n August 25, NABET-CWA convenes its first Triennial Conference in Chicago. A number of speakers will be on hand to discuss the state of NABET-CWA, as well as the Union movement as a whole. In addition, Union delegates will elect a Sector President and review proposed changes to the Union’s By-Laws. NABET-CWA will review the past three years since its last conference — June 2002 in Las Vegas — with reports on finances, organizing, health and safety, and training. The Task Force on Technology and Training will deliver its first report to the full Union since the advent of BURST in 2004. The Resolutions and By-Laws Committees also will convene and report to the delegates throughout the conference. In addition, RVP-6 Bill Wachenschwanz, chair of NABET-CWA’s National Organizing Council will make a report.

Several speakers will address the Conference, including CWA President Morton Bahr, CWA Executive Vice President Larry Cohen and CWA Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Easterling. Dr. Dennis Mazzecco, Associate Professor of Hofstra University’s School of Communications will speak to the delegates about the 70th anniversary of the Wagner Act and its affect on the Broadcasting industry.

Union By-Laws
The By-Laws Committee, chaired by Local 57 President Richard Daszkowski, will go through the Sector By-Laws amendments that were submitted by NABET-CWA locals and the Sector Executive Council to determine which proposed amendments should be placed before the Conference delegates for consideration. The Committee then issues its findings in the form of a written report, which is subject to amendment from the Conference floor.

This year, the By-Laws Committee will consider recommendations submitted by the Sector Executive Council and four locals. Most amendments seek clarification of the intent of existing language, such as non-substantive changes to grammar and form. However, the delegates can only call for an amendment of the Committee report if the amendment concerns a proposed amendment previously submitted to the Sector prior to the deadline for submissions.

Among the SEC’s proposals are amendments to Article X, including the filing of charges against members. The SEC proposes redefining the types of offenses for which such charges can be filed, requiring mediation, and the elimination of the need to convene a trial body in the case of a “guilty with an explanation” plea.

The SEC has also proposed clarification of procedures concerning the election of a Sector President and the Vice President by the SEC in the event of a simultaneous vacancy of both offices.

Both the SEC and Local 21 submitted proposals concerning members in good standing being allowed to observe meetings of the SEC. Local 411 has proposed changes to Section 12.2 regarding Sector reimbursement of certain expenses. Local 41 is proposing increasing the rate of Sector dues, and Local 16 submitted a proposal concerning membership eligibility language.

Presidential Election
On the last day of the conference — Saturday, August 27 — delegates will elect a Sector President and Vice President. The candidates for the office of Sector President are Local 53 Treasurer John C. Alarid and current Sector President John S. Clark (Local 11). The candidates for the office of Sector Vice President are Local 53 President Leroy G. Jackson, Jr., and present Sector Vice President James C. Joyce (Local 16). The elected officers will hold terms of three years and the Sector President automatically becomes a CWA Vice President.

Local 51 Organizes Oregon’s KOIN-TV
On June 6, NABET-CWA gained 39 new members at KOIN-TV (CBS) in Portland, Ore. With a 26-10 vote, the unit of master control operators, news photographers, Technical Directors, Editors, Audio Engineers, Directors, Graphic Artists, and Floor Directors voted to join the Union.

“Working a 12-hour day without overtime and then being given a shorter work week so as to avoid paying any overtime, was one of the reasons that caused the employees to seek representation,” said Local 51 President and organizer Kevin Wilson.

Wilson said the organizing campaign at the station began in April. NABET-CWA initially petitioned for a wall-to-wall unit, but when it became clear that the company wanted to delay the vote by arguing that some members of the unit were “supervisors,” the Union amended its petition, leaving out the groups in contention in order to get an election. After the employees voted overwhelmingly for the Union, a petition was immediately filed for the remainder of the group.

In the four-day National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hearing that followed, the Union asked that the Board incorporate the residual group of 20 Producers, Assignment Editors and Commercial Production Employees into the initial certification. The company agreed they would not contest the inclusion of the Associate Producers, Assistant Chief Photographer and Webmaster in the group.

On July 27, the NLRB issued a decision ordering an election for all of the employees the union was seeking, believing that none of them met the test for “supervisors” under the Act. An election will be held the week of August 22.
For many issues now, I’ve wanted to write a column that’s bright, cheerful and positive, something more inspirational and uplifting than the heavy, gloom-laden storm and drange pieces I’ve been writing lately. Unfortunately, the current events of our day, labor- and political-wise, have not been very conducive to that kind of thing. It’s not easy to be cheerful and upbeat when the labor movement in the United States is under an attack that’s unprecedented during our lifetimes.

Nevertheless, now that our Triennial Sector Conference is at hand, and the delegates are gathering, it’s time to put our troubles aside for a little while and look back at what we’ve accomplished together as a Union over the last three years. We’ve focused a great deal of energy on training during the last couple of years. With the technological changes that are ongoing in our industry, it is of paramount importance that we give our members the tools they need to keep their skills up to date. Under the leadership of Sector Vice President Jim Joyce, the Task Force on Technology and Training that I appointed after the last conference has been looking for ways to enhance the opportunities for membership training. They were able to link their efforts to those of BURST, a training organization that was founded by NABET-CWA Locals 11 and 16 and IBEW Local 1212 in New York City. Making BURST a national effort, they launched a program that made low-cost, subsidized training opportunities available to our locals and our members.

The SEC created a training fund that gave matching grants to locals that started training programs. These grants, which vary depending on how much money the locals have in their treasuries, have been especially helpful in training members in Binghamton, New York, where the program made it possible for WICZ-TV to replace much of its technical equipment because the Union was able to pay for the training of the station’s employees—a win/win situation for workers and management alike. There is still much work to be done in the training area, but we’ve made a worthy start.

We’ve also done good work in the battle to preserve government funding for PBS stations. Public broadcasting funding has been under attack from the conservative elements in both Congress and in some states. NABET-CWA, working with the political club of CW A, has been in the forefront in fighting to get this funding restored for the benefit of the American public and for the workers we represent at PBS stations across the country.

We still have much important work to do over the next several years, and we must work all the harder to maximize our achievements in an increasingly hostile environment. The advances we’ve made in the recent past, accomplished under adverse conditions, show that there is potential for success even in difficult times, and we must seize every opportunity available to us. And although the events outside our Union that batter and buffet the workers in this country are likely to continue over the next few years, we cannot let them hold us back as we fight to realize our potential. It’s always invigorating to attend our Sector Conference which is inspired by a dedicated group of people—our Union’s activists—who continue to work tirelessly, regardless of the political circumstances that make their jobs ever more difficult.

When I’m with them, I know that, regardless of the odds, we will never give up the battle to make the lives of the working men and women in broadcasting better. So, as we gather in Chicago for our Conference, let us celebrate our efforts in the past and re dedicate ourselves to the difficult tasks before us as we try to build a better future together.

GE Retirees Attend Shareowners Meeting

by Bill Freed, NABET-CWA National Retiree Coordinator

I attended the GE Shareholders meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, on April 27, along with other CWA GE pensioners from Pennsylvania and Kentucky and members of the CWA Retirees Justice Fund, an organization that represents the interests of long-term GE retirees.

Kevin Mahar of IUE-CWA Local 201 and Helen Quinnir, an IUE-CWA retiree from Schenectady, N.Y., are co-chair of the Justice Fund and have attended the last several GE Shareholders meetings in an attempt to bring the plight of long-term GE retirees to the attention of the shareholders.

Jack Welch, former GE CEO, told Mahar that he and his organization were responsible for the last increase in GE pensions in 2000. The goals of the GE Retirees Justice Fund are to set a minimum pension of $33 per month per year of company service, and to institute a Cost Of Living Allowance, so that the pensions of GE retirees can try to keep up with inflation and the ever-increasing cost of medical insurance.

On the morning of the shareholders meeting, Mahar gathered all of us together and distributed signs identifying us as GE retirees. We then spent about 45 minutes demonstrating in front of the Aronoff Center, the site of this year’s meeting.

Mahar submitted a shareholder proposal that dealt with the fact that some GE directors sit on so many corporate boards that they are overextended and cannot properly carry out their responsibilities for GE. This proposal allowed Kevin to raise the issue of how overextended GE retirees are because of the lack of regular increases in their monthly pension payments. To emphasize the point, Quinnir gave a compelling account of how the unwillingness of the GE Pension Trust to give retirees regular increases has affected her quality of life.

Mahar used this approach because the Security & Exchange Commission’s rules do not allow shareholder proposals regarding the Pension Plan to be submitted.

Once all the shareholder proposals had been introduced and voted on, there was a period of time devoted to questions and concerns of the shareholders. I raised the issue of a company called Genworth. This company was formed when some parts of GE Capital were spun off into a new corporation. I questioned CEO Jeff Immelt as to why current GE shareholders were not issued stock in the new corporation, since these were assets that once belonged to our company. He said that there were a few ways to handle a situation like this. In this case, GE received all the money from the Initial Public Offering (IPO) and it was used for many things, like reducing debt. I pointed out that I did not see how GE shareholders were benefiting from the spin-off. I had not seen a significant increase in the share price, nor was there a large one-time increase in the dividend.

Immelt’s response was that the share price had gone up 4 points. From my point of view, that was a totally unsatisfactory response to my inquiry. The bottom line is that the money was just absorbed into GE with no apparent specific benefit to the shareholders. Unsatisfied, I have checked with attorneys familiar with IPOs, and they tell me that what GE did is completely legal.

We need to continue to aggressively question company officials about these types of issues, and perhaps the next time we will see a more substantive result in these matters.

During the open session, one of the IUE-CWA retirees, Norbert Flynn, 91, from Pennsylvania read a statement in support of increases in retiree pensions. At some point during his statement, Immelt interrupted him and said that he thought that we had heard enough about pensions for the day. The retiree responded by saying, “that’s fine, Mr. Chairman, but I am going to finish my statement.” I was disappointed in Jeff Immelt’s comment, but it served to highlight what I believe is his indifference to the GE retirees and their concerns.

The GE Retirees Justice Fund has a website: www.gereetrees.com. This is a great place to keep up-to-date on all the things that are happening regarding GE retirees.

For questions on retiree matters, I can be reached at e-mail: bfreedman@calcwca@optonline.net; phone/fax: 1-800-928-5279.

NABET-CWA Sector President
John S. Clark

Member Loans Available Through CWA 401(k) Plan

In June, the CWA Savings and Retirement Trust 401(k) approved the creation of a loan feature for NABET-CWA members, including daily hires.

As of September 1, NABET-CWA members can apply for loans from their 401(k) account. The minimum loan amount is $1,000 and the maximum is the smaller of 50% of the account balance or $50,000. Loans can be made monthly by payroll deduction or by automatic debit from personal checking or savings accounts.

The loan period is not to exceed five years. Interest on the loan is the prime rate interest rate, as stated in The Wall Street Journal on the first of the month, plus 1%. There is a set-up fee of $50 and a quarterly fee of $6.00.

The 401(k) plan, which includes 109 member companies, is ideal for those small companies that don’t offer plans to employees. Even if a company has only one Union member, all employees, including management, can join the plan.

In 2005, the CWA Savings and Retirement Trust has grown to over $100 million in member assets.

For more information on this loan program, contact your trust office at 800-987-0721.
TWIN CITIES’ LOCAL 411: Talks and Training in 2005

Richard Bowring, Local 411 President

Local 411 was formed in 1978 with the first contract at WCCO-TV, followed by the first contract for Twin Cities Public Television (KTCA/KTCI-TV) in 1979. Today, there are 85 members at the CBS owned-and-operated WCCO and Twin Cities Public Television, combined.

The Local’s president for nearly five years, Richard Bowring II, said Local 411 reached a contract agreement on July 29 at WCCO and will begin talks at his employer — KTCA-TV — on August 23.

The photographers and editors at WCCO had been working under a contract extension since April. The two sides began talks in July, with NABET-CWA trying to hold the line on jurisdiction, address truck safety issues and enhance their economic package.

Bowring said the truck safety issue has come up because the station wants one person to run the masthead, edit and shoot.

“It’s too much for one person to do,” he said.

The WCCO agreement is for four years and includes raises of 3% in each year. Out of that 3%, 1/2% is put into a merit pool and divided among the unit. There were also minor jurisdiction adjustments.

At KTCA, where Bowring has been a photojournalist for 21 years, the photographers, studio crew, graphic designers, loggers and scene shop workers also want to retain jurisdiction and improve their compensation package (including sick time).

However, one of their biggest issues is part-time seniority since more of the workers are part-time than full-time.

When asked about PBS funding issues, Bowring said his station is doing fine right now, thanks to the House of Representatives’ recent vote to restore most of the funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

However, he said the Union has experienced a decline in membership as a result of layoffs.

The Union lost jurisdiction over production labor in May, and that peaks their interest.”

— Richard Bowring, Local 411 President

NABET-CWA Reaches Agreement with WSNS-TV/Telemundo

After 18 months and 44 negotiating sessions, NABET-CWA and WSNS-TV, a Telemundo/NBC station, reached a new contract agreement for the nearly 50 Telemundo technical employees.

The members work side-by-side with the NBC employees and now have a contract very similar to their co-workers. The agreement included wage ranges increasing from $7.3 to $531 a week.

At KTCA, where Bowring is also looking forward to gathering members together for the Local’s annual picnic. “We are continually trying to get members to take an active role in the Union.”

This is the twelfth article in a series on NABET-CWA locals.

Regional Vice Presidents Elected

NABET-CWA Regional Vice Presidents were elected in Regions 3 and 5 in June. Voting was conducted by mail.

Jim Lee was elected Region 3 Vice President, replacing incumbent Stanley Lorek, and Keith Hendriks, the former Local 53 President, was elected Region 5 Vice President, over Leroy Jackson, the current President of Local 53. The incumbent in Region 5, Richard Daszkowski, did not seek reelection. There was no contest in Region 1, where RVP Richard Gelber continues in that office.

The officers began 24-month terms on the Sector Executive Council on July 1, 2005.

President: Richard Bowring II
Vice President: Clayton Henderson
Secretary: Paul Brown
Treasurer: Dave Bissonnette
Membership: 85
Year Chartered: 1978

NABET-CWA 2005 Scholarship Award Winners Announced

NABET-CWA has selected this year’s scholarship award winners. These exemplary high school seniors will receive an award of $750 for each year for four years to help offset the cost of their college educations. The winners are:

Laura Azar (Upper Montclair, N.J.) — George Smith Scholarship Award
Stuart Clarke (Mount Airy, Md.) — Edward M. Lynch Scholarship Award
Jacob Frank (Natick, Mass.) — Dorr C. Wilson Scholarship Award
Sara Vogel (Brooklyn, N.Y.) — James P. Nolan Scholarship Award
Lauren Zletz (New York, N.Y.) — George Smith Scholarship Award

In addition, Michelle Santillo was awarded the Thomas F. Kennedy Scholarship Award in the amount of $1,000. The scholarship contest is open to sons and daughters of active, retired or deceased NABET-CWA members. Additional information and photos of the 2005 scholarship recipients will be included in a future issue of NABET News.
Fox Digital – Los Angeles
On August 13, NABET-CWA’s Local 53 Fox unit reached a tentative agreement on its largest daily-hire contract – at Fox Digital. The negotiations began on June 28 for the contract covering 25 staff employees and 500 daily hires. Negotiators, who worked off a membership survey that was prepared prior to the talks, discussed non-linear editing, contributions to the Flex Plan, cable and staff wages and bereavement leave for daily hires. A vote on the contract will take place in late September. The mobilization committee, headed by Gary Singleman, was very active throughout the negotiations. The committee enacted “shirt day,” with members wearing NABET-CWA polo shirts every Thursday and other designated days to show solidarity with their negotiating team. The mobilization committee received training through CWA, which schooled them in mobilization techniques such as creating an infrastructure of member volunteers to improve member communication, documenting every member in the workplace, and assigning each member to a Mobilization Work Group Coordinator. This was NABET-CWA’s first use of the proven CWA mobilization plan at Fox Digital, and according to Singleman, it was “an unqualified success.”

House Recording Studio – Washington, DC
A 4-year agreement was reached in May on a renewed contract for the Local 31 unit. All new terms were Union proposals, including improvements to meals, shift differential, short turn-around premiums, added classifications, and added jurisdiction language (covering hearings and a “crash” truck). Language was also added for a hiring roster to supplement the staff. The contract had expired on April 1 and the group was working under an extension. Committee members include Todd Redlin, Steve Johnson and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson.

KVEA-TV/Telemedumo – Los Angeles
Contract talks began on April 15 for this Local 53 unit, which works on the NBC Burbank lot and also includes KWHY-TV employees. Now that the unit is based on the NBC lot, NABET-CWA is proposing greater parity between the KVEA agreement and the terms of the NBC Master Agreement. The contract expired December 31, 2004, and the unit is currently operating under an extension agreement. The negotiating committee includes Carlos Flores, Joe Ayala, Lyesser Parada and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson.

National Public Radio – Washington, D.C.
Talks began in May and continued through July for the Local 31 unit at NPR. The contract expires on September 30. The parties agreed to early bargaining when the contract was extended by a year in 2004. The Union wants to refine and redefine certain areas of the agreement, including shift picks, vacation scheduling, overtime, remote work and weather emergency language. The Company wants to rewrite jurisdiction and eliminate certain categories and premiums. Multiple dates are set in August, as well as three full weeks in September to try to complete these negotiations. The negotiating committee includes Flawn Williams, Joe Mills, Sue Klein, Frank Nelson and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson.

PBS
Negotiations for a contract for the 57-member unit of technicians and PBS media library employees are finally “moving along,” according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Don Jernigan. The two sides signed off on one of the major outstanding issues, “shift pick,” and the company removed several items from the table. Further talks, which are being held under the auspices of a federal mediator, are scheduled for the first week of September. The Local 31 unit is working under indefinite contract extensions after their two separate contracts expired on June 30, 2004. Members of the bargaining team include NABET-CWA Staff Representative Don Jernigan, Cashe Mitchell, Robert Fatscher and Valerie Smith.

WFLD-TV – Chicago
NABET-CWA has been in talks with WFLD-TV (FOX) since March to work out a contract for more than 100 technicians and couriers (staff and daily hires). Local 43 President Ray Taylor said the talks have been productive and he was hopeful that the next session on August 13 would resolve the outstanding economic issues. The contract expired on March 31. The bargaining team consists of Dennis Farnham, Chris Willadsen, Russ Sherman, Kris McCoy and Taylor.

WFSB-TV – Hartford, Conn.
After a contentious principles of March in WFSB (Meredith) management came to the table laying out three areas of major concern: shift pick language, performance evaluation and seniority classification. In July, the two sides met for three fruitless days, with the company refusing to move on its many significant issues, including eliminating wage scales in favor of a full merit system, revamping shift picks and vacation scheduling, taking away jurisdiction over computers, master control, editing, and a host of other areas, and taking away work for the second station in Springfield, Mass. currently operated by the NABET-CWA unit. A week after these meetings, the Company sent a 14-day notice to terminate the agreement, claiming the Union wasn’t bargaining “fast enough.” On the eve of the effective termination, the Company relented and continued the contract extension. More dates are set for the coming months into September.

Meanwhile, the Local 17 unit is submitting a request for funds from CWA’s Defense Fund and is in the process of ramping up for mobilization. The negotiating committee includes Andy Halpin, Rick Huntington, John Viscenza, Haynes Ford and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson.

WGBH-TV – Boston
The NABET-CWA Local 18 unit at WGBH-TV (PBS) overwhelmingly ratified a new collective bargaining agreement in March. Contract terms included 3% increases for each year of the 3-year agreement. The Union successfully defended against Company proposals to alter jurisdiction and lay-off language, retained language in shift pick, digitizing and studio/master control work, but did make significant concessions in the health care package. WGBH, like many other public broadcasters, is facing serious economic difficulties, resulting in cost-shifting in medical expenses. Bargaining team members included Local President Brad Hawes, Doug Martin, Mark Steele and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson.

According to NABET-CWA Staff Representative William Murray, negotiations at WGBB-TV (Sinclair/ABC) rapidly improved when Sector President John S. Clark attended the July 14 session, along with federal mediator Ed Jones of Albany. More talks are scheduled for the first week of October.

WIVB-TV – Buffalo, N.Y.
Contract talks continued for this Local 25 unit at WIVB-TV (Un/CBS) in late July, with the company and NABET-CWA failing to come to terms on the biggest issues: jurisdiction and benefits. The Company wants unrestricted jurisdiction and complete control over medical benefits, both of which the Union opposes. The contract expired in March and the unit is operating under an extension agreement. Committee members include Local President Roy Schrodt, Jim Divastes, Ron Gabalski, Rich Ering and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson.

WTNH-TV – New Haven, Conn.
An agreement was reached for the NABET-CWA Local 14 producers unit, while negotiations continue for the newly organized directors unit at WTNH-TV (Un/ABC). NABET-CWA proposed a single agreement for the directors unit and the existing technicians and photographers because the introduction of a ParkerVision system blends the work of directors and TDs. The Company, however, refused an offer to create a single agreement for both units. The negotiating committee includes Tracey Doherty (directors), Eric Dobratz (producers), LP George Roelofsen, LVP Mark Crescini, Tim Clune, Secretary-Treasurer Tom Sgro and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Paula Olson. The contract expired in early February and the unit is working under an extension agreement.