually eliminate the middle class

Such strategies have been a success to a large degree but they has also had an adverse effect on our economy because there is a relationship between hours worked and leisure time.

The work force in America is the major consumer of things produced not only in our country but many others. For entertainment Americans have many choices.

Spending time with friends, family and loved ones, watching television, listening to radio, accessing their computers, reading books, reading newspapers and magazines are just some of the things workers do for entertainment.

A relationship between hours worked and leisure time is that more time spent working leaves less time available for leisure activities like entertainment.

Americans find that each day they must prioritize what activities they can pursue outside of work in the ever shrinking time they have.

Most families require both parents to work bring in enough money to pay the bills.

Many family breadwinners have to work multiple jobs to keep even.

Decades ago articles were printed about the workaholic Japanese and how some were almost forced to take time off to increase their quality of life.

Corporations have now turned America into the country with the least leisure time in all of the developed world.

This also decreases the time Americans have for things like consumption of corporate products and fear of job loss and stagnating paychecks compound that fear and helps to push America into a recession.

The middle class was in large part created by the confidence of union workers. That they can plan for a better tomorrow and not worry too much about purchasing large items like housing, automobiles and college for their children because life would be better tomorrow.

As unions density declines that confidence also declines. Without a voice in the workplace companies are free to treat workers any way they want. (Absolute power corrupts absolute). Without unions workers may soon find many of the social advances of our time reverting back to the way they were in the 1800's

Without viable middle class companies will have to look elsewhere for customers for their products.

Without the hope of becoming middle class apathy in America may cause the starting of new small companies to decline.

Supply side strategy will not work if demand is being eroded.

Labor in other countries: Discussions regarding Human Rights and the quality of life in countries with restrictive or prohibited labor unions.

Latin America remained the most perilous region for trade union activity, with Colombia once again topping the list for killings, intimidation and death threats. 70 Colombian unionists paid the ultimate price for standing up for fundamental rights at work. Other countries under the spotlight for violence and repression against unionists include Iraq, Iran, El Salvador, Djibouti, China, Cambodia, Guatemala, Zimbabwe and Burma. Some Arabian Gulf countries continue to ban trade unions altogether, while in several other countries including North Korea; government-controlled "official trade unions" are the order of the day. Human rights watch.

Unions supply the checks and balances without which many corporations would not hesitate to abuse the massive power it yields over its workers.

Without a strong union, supported by our elected officials, the bottom line will be all that counts and people will just be an after thought.

I repeat and earlier statement (Absolute power corrupts absolute)

An example of this is the following.

A law suit was filed against the Coca-Cola Company in Columbia alleging abuses of their workers including the killings of union leaders.

It is alleged that the manager of that facility kept an open relationship with murderous death squads as part of a program to intimidate union leaders fighting for basic human rights.

Other employees stated that they were subject to torture, kidnapping and/or unlawful detention in an attempt to force them to stop all union activities.

Questions from the class: Class discussion

History and information will be based on but not limited to class curriculum from the Harvard University trade union program class of 2008.

(See attached file: memo to Keith Segalla, QPS syllabus 9-4-08.doc)