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Sun Times “deletes” photo department

By John Bachtell

The new Chicago Sun Times management ordered the newspaper's 28 photojournalists to a 9:30 a.m. meeting last Thursday. The meeting was “intimidating” with a “toxic and unkind spirit in the office,” Pulitzer Prize winning photographer John White later told the Poynter website.

“As you know, we are going forward into multimedia and video, and that is going to be our focus. So we are eliminating the photography department,” White recalled management saying.

Twenty-eight photojournalists were out the door in a blink. It was as if “they pushed a button and deleted a whole culture of photojournalism,” said White. “Humanity is being robbed, by people with money on their minds.” Photographers call it the darkest day for photojournalism. However, the layoffs are part of a broader crisis of the newspaper industry as the public finds other means to get news online.

To keep up, newspaper owners are attempting to break unions, hollowing out their staffs and in the process destroying journalism as a profession. There are only two labor editors at the nation's major newspapers as business pages take over coverage of labor news. Meanwhile, the number of newspapers covering Congress dwindled to 23



in 2008. Syracuse University professor Vin Crosbie predicts more than half of the approximately 1,400 daily newspapers in the country could fold by 2020.

Meanwhile, the corporate media industry is consolidated in fewer hands. In 1983 there were 50 different corporations that had control over U.S. media; today there are only six (Viacom, Comcast, Disney, Time Warner, CBS, and News Corporation). The monopolization and drive for

T H I S W E E K :

- Sun Times “deletes” photo department
- Fast food strikers teach some important lessons
- Attention Part time at \$7.40 equals poverty
- Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan
- Texas clergy and students back Walmart strikers

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profits is adding pressures to cutting operating costs. The move at the Sun Times is part of cost-cutting efforts by Wrapports, LLC, the new owners. Instead of having photojournalists on staff, news reporters will be trained in how to use their smartphones to snap photos and videos.

While corporations destroy journalism as a profession and concentrate their holdings and control over the flow of news and information, they are also undermining democracy.

Earlier Wrapports closed the paper's nine suburban offices, consolidating operations into its downtown headquarters. Suburban editorial and advertising employees are shouldering new expenses as they work from cars and coffee shops and send stories remotely, according to the Chicago Newspaper Guild (CNG), which represents the workers.

A satirical Sun Times hiring ad by the CNG said, "On call for 24/7 for possible breaking news for as low as \$13 an hour. Position requires tact to interface with public who complains about publication's lack of content. Ability to deal with distant and hard-to-reach editors in a toxic labor environment is a plus. "Experience required: - Enough to know how to churn out multiple stories per day, but not enough experience to demand a reasonable salary."

Newspapers claim to be losing money mainly because advertising revenues have plummeted. But the fact is they are still making profits - just not enough for the money men. Average pre-tax profits for newspapers peaked at 28.5 percent in 1999, and were still 24.2 percent in 2005. They fell to 14.9 percent in the first nine months of 2011.

according to the International News Marketing Association. However, 2012 ended with stocks for the major newspaper publishers surging on Wall Street. According to Poynter, "Six of eight publicly traded companies showed gains for 2012; four of those were up 30 percent or more."

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CNG president David Pollard said the union would fight the firings and "what the company is trying to do to our union brothers and sisters, (and) to the freedoms we hold dearly as United States citizens and that is freedom of the press." The firings, he said, "may be looked at as a cost saving to them, but more importantly, it weakens the freedom of the press and the positive and powerful impact it has had on our country."

"This fight is not only about the Chicago Newspaper Guild. It's about all of organized labor. They are trying to kill us," said Pollard.



John Bachtell writes for Peoplesworld.org

Fast food strikers teach some important lessons

By PW Editorial

Over the past few months thousands of low-wage fast food workers have walked off their jobs. In most cases, fast food workers are making minimum wage. Some make \$8, maybe \$9 an-hour.

Almost all work without benefits, sick time or paid vacation. They are some of the most exploited workers in our increasingly service sector driven economy. Additionally, "dignity and respect" is a major demand of all low-wage fast food workers.

Favoritism, racism, and sexism are common practices in the industry, an industry with very high turnover and very little, if any, third party, independent mediation. Remarkably very few have faced retaliation or reprisal from management. And where reprisals have occurred the community response has been swift and decisive. The strikes and the communities' response of support are important for at least three reasons.

First, the strikes have forced recalcitrant

managers, franchise owners and restaurant CEO's to take note and come to the realization that the community - labor, clergy, student, academic, etc.- intends to mediate low-wage fast-food worker grievances regardless of union recognition and in spite of the relative ineffectiveness of the NLRB.

Second, the strike wave has hit the fast-food industry in its collective pocket book. If for no other reason, the strikes are important because managers, franchise owners and corporate CEOs are beginning to address at least some of the grievances brought to their attention, due to the loss in profits and bad publicity. And thirdly is the issue of worker empowerment. The strike wave has empowered a whole new section of the working class to the possibility of collective action as a means to redress grievances.

There will likely be more strikes as we move forward. New and different tactics and strategies will likely be used. The work isn't done. But even in its infancy the fast food industry strikes have already taught us some important lessons.

The strike wave has hit the fast-food industry in its collective pocket book.

Attention Walmart: Part time at \$7.40 equals poverty

By John Rummel

Three weeks ago, 400 fast food workers across Metro Detroit shocked their employers by walking off the job demanding a living wage of \$15.00 an hour. The “D-15” and Good Jobs Now campaign is not letting up. On Friday, that campaign was taken to the front door of the Dearborn Walmart.

Good Jobs Now organizer Pastor W. J. Rideout of All God’s People Church in Detroit said Walmart CEO Mike Duke makes between \$8,000 and \$9,000 an hour, versus the workers getting \$7.40.

But Rideout said the “kicker” is, people working at Walmart are not given 40-hour weeks. “They get between 15 and 30 hours a week, bringing their earnings to only \$6,000 to \$11,000 a year.”

He considers the \$7.40 minimum wage a beneath-poverty “slave wage.”

It’s not enough to support a family said 52-year-old Detroitier Dwight Jarrett.

Jarrett said the economy is growing poorer and is “hard on everybody, even some of the middle class.”

As an example, he said, look at gas prices, currently \$4.20 a gallon in Michigan. “You might be able to pay for gas maybe two days out of the week,” he said. “Later that month, you pay the rent. After you take all that and other things, you can’t get to work because you don’t have money.”



trickle-down: “Take care of the little people and the little people will take care of the big people. The whole community can grow, not just Walmart.

“Walmart makes too much money to not support its workers,” he added.

The fight is “personal” for 58-year-old Velma Cornelius. She wants her three children to “be able to get out there and take care of their families. You can’t do that on \$7.40 an hour.

It’s frustrating and hard, she said. “When they do find employment, they don’t get enough hours to pay their bills.”

Cornelius is not one to give up. She said, “We are fighting for a great purpose, for people to survive and be part of the economy again. Not just here in Detroit, but the whole country.”

It is that kind of determination that causes Rideout to say the campaign will “absolutely” continue. “It is like a fire that starts in the forest, spreading from Detroit, Dearborn, Westland, to all over Michigan and America - and on and on and on,” the pastor said.

Walmart’s \$7.40 minimum wage is a beneath-poverty “slave wage.”

Texas clergy and students back Walmart strikers

By Jim Lane

On Saturday June 1, we held a rendezvous at a Kroger's store in DeSoto, and then car-pooled to the Walmart in nearby Lancaster to urge on the striking employees. Even before we started, some young people were passing out leaflets urging everyone to come to more events being planned for Friday June 7.

Managers stopped some of the protest crew before they entered the store, but most of us got in. We held a good loud rally, with lots of signs and placards, inside. The group had planned to get down on one knee and have a prayer from one of the three Methodist ministers accompanying us, but police and Walmart management made that impossible. We did manage to get off several rousing cheers of "Stand up, Live Better!" I noticed, and other people confirmed, that the customers who saw us seemed favorable. The three ministers, wearing religious scarves hand made in Guatemala, lead us solemnly out the door, where we broke into "We, Are, the Ninety-Nine Percent!" as we passed through the parking lot. Again, the customers seemed happy we were there

Outside, we assembled curbside to the service road of Highway 35, which is, ironically, the NAFTA highway. There, we protested low wages, unattainable benefits, and murderous uncertain working hours. State Representative Roberto Alonzo urged us to keep at it until decent treatment becomes available for all workers. Reverend Doctor Joerg Rieger assured us that God and Jesus Christ, a carpenter, were clearly on our side.

Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan

Por La Confederación Sindical Internacional (CSI)

La CSI y ONU Mujeres unen sus fuerzas para presentar una nueva publicación: "Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan: aplicar protecciones para los trabajadores del hogar".

La presentación oficial, copatrocinada por ONU Mujeres, la CSI y el Gobierno de Filipinas, tendrá lugar en un evento paralelo durante el 57º período de sesiones de la Comisión sobre la Condición Jurídica y Social de la Mujer de las Naciones Unidas, en Nueva York, que lleva por tema: "Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan: asegurar la protección, respetar los derechos".

En base a testimonios personales de Bolivia, el Estado de Nueva York en EE.UU., Filipinas y Sudáfrica, la carpeta informativa de la CSI y ONU Mujeres pretende incitar a todos los gobiernos a tomar medidas para asegurarse de que los trabajadores/as del hogar estén reconocidos y protegidos por la ley. Los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar representan parte integral de la fuerza laboral en el mundo entero y su participación podría aumentar aún más en los próximos años. Actualmente constituyen ya entre el 4-10% y el 1-2,5% de la mano de obra total en los países en desarrollo e industrializados, respectivamente. El 83% de estos trabajadores son mujeres. Millones son migrantes que dejan atrás a sus propios hijos para hacerse cargo de los hijos de otras personas. Sin embargo, en el 40% de los países del mundo no cuen-

tan con ningún tipo de protección.

Apoyándose en los prometedores avances en cuanto al marco normativo internacional y las prácticas nacionales que plasman estas normas de derechos humanos en muchos países, la carpeta informativa explica cómo las protecciones legales no sólo benefician a los trabajadores del hogar sino al conjunto de la sociedad. "ONU Mujeres se compromete a colaborar aún más estrechamente con sus asociados clave para garantizar la protección legal y social a las trabajadoras del hogar", afirmó Michelle Bachelet, Directora Ejecutiva de ONU Mujeres. "El derecho de los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar a ser reconocidos y protegidos por la ley es un derecho humano fundamental. Debemos reconocer que los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar realizan una importante contribución a la sociedad, que nos beneficia a todos".

Pero la carpeta no se limita a aportar argumentos para la protección legal. Demuestra que las normas pueden ser aplicadas y mejoradas en todos los países. "Los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar se merecen un trabajo decente, igual que cualquier otro trabajador. Nuestra campaña '12 para 12' pretende establecer un movimiento global de trabajadores/as del hogar reclamando justicia para esta categoría de trabajadores olvidada. Exhortamos a todos los gobiernos a ampliar la legislación laboral para cubrir también este sector", manifiesta Sharan Burrow, Secretaria General de la CSI.

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