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NEWS FROM THE AFL-CIO, CTW, INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL UNIONS

After nearly a year of negotiations, Communications Workers of America and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers intensified pressure on Verizon to reach a fair contract covering 29,000 CWA and IBEW members in the northeast and east coast states. CWA also reported that negotiations lag for wireless retail store workers in NY and Massachusetts who have been without a contract since August 1, 2015. In March, the unions launched a hard-hitting TV ad campaign that criticized Verizon executives for earning millions a year in compensation while

trying to cut the benefits and job security of union workers. In addition, 20 U.S. Senators recently sent a letter to Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam calling for the company to reach a fair agreement. "It's in the best interests of our constituents that Verizon and its unions reach a fair agreement that supports good jobs and ensures that Verizon can move forward in investing in state-of-the-art broadband buildout for our communities," the senators said. "Verizon workers are the backbone of this company, and executives have lost sight of what makes this company so profitable," said national CWA President Chris Shelton.

Six unions representing Siemens workers in North America and the German union IG Metall met with company officials in late February in Florida

to begin a process that could result in the company adopting neutrality toward organizing in its nearly 150 nonunion plants across the U.S. and Canada. Siemens' annual worldwide meeting will be held in June in Washington, D.C. and union leaders hope that the \$100 billion company will vote to adopt neutrality for organizing at its remaining North American plants. The company employs 40,000 employees at 149 North American plants that are nonunion. The purpose of the recent meeting was to increase communications between global manufacturing giant Siemens and its labor stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic. Among the unions participating in the meeting were the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the International Association of Machinists.

Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) escalated the national boycott over Nabisco products made in Mexico following the layoff of the first 277 workers at the Southside Nabisco Chicago Bakery. More than half of the 1,200-plus jobs at the factory will be transferred to a lower-wage plant in Mexico. The BCTGM sent teams of the laid off workers around the country, focusing on large urban areas, to meet with unions, social organizations, churches, state labor federations, among others to promote its "Check the Label" campaign and continue to expand its coalition. The campaign encourages consumers to reject Nabisco products made in Mexico and instead buy those that are produced in America in support of American jobs.



Verizon Wireless protest. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from Thomas Altfather Good.

"Nabisco's plans to lay off American workers, put their jobs in Mexico and then return the products to the United States to sell is the ultimate insult to both the American worker and consumer," said BCTGM International President David B. Durkee. The national contract between Mondelēz International and more than 2,000 of its 4,000 union-represented workers expired on February 29, 2016.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR NEWS

Nearly 200 London hospital

service workers, mostly female and migrant, launched a one-day strike March 21 for a living wage. They are employed by U.S.-based Aramark at four mental health facilities where they work as cleaners and domestic staff. Many of Aramark's London hospital employees are paid £7.38 an hour, more than £2 below the London living wage set by the Greater London Authority. The strikers called for a new minimum hourly rate of £10 and better sick pay and overtime. They are represented by the GMB union which has been in negotiations with the company for weeks. "There's a small proportion of the people who are striking who have been union members for a number of years. But the vast majority have not been in a union, and they've never been on strike before," said union organizer Nadine Houghton.

Australian trade unions

launched a blistering attack on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull for trying to resurrect a construction industry watchdog commission abolished by Labour in 2012. Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the country's biggest construction union, is leading the fight against the proposed reinstatement of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, created to monitor union activities in the industry. National construction division secretary Dave Noonan told the news media the Prime Minister was being held hostage by his big business backers and a conservative party that appeared "obsessed" with slashing workplace rights. "These undemocratic and repressive laws help the government with its base, it helps them settle the 'Taliban' in the Liberal

backbench, and it rewards their mates in the big property developers and construction companies," he said. Turnbull, meanwhile, has threatened a July election if the Senate did not agree to restore the ABCC.

A new study found that 17 per-

cent, or one in six, of Hong Kong migrant domestic workers surveyed are in forced labor. In "Coming Clean", a first-of-its kind report by the Justice Center Hong Kong, only 5.4 percent of the more than 1,000 domestic helpers surveyed showed no signs of exploitation. "Unscrupulous recruitment and placement agencies, brokers and moneylenders, have a huge role to play, and lack of adequate regulation and of stiffer penalties on these agencies that overcharge is having a detrimental human rights impact on migrant domestic workers," said Victoria Wisniewski Otero, co-author of the report. The yearlong study also found that of the domestic workers in forced labor, one in seven (14.0 percent) were trafficked into it. According to the survey, four out of 10 (39.3 percent) did not even have their own room to sleep in, 35.2 percent shared a room with a child or an elderly person, and two percent slept in a kitchen or communal space. "The survey findings provide much-needed evidence to push for policy and legislative change around forced labor, human trafficking and domestic worker rights in Hong Kong," said Piya Muqit, the executive director of the Justice Centre.



Domestic workers rally in Hong Kong. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from IDWF.

Workers at an Amazon.com

warehouse in Germany launched a new round of rolling strikes in a long-running dispute with the giant retailer. The walkout by workers at the warehouse in Koblenz lasted three days and was called by the trade

union Verdi. The union has organized frequent strikes at Amazon warehouses across Germany since May 2013 to force the retailer to raise pay for warehouse workers in accordance with collective bargaining agreements in Germany's mail order and retail sector. Amazon refuses to recognize the country's collective pay agreements for the sector. Amazon employs around 9,000 people in Germany which is the company's second-biggest market behind the United States. The most recent strikes were held in the run-up to Christmas. In Leipzig, the union is calling for starting pay of 10.66 euros (\$14) per hour, compared with 9.30 euros now. In Bad Hersfeld, it wants pay of 9.83 euros to be increased to 12.18. Verdi also is pressing for higher basic pay and bigger supplements for night shifts. Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos is an outspoken opponent of unions.

NATIONAL AND POLITICAL EVENTS

Employers now must disclose

outside consultants they hire to counter workers' union organizing efforts, according to new rules released by the U.S. Labor Department. First proposed in 2011, the new "persuader rule" required employers to publicly report any actions, conduct or communications that are undertaken to, explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly affect an employee's decisions regarding his or her representation or collective bargaining rights. "Workers should know who is behind an anti-union message. It's a matter of basic fairness," Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez said in a statement. "This new rule will allow workers to know whether the messages they're hearing are coming directly from their employer or from a paid, third-party consultant," he added. "Full disclosure of persuader agreements gives workers the information they need to make informed choices about how they pursue their rights to organize and bargain collectively. As in all elections, more information means better decisions."

Broad majorities of Republi-

can primary voters view their party as a source of embarrassment, according to a recent New York Times/CBS News national

poll. The survey revealed they think the campaign is more negative than in the past and are alarmed by the harsh attacks of their presidential contenders. Despite these feelings, Donald Trump has picked up support among Republicans with 46 percent saying they would like to see him as their party's nominee. This approval rating is his highest since he declared his candidacy in June 2015. Fully three-quarters of Republican primary voters expect Mr. Trump to be their party's nominee. Compared with Republicans, far more Democratic primary voters see their side as unified and say the campaign has made them feel mostly proud of their party. The poll also found that half of all voters said they would be scared if Mr. Trump were elected president, and another 19 percent said they would be concerned.

Hailed as the most significant

safety and health standards in decades, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued new standards on silica dust which causes silicosis, lung cancer and other disabling diseases. The rules cut permissible levels of dust exposures in half for manufacturing workers and even more for construction workers. Employers also are required to control dust through such measures as ventilation systems and water purifiers, to monitor exposures, train workers and conduct medical exams. According to OSHA, about 2.3 million workers are exposed to respirable crystalline silica in their workplaces, including 2 million construction workers who drill, cut, crush, or grind silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone, and 300,000 workers in general industry operations such as brick manufacturing, foundries, and hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking. The rule, which goes into effect June 23, will save over 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis each year, OSHA said.

REGIONAL & LOCAL LABOR NEWS

Union-endorsed candidates

won three of four special state House elections in March which effectively blocks pending "right to work" legislation in the



Silica Rule rollout announcement. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from US Department of Labor.

General Assembly, according to Kentucky State AFL-CIO President Bill Londrigan and Bill Finn, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council director. Democrats hold a majority in the state House by a 52-47 margin. The state Senate has a 27-11 pro-right-to-work Republican majority. House Speaker Greg Stumbo (D) told the news media that unions were a big reason Democrats still have the legislature's lower chamber. "I don't think you can overstate just how important organized labor was in the special elections," he said. "They gave us a strong foundation to work from, and they were crucial for our ground game." Kentucky is the South's only non-right-to-work state and the Kentucky House is the only chamber in a southern legislature with a Democratic majority.

Ending a weeklong strike

March 22, 1,200 registered nurses demanded a first contract that ends chronic understaffing they say puts patients' lives at risk at the Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center (LAMC). The nurses are represented by the California Nurses Association (CNA), an affiliate of the National Nurses United (NNU). They work at the main hospital for Kaiser Permanente patients requiring specialized and critical care in southern California. According to the union, the

nurses want Kaiser to invest in the regional specialty center and settle a fair contract with strong patient care provisions similar to what Kaiser has previously agreed in the CNA contract for 18,000 nurses in California. The nurses have received no cost-of-living or wage increases in the last six years and voted to join CNA-NNU in June 2015. Kaiser claims that its last contract proposal was "excellent", but union members counter that the hundreds of nurses that had reviewed the proposal felt "disrespected," according to Kaiser Division Director at CNA, Karen Chan.

The International Brotherhood

of Teamsters, the Teamsters Airline Division and Teamsters Local 284 demanded today that NetJets, a Columbus, Ohio-based luxury air carrier owned by Berkshire Hathaway, halt a campaign of "unwarranted retaliation against their flight dispatchers for choosing union representation." The union is in contract negotiations with the company and accused NetJets of shifting "its anti-worker agenda to the bargaining table." According to the Teamsters, the parties remain far apart on job security, wages, insurance and benefits. Among other issues, the union said company negotiators want to replace dispatchers with automation and software programs. "The recent threat



NetJets aircraft. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from Eddie Maloney.

to eliminate flight dispatcher jobs is just more of the same from this company that refuses to listen to and respect the voices of its workforce,” said Capt. David Bourne, Director of the Teamsters Airline Division.

IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Architect of the Capitol Ste-

phen T. Ayers recently told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee that the majority of the roughly 90 restaurant workers serving the U.S. Senate are at risk of being underpaid. The workers are supported by Good Jobs Nation, a project of the Change to Win labor coalition. Employed by Restaurant Associates, they have demanded higher wages for more than a year. In December, the firm’s contract was renegotiated and appeared to deliver improved pay and benefits for workers. But many were subsequently reclassified into new, lower-paying jobs which cheated them out of the raises they were expecting. “We thought we were doing a good thing only to be surprised a week or two later to learn that the pay rates we agreed to were not going to be paid,” Ayers said at the hearing. Paco Fabián, a spokesman for the coalition, said, “There should be consequences for noncompliance in federal contracting. If it’s happening right under the noses of lawmakers, then it’s likely happening all over the federal contracting system.”

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO

and its affiliated public employee unions presented a plan to the State Investment Council on Wednesday to reduce “alternative investments” in the state pension fund portfolio and reduce the management fees paid to Wall Street firms. Alternative investments include hedge funds and private equity. In FY15, 36 percent of the state’s pension funds were invested in alternatives such as hedge funds and private equity, said the state federation, compared to the national average of 25 percent. The alternative investments managed by outside firms cost the state \$701 million in fees and bonuses in FY15 and \$600 million the previous year. “The performance of the alternative investments does not justify their outrageous cost,” said New Jersey State AFL-CIO President Charles Wowkanech. “Let’s stop making Wall Street millionaires into Wall Street billionaires and return to a responsible, traditional allocation of stocks and bonds.”

Missouri labor hailed Gov. Jay

Nixon for his veto of legislation that would have restricted the ability of public employee unions to collect dues from members. The measure would have required public employee union members to authorize dues withholding each year. In vetoing the measure, Nixon called the bill “...an unnecessary burden on public employees” and noted it likely violated the equal protection requirements of the Constitution.

“Public employees who are members of unions would be required to complete two separate authorizations each year,” Nixon’s veto message said. “Singling out union dues for these extra processes serves no beneficial purpose.” Teamsters President James P. Hoffa praised Gov. Nixon who, he said, “stood up for everyday Missourians against corporate interests.” “The Teamsters want to thank those who voted against this attack on working families. They displayed courage in the face of pressure from corporate special interests,” Hoffa said.

SIGNIFICANT LEGAL AND NLRB RULINGS

By a 6-2 ruling, the Supreme

Court March 22 upheld a class action suit involving more than 3,000 workers at a Tyson Foods Inc. pork processing plant in Iowa who sought to band together in a single lawsuit to recover overtime pay. As a result, the ruling sustained a \$5.8 million judgment against the Springdale, Arkansas-based company. Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy rejected the company’s argument that plaintiffs could not use statistics to prove their case since the company did not keep detailed time records of workers putting on and removing protective clothing prior to starting their shifts. The workers should not suffer because Tyson failed to keep records, Kennedy said citing a 1946 precedent, *Anderson v. Mt. Clemens Pottery*. The decision also limits the sweep of the court’s 2011 decision in *Walmart Stores v. Dukes* which threw out an enormous employment discrimination class-action suit and made it harder for workers, investors and consumers to pursue class action suits.

LABOR LETTER
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Fred Clare
Eastern
Canadian VP,
International
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Frost Insulators &
Allied Workers

ASBESTOS: THE INTERNAL TIME BOMB

I emigrated from England to Canada in 1970 and that was when I was first exposed to asbestos.

I had started my apprenticeship and signed my apprenticeship papers in 1967 and like my father before me I became an Insulator, or as they were known in the UK, a Lagger. The company I worked for specialized in doing cold work that used materials such as cork and sometimes urethane. These were materials that could handle the low temperatures required in the food processing plants and breweries where we worked.

Asbestos was used in hot work applications, so I had never worked with it before immigrating to Canada. After my arrival, I continued working in my trade and found that asbestos was used on nearly every project that was under construction, without exception!

One of my first jobs was to unload bags of what was called Johns Manville 352 Asbestos cement or "Blue Mud," as it was known in the trade. Unlike bags of regular Portland cement, asbestos cement was packed solid in rectangular boxed-shaped heavy paper bags that weighed about 75 lbs. Because those paper bags were not sealed, it was inevitable that some of the powdery asbestos dust escaped onto the outside of the packaging, making it impossible to carry them without contaminating your clothes.

I remember unloading dozens of those heavy bags from trucks and then carrying them on my shoulder up flights of stairs breathing hard and deep from the combina-

tion of the weight and exertion. No doubt I was breathing the fibers deep into my lungs.

"Pile them over there," motioned the foreman, "by the mixing trough." The mixing trough was made from an 8'X4' sheet of plywood with scaffolding planks running down the 8' sides. The two 4' planks were sloped and formed the ends. It was the apprentice's job to mix the cement and supply the journeymen with bucket after bucket of the stuff. The color of the product was blue-gray.

Because we were not supplied masks, our defense was to turn our heads away and hold our breath as we poured the dry asbestos into the mixing trough. A blue cloud hung in the area so anyone working around the area would have also inhaled those deadly fibers.

The human body is a marvelous organ. It can dissolve foreign particles or expel them by coughing. Not asbestos though. Many of the finer particles become permanently lodged, hooking themselves into the surrounding tissue, and there they stay for the rest of your life. Our defense system will unsuccessfully continue to try eliminating those microscopic particles.

Ironically, it is now known that it is this defense mechanism that can actually lead to cancers and asbestosis. One of the reasons that these fibers are so dangerous is they are very light and become airborne, wafting around on the slightest breeze from a window or a draft from an open door where they can be inhaled by anyone unfortunate enough to be in the area.

Those people who are aware of the results of exposure to asbestos must learn to live with the thought that a time bomb is now inside their body. It becomes a question of if, or when the telltale symptoms will appear. It normally starts with a cough that just doesn't seem to go away, or they often experience a sudden shortness of breath while doing everyday activities that they normally didn't give a second thought to, such as walking short distances or climbing stairs.

Mesothelioma is a particularly nasty cancer. The only cause is asbestos; there is no known cure. It develops either in the lining of the lungs (Pleural Mesothelioma),

or in the lining of the stomach (Peritoneal Mesothelioma). From when the symptoms first appear, it is usually only a matter of weeks or months that the victim has left to live. They suffer extreme weight loss, with muscles rapidly wasting away, causing them to become weaker and weaker until they are unable to rise out of a chair or walk on their own without assistance.

It's not unusual that some fellow work mates, no matter how close they were, cannot bring themselves around to visit mesothelioma victims, and if they do, it's usually just once. "That wasn't him, that wasn't him!" is a recurring reaction that I have witnessed. They just don't know what to say. How can you ask questions such as, "How do you feel" or make a statement such as, "You're looking better?"

Another reaction you often hear is, "I want to remember them as they were." That is because the person they once knew has now become a shell of their former self. That is how much of a physical change those suffering from the disease go through.

LET'S COVER THE
WORLD IN
MESOTHELIOMA
AWARENESS!

Mesothelioma Applied
Research Foundation

www.CUREMESO.ORG

The International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers maintains a political presence in Canada and the United States monitoring developments related to Mesothelioma that can have an impact on industry and HIFA members. On September 26, Mesothelioma Awareness Day, the Insulators Union wants to paint the world Blue. For more information go to the Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers webpage <http://www.insulators.org> and www.curemeso.org

Over the years, many of the people I have known and worked with have lost their lives to complications due to asbestos exposure. Statistics fail to show the devastating effect on family members who have lost loved ones, nor do they take into account those who have died from asbestos disease when unsuspecting husbands and fathers brought it home on their clothes. This is not unusual, especially in shipyards, when the workers' wives would wash the coveralls of their husbands. I personally knew an insulator, I'll just call him Jack, whose wife contracted Mesothelioma and passed away before him. I cannot imagine the guilt he must have suffered as he witnessed her suffering. However, it was not too long after she passed that Mesothelioma once again came knocking, this time taking Jack's life.

The leading cause of death in the construction industry used to be from falls. Asbestos has now taken that number one position. Despite this, products that contain asbestos are still being imported into Canada. In fact, the supposed safe use of asbestos is still legal in Ontario and Quebec.

What is it going to take before asbestos is once and for all banned in Canada?



MFL International Women's Day

Charlene Matheson, Co-Chair of the MFL Women's Committee and President of Unifor Local 830, receives a contribution from AIL Public Relations Representative Leo VanDenBussche, to support the International Women's Day march in Winnipeg, Manitoba. (In January 1916, Manitoba became the first province to allow some women the right to vote.)



Winnipeg's MayWorks Festival of Labour Arts

AIL Public Relations Representative Leo VanDenBussche (left) presents a \$500 cheque to Dave Sauer, President, Winnipeg Labour Council, for the MayWorks Festival of Labour and the Arts which will be held in May. Inspired by events surrounding the anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, MayWorks focuses on the art produced both by artists (with their depiction of the working class life) and by workers with their own interpretation of their lives and struggles.



Broadbent Institute Support

Susan Fuldauer, Vice President of PR Field Operations and Public Relations Representative Chase Robinson (right) present a cheque to Josh Bizjak, Director of Development of the Broadbent Institute, to support the March Summit.



UNITE HERE Canada Scholarship

AIL Canadian Director of Labour Relations, Daryl Barnett (right) presents a \$5000.00 cheque to Nick Worhaug, National Director UNITE HERE Canada for the union's scholarship program. During the presentation, Barnett said, "UNITE HERE Canada and its affiliated locals form an important part of our communities' social fiber and are a strong voice for workers and their families. Your Union has stood and continues to stand for the right of workers regarding the right to organize and freely negotiate collective agreements. These and other initiatives contribute to a strong middle class and an economy that works for families and ordinary Canadians. What better way to ensure union growth than by supporting union members and their families through the UNITE HERE Canada scholarship."



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