

Guild update April 2009

Bad economic news is all around us, particularly when the news is about the newspaper business. But even as the bad news rolls in, it is the Guild contract that protects you from some of the worst hits.

Circulation Layoffs:

In the past two weeks, the company announced that it was cutting five circulation district manager jobs. Because of the contract, all the laid off workers will have recall rights. In addition several are planning to exercise their contractual bumping rights to move to other positions. Although they will be working in lower-paid jobs, these individuals will have their benefits protected and be assured a paycheck during the worst recession in over a generation. In another case the Guild has filed a grievance over the company's refusal to permit him to bump into a job he previously performed.

Paycuts:

On March 26 the New York Times Company announced it was cutting the pay of workers not covered by union contracts. At the T&G non-union workers will see a 2.5% pay cut. Our contract prohibits pay cuts.

Bargaining:

The Guild and the company have held an off-the record bargaining session. Based on the discussion that occurred there, we have scheduled another. In this forum the company has suggested a willingness to move on issues that we have not seen in over a year-and-a-half of open negotiating session. If this process is successful, there will still be difficult decision to make but the worst of the company proposals could disappear. It is unfortunate that we must rely on this technique for real bargaining to occur. However, there can be no agreements without making the proposals public and a ratification by the membership.

Me-Too Arbitration:

Because of the potential for progress our negotiators witnesses during the off-the-record bargaining session, the Guild has agreed to postpone the arbitration over the contract's "Me-Too" clause. (It involves the 2% increase give the craft unions that was not offered to Guild members.) We feel strongly about the case, so does the company. Our lawyers advise us it could go either way. Our belief is a negotiated contract that addresses the pay issue is worth the postponement of a case that could harden attitudes however it is decided.

Unfair Labor Practice Charge Filed

The Guild has filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board over the T&G refusal to provide information related to the Me-Too arbitration. We are waiting for a decision from the NLRB investigator.