Input sought on revamping of AFL-CIO

By Mark Gruenberg

PAL Staff Writer

WASHINGTON--AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney seeks even more comments on changing the federation's nature and structure.

"We will undertake a full and open discussion about our future and the choices we must make together," he said in an early-December letter, outlining topics for the federation's 50th-anniversary convention, to be in Chicago in late July 2005.

"We need to be humble enough to recognize we do not yet have the answers, but we need the determination to seek those answers and make extremely hard decisions" about labor's future, he said.

Sweeney said the federation's Executive Council would offer its own revamp plans to the convention. It expects to discuss those plans during its meeting in Las Vegas, on March 1-3.

"But a key element in this process is ensuring we open up the discussion to all levels of the movement and hear everyone's voice," he said.

Sweeney wants every national union to send him, by the start of 2005, a list of issues it believes the AFL-CIO must address in the revamp process. "along with any suggestions for meeting those challenges." In December, the Teamsters sent their own plan.

Sweeney seeks similar lists from state feds, central labor councils, constituency groups, labor's allies, union activists, rank and file members and "friends of labor." The federation's executive committee--a 25-member group of top union leaders--will sort through the suggestions, seek those where there is consensus and those that need more study.

Sweeney's call is just the latest development in the debate over the federation's future, which Service Employees President Andrew Stern touched off in June. Stern said that labor must revamp the AFL-CIO, making it more centrally controlled, with only 20 unions downsized from 60--and with unions targeting "core industries." He also wants more money devoted to organizing. The alternative, he said, is to rip up the AFL-CIO because it is an outdated organization that hasn't kept pace with changing workplace structures, among other things.

Sterling amplified his comments in a 10-point reorganization plan distributed in November featuring forcing mergers and rebates of AFL-CIO dues to unions that create specific organizing plans. He drew both support and resistance, notably from the Machinists, who said they would leave if the AFL-CIO tried to merge them.

But Stern later said, after presenting his plans to the Executive Council in November, that if the AFL-CIO did not change, his union--the federation's largest, with an estimated 1.6 million members--might leave. An SEIU committee is already investigating the implications of departure, he added.

Stern's ideas led to other revamp plans, also posted on the www.aflcio.org website, from the Teamsters—which generally agreed with him—and from CWA Vice President Larry Cohen, who had a different view, concentrating on mobilizing and bargaining.

But the Teamsters also said the dues rebates could be a carrot to entice smaller unions to merge into larger ones, as opposed to the forced mergers Stern advocates.

Central Body to discuss future

At the January 13 and February 10 regular monthly meetings of the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body there will be discussions about the future of that body and the AFL-CIO in general. Both meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. in Wellstone Hall of the Duluth Labor Temple. Anyone interested in joining the discussions.

Central Body President Alan Netland said there is a lot of discussion nationally about the direction the labor federation needs to go in order to create a stronger presence for working families on national, state, and local agendas. "That will directly affect how we function on the local level," he said.

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Events set to remember Martin Luther King

On Saturday, January 15 the Twin Ports will start three days of events to remember the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the hope of continuing his legacy of unity. The events culminate in a march and rally on the national holiday in his honor on Monday, January 17. All the events are free and open to the public. Here's the schedule:

Saturday - Jan. 15 - 6:00 p.m. Interfaith Prayer Vigil, Temple Israel - 1602 E Second Street

The Children of Abraham planning committee focus on working towards Dr. King's vision of peace from a variety of faith traditions and perspectives. The vigil will include songs, readings, and dance.

Sunday - Jan. 16 - 5:00 p.m. Ecumenical Worship Service, Christ Temple Victory Center - 330 North 59th Ave. West

Monday - Jan. 17, Free Community Breakfast- Serving begins at 7:00 a.m., First United Methodist (Copperpot) - 230 East Skyline Parkway

The breakfast will include a live telecast of Juan Williams, senior correspondent for National Public Radio and a best selling author, speaking in Minneapolis on the theme of "Remember the Dream: Strong Minds, Great Hearts, Ready Hands, True Faith." A local program will follow the telecast at 9:00 a.m.

Monday - Jan. 17, March and Rally - 11:00 a.m., Washington Center to Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center

Marchers will begin gathering at 10:30 a.m. at Washington Center (corner of 4th Street and Lake Ave.) The march starts at 11:00 a.m. from there through downtown to the DECC. The rally begins in the DECC Auditorium at 11:30 a.m. and features Rep. Neva Walker, the first black woman elected to serve in the Minnesota legislature.

Sign language interpretation will be provided for the Breakfast and Rally on Monday, January 17th.

Dr. King was shot to death in Memphis in 1968 where he had gone to support striking AFSCME sanitation workers employed by the city. Four years earlier, prior to his death, Dr. King had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. ames Earl Ray was sentenced to life in prison for the murder. He died in 1998.

For more information, visit http://www.mlk-duluth.org or contact Fahad or Althea B’huuto at 786-9655.
"Anti-inaugural" rally to protest war, policies

On Thursday, Jan. 20 as a gala inauguration of President George W. Bush takes place in the nation’s capitol, counter-inaugurals will be held around the nation, including in Duluth.

The protests are not over election results but over Bush’s Iraq War, which has devastated that country and drained resources needed in the U.S.

The Northland Anti-War Coalition will lead a march and rally that will begin at 5:15 p.m. in Leif Ericson park. The march will proceed to the Minnesota Power Plaza at Lake Avenue and Superior Street, where the rally will take place.

Event organizers say U.S. troops should be brought home from Iraq.

“It is evident that the Iraqi people do not want to be occupied,” says AFSCME Local 66’s Sharla Gardner. “We want to show the troops that we support them by demanding their immediate return, which will the U.S. to redirect our resources to the creation of good jobs, affordable health care and now tsunami relief.”

After the recent Asian tsunami catastrophe, the U.S. pledged $35 million in aid and then quickly changed it to $350 million to hide its embarrassment in the face of larger plagues by smaller countries. However, even that $350 million is only one-fourteenth of what the U.S. is spending every month to force its military and political control on Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bob Kosuth, a union faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, says the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq has not led to a stable democracy or reconstruction.

“Indeed, it has been the primary cause of the massive violence and chaos going on there daily,” Kosuth says.

While many Americans question the continued occupation to the war in Iraq, many NAWC members, many of them trade unionists, say over 1,300 US soldiers and 100,000 Iraqis have died in a war based on lies and waged for the sake of oil, profits and power. More deaths will not justify these lies and so they continue to protest the war.

You can visit their website at www.geocities.com/NAWC. Also, on Jan. 20 a “Not One Damn Dime Day” protest is being started to stage a national boycott of all forms of consumer spending in opposition to the war and Bush’s policies. The boycott is aimed at national retailers.

Labor Lunch with Bergson

Another Labor Lunch with Mayor Herb Bergson has been arranged by Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body President Alan Netland. Mark your calendars and attend the luncheon scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 27 at noon at the Pickwick. You pay for your own lunch, which is ordered off the menu.

A lunch with Bergson last year was poorly attended by union members. If you need the Mayor’s ear, there is no better format than these luncheons.

Correction

In the Dec. 15 issue of the Labor World the Laborers Local 1097 holiday greeting advertisement was inadvertently left out of the paper.

In that issue the Blue Cross and Blue Shield ad did not render properly due to an editor’s error.

We apologize to all the members, staff and officers of Laborers Local 1097 in northern Minnesota and to Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Next on Minnesota At Work

“Minnesota At Work” the UM-Labor Education Service working people’s program is seen on 19 stations with MN AFL-CIO funding. Here are some of the area stations:

Duluth Channel 20-Tue/9:30pm, Fri/12:30am, Sat/5:30pm; Hermantown, HTV7/Ch11-M/9pm, Th/10am, Sat/5pm; Cloquet, Ch7-Tu/6pm, Sat/7pm; Virginia, Ch12-Sa/10pm; Hibbing, Ch12-Tu/5pm, W/2pm, alt/M/15pm; Iron Range Ch13-Sa/10pm, St. Cloud, Ch10-M/9pm.

The following listings are Duluth.

Jan. 6—Minnesota At Work: Twenty Years of Labor TV—2004 marked the 20th anniversary of MAW, the oldest continuously cable-cast labor show in the U.S. This compilation features excerpts from past programs highlighting two decades of the state labor movement’s people, events and issues.

Jan. 13–The Willmar 8 Revisited—What motivated eight women, living in a small town to take on the powerful banking industry. Twenty five years after their groundbreaking strike at a Willmar bank, three of the women involved in that history struggle recall the issues behind the walkout and talk about the effect it is still having.

Jan. 20–Justice on the Table—Farmworkers are paying the price to put food on our tables. Excluded from labor laws, they face low wages, harsh working conditions and a life expectancy of 48 years.

U.S. agriculture depends on a steady flow of “illegal” immigrants, but that status leads to added exploitation and abuse of the people who feed us. Moving Image Productions in cooperation with the Farmworker Justice Coalition in Oregon, listened to the stories of workers in the fields and highlighted their contributions to our economy.

Publication schedule change

There has been a change in the 2005 publication schedule for the Labor World. The first issue in March will be March 2 rather than March 9. We’re sorry for the inconvenience, but we couldn’t listen to the editor whine about his vacation schedule any longer.

The revised schedule is: January 5 and 19; February 2 and 16; March 2 and 23; April 6 and 20; (Workers’ Memorial Day/Safety issue); May 4 and 25; June 8 and 29 (Labor Day, Primary Election issue); September 14 and 28; October 12 and 26 (General Election issue); November 9 and 22; December 7 and 21 (Holiday issue).

I.U.O.E. Local 70

Monthly Arrowhead Regional Meeting

Tuesday, January 11, 2005, 5:00 P.M.

Duluth Labor Center, Hall B

Dick Lally, Business Manager (651) 646-4566

Sheet Metal Workers Bemidji Area Notice

Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 will have a union meeting for the Bemidji area on Thursday, Jan. 20 beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Northern Inn, 3600 Moberg Drive, NW in Bemidji. Hors d’oeuvres and refreshments will be served.

--Dennis Marchetti, Business Representative
The glory that was our first Sunday of 2005 came after two days out of three when Mother Nature had her way with us. Thursday’s breeze stored up Saturday’s beautiful, heavy snow storm, unlike the tsunami half way around the world a week earlier, didn’t put us in harm’s way unless we didn’t get home safe and stay put.

For many of those poor tsunami victims there was nowhere to hide because they had no warning. As much as we have fun at the expense of weather forecasters around here for their inability to do their jobs, they can tell us when we’re going to have a big problem.

We too often gripe about our less than ideal climate here. What it gives us is more than our share of crummy days of clouds, precipitation, fog and cold that tries to snap your ears off. That’s a small price to pay when you look at how “ideal climates” are visited by catastrophe. Floods, earthquakes, droughts, fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other killers don’t often destroy lives here. We seldom have to “batten down the hatches.” In other parts of the country and world in Iraq, Libya, a pot that tries to snap your ears off. That’s a small price to pay when you look at how “ideal climates” are visited by catastrophe. Floods, earthquakes, droughts, fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other killers don’t often destroy lives here. We seldom have to “batten down the hatches.” In other parts of the country and world.

In spite of living here for 56 years I didn’t notice the high tide of the days until two years ago. Jumping into frigid Lake Superior in July has always been like a religious cleansing for me. Run as hard and far as you can into the lake, dive under and run for the too hot sand before you freeze. Now there are killer tides.

The first lesson I was given about the ocean was to never turn your back on it. Even then sometimes it won’t be denied. Under the best of circumstances, hospitals in tropical climates are often occupied by tourists who don’t pay enough attention to Mother Nature. Sun burns are bad enough, but broken necks and backs from being slammed by a rogue wave are fairly common from a lack of regard for nature’s power. ‘Died while on vacation’ offers no solace in an obituary.

Millions of lives have been destroyed or shattered as we complain about a few crummy days. We’ve got it good and safe. As the days get longer and we advance into the cycle of seasons, life and death flow through the calendar. It seems odd that the first day of the year is in the dead of our winter. It should be the same as the first day of spring, when even in these northern climes think the cycle of life and rebirth is about to gain its way.

May Mother Nature show some mercy to the survivors of the tsunami. May the aid get to them soon enough.

Government hands money to the rich as it cuts budgets, services
by Senator John Marty

Minnesota, like most states, has faced tough budget decisions in recent years. Road maintenance and snowplowing have taken a hit. Healthcare for the uninsured was reduced. Schoolteachers have been laid off. Yet government subsidies for private business continue unabated.

The absurdity of this extravagant government spending is obvious at looking at professional sports. Taxpayers, some of whom cannot afford healthcare or basic necessities, provide funding for wealthy team owners and athletes.

Latrell Sprewell of the Timberwolves, recently complained about a contract offer because “I got my family to feed.” It must be a hungry family -- Sprewell is receiving $14.6 million this year.

Vikings owner Red McCombs, who will likely end up well over $300 million in profit when he sells the Vikings, complains that he cannot make it economically without a new stadium.

Marie Antoinette’s “Let them eat cake” is no more out of touch with reality than this. Even so, Speaker of the Minnesota House Steve Sviggum boldly predicted that the state will build a new publicly-funded ballpark next year as soon as it deals with a $1.4 billion state deficit through additional budget cuts.

Taxpayer funding for professional sports is just the tip of the iceberg. Federal, state, and local governments routinely give public funds to businesses. These payments are hidden through complex financing arrangements so it is not obvious to the public what is going on. Even some politicians agreeing to the deals may not fully understand what is going on.

My home city, Roseville, is on the verge of giving as much as $47 million in public money to a retail and residential redevelopment. To put this $47 million in perspective, Roseville receives only about $10 million per year from property taxes from all residents and businesses -- the windfall to the developer is almost five times that!

Proponents explain that some of the land has soil contamination that needs to be cleaned up. They neglect to mention that the polluters are responsible for the clean-up costs. When government agencies make a decision to collect money for pollution remediation, they usually succeed.

Even if the city was unable to collect from the polluters, only 7 percent of the proposed $47 million subsidy is for clean-up costs. For supporters, that doesn’t seem to matter. They claim that much of this is “free money.”

Why? They plan to use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for the project. Few people understand TIF, and most people’s eyes glaze over if you try to explain it, even though cities routinely give TIF subsidies. In theory, TIF provides funding out of the incremental increase in property taxes collected after the development as compared to the property taxes before.

When this new development is completed consultants claim that the higher value of the property will yield an incremental increase in property taxes that totals about $27 million over the next twenty-five years. The city would give this tax money to the developer as a subsidy. That is the argument that this money would not otherwise be collected. Hence, they consider it “free money.”

Not surprisingly, this isn’t the whole story. Failure to provide a subsidy does not mean that no redevelopment will occur on such prime property. Several years ago, Minneapolis provided a large TIF subsidy to a developer of the south end of the Nicollet Mall. A competing developer pushed a plan to redevelop the property without taxpayer money.

When Minneapolis chose the first developer because that proposal included a downtown Target store, they justified the TIF subsidy by calculating the difference in taxes between the proposed development and the taxes from the prior use of the property. They ignored the comparable taxes that would have been collected by the competing -- and unsubsidized -- development.

These new developments, in cities across the state, cause higher
We're dogmeat if 2005 doesn't prove to be better than 2004 was. (To be continued...)

AUSTRALIA -- Oh 2004, bird thou never wert. Was it really that horrible a year, or does it only seem that way? Abu Ghraib, the endless trials and tribulations of Crawford, Texas? But let's quit dwelling on the negative here, I didn't even know where I was going. "Say," said Twight, "do you have room for the entire pack of pussbags in Texas?'

I didn't even know where I was going. "I can do even better than that," said the Dude. "You ever heard of North Platte, Nebraska? That's where Dickey the Insulator was introduced to Interior Secretary Gale Norton, she said, 'You've done a nice job decorating the White House.'"

Bless them for just not standing for it. "The Coalition of the Willing was depleted when Hungary, Thailand, Nicaragua, New Zealand, Honduras, Ukraine, Spain, the Philippines, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic and Poland (so movingly cited by President Bush during one of the debates) all proved less than willing. On the other hand, Tonga is still with us."

-- Emblematic Political Moment of the Year: As the full dimensions of the tidal wave in the Indian Ocean became clear, Bush's staff used the occasion to... take a few cheap shots at Bill Clinton. Explaining why the president had neither returned to Washington nor even bothered to come out and read a statement of sorrow, The Washington Post reported that one official said: "the president wanted to be fully briefed on our efforts. He doesn't want to make a symbolic statement or have his_intellectual looks like. Upon being introduced to Interior Secretary Galen Norton, she said, "You've done a nice job decorating the White House."

-- The Ukrainians showed us all what people who really care about democracy do when there's cheating at the polls. Bless them for just not standing for it.

-- Media Low Point of the Year: Rush Limbaugh on Abu Ghraib: "I'm talking about people having a good time, these people, you ever heard of emotional release? You ever heard of the need to blow some steam off?"

"No problemo," said the Dude. "Let us do the shopping for you!"

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By Molly Ivins
decides its job is to censor bad taste on television (got its life's work cut out for them, haven't they?), instead of preventing the truly ob-scene and dangerous concentra-tion of ownership in the media.

-- Another high point: John Ashcroft (the man whose understanding of the right to dissent is so profound he said, "To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: You tactics only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and di-minish our resolve") will be re-warded as attorney general by Al (Defining Torture Down) Gonzales.

Gonzales puts out the legal memo that says "cruel, inhumane or degrading" treatment does not constitute torture as long as it is not "equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function or even death."

Well, friends, the old ball is starting another orbit of the sun, giving us all a chance to do better this time. Let's not blow it, because we sure look like dogmeat after this one.

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By Don Holte
Insulators Local 49

"So Dude," I says, "we're like imbeciles when it comes to relating to you, fill us in on proper protocol with regards to yourself."

"Treat me like I was just another Bros. All I've ever wanted from mankind was to be treated with the same respect that you'd treat your friends with, nothing extra. I've only wanted you to treat mankind and the planet I gave you with that same respect."

"Let me get this straight," I says, "you're not into all this ring-kissing and general kowtowing the bigwigs have us believe?"

"No way, you must have realized by now that you are surrounded by pinheads, I take some responsibility for that. In giving you the ability to think for yourselves, I've also given you the ability to let others do your thinking for you. It's all part of the experiment. I am in your words, perfect, does it make any sense that I would need affirmation from you that this is so? Look, for thousands of years, there's been some who have used me like weaklings use a bully. They claim to be my secret agents and use that false power to initiate mayhem on their fellow man in my name for their personal gain. Now this makes me crabbly! And I have a place for them!"

"I'll bet it's North Platte, Nebraska," chimed in Engstrom, "that's the buttuhole of the universe."

"I can do even better than that," said the Dude. "You ever heard of Crawford, Texas? But let's quit dwelling on the negative here, I called you here for a purpose, and I haven't got all night."

"Whadya mean you called us here," I asked. "I was driving and I didn't even know where I was going."

"Remember when you blew the corner at Woodland Avenue, and ended up on Columbus?"

"Oh, you saw that," I says, "anyone could make that mistake."

"You gotta excuse my friend," said Engstrom. "He's Norwegian, and he never admits mistakes."

"Gotcha," said the Dude, "that could qualify him as president!"

"Well, we'd all be eating lutefisk and sucking down kipper snacks," Engstrom yelled.

"Better than Halliburton rations or dying for oil," said the Dude. "Right arm and the Insulator's salute to Dickey," said Engstrom, "Right arm," said the Dude.

"Say," said Twight, "do you have room for the entire pack of passbags in Texas?"

"No problema," said the Dude. (To be continued...)
Call for a Property tax freeze

Minnesota Senate Tax Chairman Larry Pogemiller (DFL-MPLS) is asking Governor Tim Pawlenty to join with him in supporting legislation early in the 2005 legislative session that would freeze local property taxes.

In 2003, the Senate passed a tax bill containing language that would have frozen property taxes because Senators predicted the Governor’s budget would shift the state budget problem onto local property taxes and fees.

“The Governor’s radio comments (Dec. 23) regarding local property taxes is a tacit acknowledgement that his policies have partially caused local property taxes and fees to increase,” Sen. Pogemiller said.

“The Governor claims he made a pledge not to raise taxes. Unfortunately, he has not kept that pledge in regards to property taxes and fees at the state level,” Sen. Pogemiller said.

In addition to facing increases in property taxes, the Governor’s budget raised about $400 million dollars in new state fees, and local governments have been forced to do the same at the local level to maintain basic municipal services. For example, the city of Saint Paul recently announced a street light maintenance fee for all who live and do business in the city. The fee is also assessed on schools, churches, and non-profits.

Pogemiller is concerned the Governor’s artificial “no new taxes” approach is unduly forcing up property taxes and fees. These assessments are not based on people’s ability to pay.

“The only way a property tax freeze bill could pass is by securing bipartisan support,” Sen. Pogemiller said.

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HERE 99 has had an informational picket at the airport because of the union-busting since Nov. 1, 2003. We’re asking everyone to please refrain from buying Pepsi products to help us in our struggle.

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Work & Health

By Phillip L. Polakoff, M. D.

Even retirement can be a health hazard

Regardless of age or occupation, most working men and women eventually face the health hazard of retirement. Like other hazards in the workplace, you can either learn how to cope with it and not get hurt, or you can barge into it unprepared and suffer.

Retirement can affect two aspects of your total health—your physical health and your mental health.

Preparation for retirement ideally should begin 5 or 10 years before the time you’ve decided you want to close the old locker for the last time and walk away. An evaluation of your health status is a good place to start.

Some of the first symptoms of chronic disabling illnesses begin to show up between the ages of 40 and 50. Chronic diseases—cancer, and those of the heart, kidney and blood vessels—account for most of the illnesses of people as they get older. However, there are no particular diseases limited to old age.

The elderly are also more likely to come down with pneumonia, influenza and other respiratory infections.

By paying careful attention to your physical health during your earlier years, these chronic diseases lying in wait down the road a few years hence might be more completely under control for a more enjoyable retirement.

An important part of staying well, particularly for older people, is nutrition. Older people tend toward malnutrition for a number of possible reasons. Some are victims of long-established poor eating habits. Some are simply ignorant of a basic understanding of how the body needs and uses the food consumed. Others may have a poor appetite. Some, sadly, suffer from low morale because they cook and eat alone.

For those planning their retirement, learning about nutrition can be a double opportunity. Not only can this knowledge help maintain good health and a sense of well-being, it can also provide another interest to help replace a job-related skill and interest.

You can replace a skill no longer needed to keep a machine in good working order by learning how to take care of a much more complicated “machine”—your body.

Mental health can be affected by retirement because too many retirees—especially those who have not planned ahead—think of themselves as no longer needed. And we all need to feel needed.

These people suffer a great deal of mental and emotional stress. They can help themselves by broadening their interests by drawing up a plan while they are still working.

If there were a magic key to well-being in your later years, it would be “Keep active.” Work itself is a powerful medicine. If you don’t have to retire, and your health permits, keep working—perhaps at a slower pace and with fewer responsibilities.

If retirement is mandatory, find something you would like to do—and MUST do on a regular basis, not just when you feel like it.

If you have questions or suggestions for articles, write Dr. Phillip L. Polakoff at 171 Alvarado Road, Berkeley, Calif., 94705.

(Copyright 2005 by Dr. Phillip L. Polakoff and medical writer Jack Tucker/PAI)

Media whites out vote fraud

by David Swanson, International Labor Communications Assn.

The Cleveland Federation of Labor sent busloads of demonstrators to a rally in Columbus, Ohio, Monday to take part in a protest of election fraud in the 2004 presidential election. There is strong evidence of vote theft in Ohio. That will be news to anyone who gets their news from a television or from most print media.

Some voices in the media admit that the election system is badly broken. But they say that it also functioned quite acceptably in November. It’s broken in the abstract, as it were, but not in any concrete time or place.

The New York Times on December 15, did print a short article on a particular allegation of fraud in the Ohio recount made by Congressman Conyers. But the Times has avoided most of the story. Sadly, so has most of the labor media and other progressive media. You’d think that labor, after spending more than $200 million on the election, would want to make sure it got its money’s worth on the vote count. Unfortunately, like its candidate, John Kerry, most of the labor movement has so far dropped the ball on this one.

There are well-documented cases of fraud that need further investigation.

(See longer version of this article at http://ilcaonline.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&amp;sid=1398.)
Labor History: The Centennial of the IWW, the Wobblies

A PAI Special Report:

CHICAGO--They started in the mining district around Butte, Montana. They coalesced in Chicago in January 1905. They were the forerunners, in the U.S., of the industrial union movement. They openly backed--depending on which source you read--socialism or "syndicalism." They were "The Wobblies."

Nobody has documented how the Industrial Workers of the World, led by the legendary William D. Haywood of Colorado, got that nickname. But there is no disputing that the IWW was the leading radical labor movement in the early part of the 1900s.

In aiming to unite all industrial workers, the IWW was in sharp contrast to the American Federation of Labor, a craft-based coalition that accepted capitalism. Even their leaders, Samuel Gompers of the AFL, a Cigar Maker, and Haywood, of the Western Federation of Miners, sounded different rhetorical tocsins.

"Long before the coming of the modern Socialist movement it was understood by the economists that all wealth is produced by labor. The theory of surplus value is the beginning of all Socialist knowledge. It shows the capitalist in his true light, that of an idler and a parasite. It proves the capitalist nature of the old."

Haywood wrote in Industrial Socialism, his key work.

The platform of the Wobblies, adopted at that Chicago convention on Jan 2, 1905, was even blunter:

"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life," it began. "Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and machinery of production and abolish the wage system."

The IWW also blasted the AFL, calling it unable to cope with industrial concentration and employers' power. It also said the federation let bosses pit sets of workers against each other. IWW's solution--one big union--was as radical as its declaration.

"Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system...It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism...By organizing industrially, we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

The Wobblies achieved some successes after their founding, along with some notable setbacks. They were a moving force in the successful "Bread and Roses" struggle of millworkers in Lawrence, Mass., in 1912, for example--not only by mobilizing the working women, but by publicizing the inhumane conditions for the women and their children. IWW's numbers reached 250,000 in 1913.

But they suffered a setback in the silkworkers strike in Paterson, N.J., when authorities used legalities to suppress the workers' civil rights, threaten all with arrest--and eventually charge 2,238 with unlawful assembly or disorderly conduct. Bail ran as high as $5,000 per worker--a tremendous sum for each of them in that era--and police brutality was rampant on IWW picket lines in Paterson.

The IWW and labor as a whole also suffered a huge setback when two men, Iron Workers Secretary-Treasurer John J. McNamara and his brother James, admitted guilt in the 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times building, because its publisher was the prime mover in keeping L.A. an open-shop town.

Though the McNamaras were not Wobblies, the IWW rallied to defend them and even threatened a general strike if they were prosecuted, reports American Labor, A Bicentennial History. Their admission drastically hurt the IWW and its cause.

Unfortunately, IWW never had the chance! The U.S. entered World War I. IWW's anti-capitalist and generally neutralist stance--it denounced capitalists as war profiteers--drew attention and a federal crackdown that effectively smashed it. "Hostility towards the Wobblies reached a fever pitch" after that, American Labor added. "Their threats to shut down factories and sabotage crops sent tremors...throughout the country. It didn't matter there was little evidence they actually disrupted wartime production...Hundreds were rounded up and jailed, merely on the grounds of suspicion." Approximately 150 IWW leaders were imprisoned, breaking the movement.

This graphic was in IWW publications in 1917-18 when the federal government tried and convicted over 100 Wobblies for supposedly hindering the war effort. From the Labadie Collection, Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Michigan Library.
Three meetings on Hermantown

Good Neighbors for Responsible Growth, a coalition that is questioning expanding Hermantown’s Wal-Mart into a Supercenter, will be holding two public meetings to discuss the project. The meetings will be at the Hermantown City Hall, 5255 Maple Grove Road, Thursdays, January 6 and January 13, from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

“These meetings will focus on the environmental review process and environmental issues related to building this 203,000 square foot Supercenter directly adjacent to Miller Creek, a designated trout stream,” said Deb Ortman, a member of the coalition.

Ortman says among the environmental concerns are storm water run-off pollution from the 22 acre development including the parking lot, destroying 11 acres of hardwood forested land, incremental development within the Miller Creek watershed, 24 hour noise and light pollution affecting surrounding neighborhoods, increased litter, impact on wetlands, potential for gas leakage from proposed gas station into Miller Creek, and no underground retention pond.

For more info contact Debbie at 722-2421 or Boyd at 729-5882. Hermantown residents who need a ride to the meetings can call Steve at 590-3684. The Hermantown City Council will hold a public hearing Tuesday, January 18, at 5:30 p.m. at the Public Safety Building, 5111 Maple Grove Road.

Wal-Mart set

The hearing will receive public comments and questions on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter. Contact Hermantown City Hall, 729-3600, to receive a copy of the EAW.

Study reveals hidden costs

When Wal-Mart invades a neighborhood, it leaves behind the empty shells of the mom-and-pop stores that it has put out of business. Now a study, “Hidden Cost of Wal-Mart Jobs,” has placed a price tag on the cost of the Wal-Mart invasion. The study tracks the use of safety net programs by Wal-Mart workers in California. As an editorial in the Oakland Tribune put it, “The problem with Wal-Mart is not that it is winning (the class war) but that it wins because of us poor schmucks in the middle who are unwittingly assisting its cause.” (http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/lowwage/walmart.pdf)

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