Highlights of the 25th Conference of the Printing, Publishing & Media Workers Sector of the Communications Workers of America

Delegates to the Sector’s 25th Conference:

- Approved a resolution (Proposition No. 1) affirming the Sector’s role, its operations and responsibilities within the relationship with CWA. Resolution No. 1 clarifies responsibilities and funding for the Sector going forward.

- Elected Dan Wasser to the post of Sector President and CWA Executive Officer.

- Authorized credentials for 43 delegates, 14 alternates and 7 guests.

- In a contested election, picked leaders for the Finance and Laws Committee to act as an executive board in developing policies and procedures for the Sector.

- Selected members of the Board of Trustees for the CWA/ITU Negotiated Pension Plan.

- Were briefed on CWA’s plans by outgoing CWA Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Rechenbach.

- Honored veteran local leaders for their long time service.

Conference Approves New Alignment for PPMWS

Delegates to the 25th PPMWS Conference ratified a plan to realign the Sector and its relationship to CWA.

The Sector will change from annual to biennial conferences consistent with CWA’s new convention cycle. Additional meetings may continue to be held at the CWA’s new convention site.

NPP Reports Strong Performance for 2010

Reporting an overall return of 14%, or $100 million, the Negotiated Pension Plan (NPP) experienced a second straight year of strong performance, the Conference Committee on the NPP reported.

Assets grew by $19 million over the 2010 calendar year, reaching $779 million. The Fund received $10 million in contributions and paid $90 million in benefits during the calendar year.

The NPP experienced a return on investment of 6.3% for the first half of 2011—raising assets to $795 million as of May 31, 2011. For the first six months of 2011 (January 1 through May 31) the Plan estimated that the NPP is funded at 76% and 83% depending on the formula used and based on asset market value of $779 million.

Despite two years of strong and steady growth, NPP Administrator John Foss reported that the Plan remained in “critical” status under the formula used by the Pension Protection Act of 2006. He said the NPP would continue to operate under the Rehabilitation Plan that was implemented in March 2010.

In addition to investment returns and contributions, the NPP received $748,211 in Withdrawal Liabilities during the 2010 calendar year.

The report noted that the NPP has been assessing Withdrawal Liability since 2003. Due to losses incurred in 2008, the amount of Withdrawal Liability for employers seeking to leave the Fund has been increased to be equivalent to the annual cost of remaining in the Fund. Foss said the Withdrawal Liability is calculated based on the actuarial valuation as of the beginning of the calendar year. Local unions have been instructed to contact the Plan office if they are notified that an employer of plans to discontinue contributions due to retirements, transfers, closures or sales.
It has been a motivating and inspiring past few months. The Sector and its members have faced many challenges over the years: attacks in Detroit that led to a lengthy strike; at the Washington Post, where our members are still working without a contract after eight long years; concessionary bargaining at the Pittsburgh Post; consolidations of facilities which has affected many of our sisters and brothers; and most recently, the realignment of the Printing Sector itself.

One constant throughout all these difficult times has been the unwavering resolve of our members to, not only overcome adversity, but also to continue fighting for better conditions and a stronger labor movement no matter where we are.

As we prepare to write the next chapter and to move our Sector forward, the delegates at the 25th Annual Sector Conference adopted a measure to do just that…move the Sector forward. After many months of talking with CWA’s leadership, the Laws and Finance Committee presented the Sector delegates with a resolution to maintain the Sector’s autonomy, structure and finances, and to put both CWA and the Sector on a stable financial footing moving forward. I commend the members of the Laws and Finance Committee, and the Sector delegates for approving the measure put before them.

It is in difficult times that our members truly show great leadership and poise, and once again they are perfect examples and the essence of what unity stands for. I am honored and privileged to be part of such a great organization.

We will continue our work on a number of initiatives over the next several months. This report will highlight just some of them:

Organizing – It is essential that we put together a well conceived and comprehensive plan to grow the Sector. This includes looking at new organizing possibilities within our current makeup, examining new locations and similar occupations related to but currently outside of our traditional makeup. It also includes better utilization, promotion and the highlighting of the CWA label to its fullest extent, not only internally, but also to the broader customer base.

The task of organizing cannot be left up to the locals alone. The Sector and CWA must stand side-by-side with each local and give support to them in all aspects of organizing, not just financial.

With this in mind, the Sector will be rolling out organizing initiatives aimed at stabilizing and growing the Sector membership.

Contract Enforcement and Negotiations – Contract negotiations and enforcement of what has been agreed to have always been pivotal in representing the membership. Each year we process numerous grievances. Unlike many other unions, the Sector and CWA pay all costs of arbitration and legal assistance once cases are approved by the Sector. That policy ensures that employers cannot cripple workers’ contractual rights by draining the finances of local unions. Every local has the strength of the International behind it in contract enforcement.

The Sector will be looking at ways to improve on all aspects of contract enforcement and contract negotiations. We will look at how we negotiate new collective bargaining agreements and increase our leverage at the table.

Transparency/Efficiency – The Sector needs to become more transparent to the members. Membership levels, revenue/expense levels and the intercompany accounts of the Sector need to be shared with the membership on a consistent basis, but at the same time we must protect the integrity of the organization.

Greater efficiency will aid in the growth of locals. It will also enable local unions to conform to Sector Bylaws and CWA’s requirements. Through efficiencies and hard work, the Sector has been able to maintain the level of representation we are all accustomed to. However, we need to focus on doing better and increasing the level of representation to our members by being more transparent and efficient.

I will be working closely with the Laws and Finance Committee and with many local leaders as well, to address these and other initiatives.

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**Committee on Laws and Finance**

Eight delegates were nominated for five open positions on the all important Sector Laws and Finance Committee that will operate as the organization’s executive board between Conferences. Sector President-elect Dan Wasser said the contested election reflected the “spirit of energy and enthusiasm” evident at the Conference. “People want to get involved,” he said.

The top five vote getters, in order of finish were:
- Chicago Mailers Local PM-2 (14430) President Bob Maida
- Pittsburgh Typographical Local #7 (14827) President Don McConnell
- New York Typographical Local #6 (14156) President Art Delanni
- Chicago Typographical Union No. 16 (14408) Secretary-Treasurer Michelle Tovo
- Washington, D.C. Mailers Local M-29 (14201) President Mark Pulliam

Candidates Steve Stasenko, Pittsburgh Mailers Local M-22 (14842); Washington, D.C. Columbia Typographical Local #101-12 (14200) President Bob Stevenson; and Matthew Theodore of Sidney, NY Local #81 (14164), finished sixth through eighth respectively.

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**Conforming Amendments to Sector By Laws**

Delegates approved a series of updates and amendments to the Sector’s by laws to clean up language required by changes made to CWA’s Constitution and to reflect other changes that have taken place in recent years. Among them:

- Language providing a succession process in the event of a vacancy in the position of Sector President. The new language specifies that the chairperson of the Laws and Finance Committee would preside until a new president is elected.
- Asserting that in the event that a member of the Laws and Finance Committee or the Pension Committee are not named as delegates to the Conference, they will be replaced by election at that Conference. The change effectively defines when a committee vacancy actually occurs.

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**Wasser Lays Out Roadmap for PPMWS Future**

Sector President-elect Dan Wasser laid out three goals for the Printing Sector as he began his term of office: “moving the Sector forward, maintaining our autonomy and growing our membership.”

Wasser, who was elected by acclamation to a four-year term, thanked the delegates and singled out the members of the Laws and Finance Committee for their “hard work and deep commitment to the Sector” providing a “perfect example of what defines the word commitment.” The committee’s members “have worked tirelessly” during the past several months to keep things going, he said. The first task is “energizing and mobilizing” the locals. He pledged to hold discussions with delegates and members. “I am confident we can achieve our goals in moving the Sector forward,” he concluded.

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**Sector Finances**

As of the printing of the Sector News, audits are underway for fiscal years 2009 – 2010, 2010 – 2011, June 1, 2011 – July 12, 2011. The following partial report was provided to the Sector Conference:

As of May 31, 2011, the Operating Fund had a balance of $582,111.64, un-audited. The Segregated Fund had a balance of $824,958.75, un-audited. There were no expenditures from the strike fund during the past fiscal year.

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Page 4B SECTOR NEWS Third Quarter 2011
Collective Bargaining Briefs Around the Sector

Buffalo-Niagara
Bucking the trend in today’s U.S. labor climate, Buffalo-Niagara Typographical #19 (14148) ratified three new labor agreements with the Buffalo News covering members in the Composing Room, Ad Operations and Ad Services departments.

A signing bonus was allotted to each employee with family health care coverage in the amount of $18,000 to cover changes negotiated in the health care plan; $9,000 for single coverage. For employees who choose to opt out of coverage the bonus was $1,187.50.

Additionally, wages will increase between $1.00 and $2.00 an hour. Raises are retroactive to 2007, depending on the employee’s classification. Even though they had been without a contract for one year, members in all three units remained united and held strong to their demands for a fair contract, enabling the negotiation process to work.

New York City
New York Mailers / New York Typographical #6 (14156) also bucked the trend securing a new agreement at the NY Daily News. The Mailers agreement with the Daily News was ratified by the active members by a margin of 4 to 1. It is a four-year contract establishing wage hikes of two- and-a-half percent each year, a $1,500 bonus and $950 into the employee 401k account, and a guarantee that employees will not be furloughed for the term of the agreement. This was in exchange for minor housekeeping changes and updates in the collective bargaining agreement.

Detroit Local 18
Employees of the Michigan Legislative Services Bureau in Lansing, represented by Detroit Typographical Union #18 (14093) could see their workload increase under the terms of pending discussions, but Local President Thomas Grenfell cautioned that the agreement “is not yet a done deal.” The workers in that operation handling coding and composing on legislative reports and bills.

Grenfell also reported that employees at the Lansing State Journal cast a majority vote to extend their agreement for one year.

Commercial Print Chain Buys Assets of EGT
Consolidated Graphics (CGX), owner of 70 commercial print shops nationwide, has purchased the assets of Michigan printer, The EGT Group.

Detroit Typographical #18 represents EGT workers in a wall-to-wall unit. Local President Tom Grenfell says that the new owner has agreed to extend the current union contract for one year, and to maintain the Local 18 bug, along with all 67 Sector-represented employees. The company’s new name is EGT Printing Solutions and it is located in Madison Heights, MI.

Toledo Blade Workers Draw the Line on Concessions
A gutsy strike vote by all the unions in the Toledo Newspaper Council closed out what Local President Tom Grenfell called “very difficult concessionary negotiations” with the Toledo Blade.

The unions slammed the door on the employers persistent demands for even deeper wage cuts, concluding negotiations with a three-year agreement that includes 3% wage reductions each year. The agreement begins a new employer-based PPO health benefit program that requires employee contributions of 30%. The workers will have an option to take a one-week furlough, or reduced vacation time for the most senior personnel.

The Blade will offer a voluntary buyout program. The Toledo Blade is owned by Block Communications that also owns the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Sector represented workers remaining in the Blade’s prepress department will not be laid off as a result of the employer’s decision to send some prepress work to its Pittsburgh plant.

Springfield
Employees at the Springfield State Journal-Register, represented by Springfield Mailers Local FM-5 (14434) secured 26 weeks of wages and a continuation of medical care when the paper moves its production facilities. Provisional Mailers receive one-week of pay for each year of service up to a maximum of 26 weeks, while part-timers get a 17 week maximum, based on one week for each year of service, with a minimum of $1,500. The final agreement also provides pay for contractual days and one-half of their 2011 vacation pay. All members of the unit are eligible for a $1,000 educational bonus for attending classes or retraining programs.

St Louis
St. Louis Typographical (CWA 6300) reports a four-year citywide agreement for job shops, providing 1% increases in the third and fourth year. “We were assisted by the NPP administrator in discussions with Advertisers Printing, a company consistent on withdrawing from the NPP,” said John Ebeling, vice president of the Print and Media Sector of CWA Local 6300 in St. Louis.

For Advertisors only, the union and company agreed to a formula for pension and health care coverage outside of the normal pattern. The agreement included a two-year freeze to reflect over scale wage rates in previous years. The employer will continue paying the full premium on health care coverage until the third year of the agreement when the rate will go to 50-50 on new costs only. Ebeling reported.

Mailers at the St. Louis Post Dispatch
The parties called in mediation to resolve negotiations for a three-year concessionary contract, reports St. Louis Mailers Local M-3 President Jim Metz. Full-time mailers took wage reductions. The union won additional bonuses for the part-timers in the unit. The company had demanded significant cuts in vacation, but the union lifted the cap on vacations for journeymen extras—to a maximum of three weeks, and grandfathered journeymen at five weeks. The company agreed to an additional $25 in the 401k plan.

In September, the St. Louis Mailers filed a complaint on behalf of 22 workers who took retirement between 2004 and 2011 when the company sought to impose a change for workers over 65 by ending 100% health care coverage. The union asserted that the coverage was a vested lifetime provision under that agreement.

Waterville ME
Waterville ME, Typographical Union #643 (14115) ratified a new four-year agreement. The members receive a 5% raise in the first year of the agreement and wage and 401k openers in the second year of the agreement. The Ad Sales Department is now being paid revenue earned by commissioners sales only. The unit covers the newspaper. The agreement is with Maine Today Media, owners of The Kennebec Journal. The local committee included Betty Adams, Bob York, Keith Edwards and Harvey Dinerstein.

District 7
District 7 Representative Lew Ellington reports that Salt Lake City, UT, Mailers +M21 (14759) ratified a one-year agreement. There were no monetary increases. However, the local retained their normal working hours for the full-time Mailers despite company proposals for flex hours. The local also bolstered, adding 20 new members. The contract improves the arbitration process, and eliminates language that enabled the company to deal directly with an employee. A new job title and wage rate was added for Journeyman Apprentice. The local committee consisted of Heidi Haley, Von McDonald, Tracy Greenwood, and Heather Porter.

UPH Board Reconstituted; Group Explores Housing Project for Elderly on UPH Land
Sector President-elect Dan Wasser was added to the board of the Union Printers Home in Colorado Springs. Delegates to the Conference were also advised that a group headed up by CWA President Emeritus Morty Bahr has approached UPH about accessing a portion of the Home’s 27 acres to develop a housing complex for elderly and currently homeless veterans.
Chicago Sun-Times Mailers Okay Severance Package; S-T Production Moves to Tribune

By a 118 to 23 vote, Mailers at the Chicago Sun Times approved a severance package from the company that finalizes plans to shut down its production and mailing operations. The paper will continue to publish relying on the production facilities of its competitor, the Chicago Tribune.

“Management’s decision to shut the mailing unit down was not open to bargaining. The only thing we could negotiate was the effect of the shutdown,” explained Bob Maida, Chicago Sun Times Local president (14430). The decision affects around 210 Mailers on the Sun Times payroll. The first layoffs began late September; the last of the Sun Times mailers will depart on November 25th. The agreement stipulates one week of pay for every year of service, up to a maximum of 20 weeks of pay.

Resolution Hails Boarman for Service & Leadership

The Conference unanimously adopted a resolution commending former Sector President Bill Boarman for his service and leadership to the Sector.

Noting that Boarman’s national leadership tenure began with his election as an ITU vice president in 1984, the resolution tracked his role in the merger with CWA and his election as the first president of the Sector in 1989.

“President Boarman led the PPMWS during the most turbulent time in the newspaper and printing industries,” the resolution declared, noting also that Boarman’s during his tenure as chair of the Board of Trustees of the Negotiated Pension Plan (NPP) the Fund grew to one billion dollars and “survived during this great recession” and hailed his leadership in transforming the Union Printers’ Home into a profitable venture.

Rechenbach to Sector Conference: Significant Financial Challenges Still Ahead for both PPMWS & CWA

“Change is never pleasant or easy,” said outgoing CWA Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Rechenbach in his presentation to the Conference. He congratulated the Sector for coming to terms with CWA on a realignment of the relationship. Even though negotiations with Sector representatives were difficult, Rechenbach said that both sides had agreed that there were four principles to be honored in the outcome: That the identity of the Sector “ought to be sacrosanct”; ensuring that the Sector would continue to have a voice within CWA; assuring that the Sector would retain its own governance; and that the Sector would be able to leave within its financial means.

In Memoriam

Delegates to the 25th PPMWS Conference paid tribute to deceased former delegates with a moment of silence. Among those commemorated were: Honolulu Typographical Local #37 (14922) Jerry Ahue, Robert M. Branick of Chicago Typographical Local #16 (14408), Morris Goldman of Bay Area Local #21 (39521), Steve Martenik of Philadelphia Local #14199, and Bill Frazee and Richard E. Gray of Detroit Typographical Local #14503.