

# The hard stuff goes orime time

odern media business is no place for nice guys. With competition ever more intense, traditional gentlemen's agreements are going by the wayside. Lately, the Seagram's folks, who now own a chunk of Time Wamer and have become players in the megamedia racket, have succeeded in breaking a decades-long taboo against running ads for hard liquor on radio and TV. Nearly 30 years ago, at a time when regulators were threatening to ban ads for all alcohol products, the liquor industry volunteered to limit hard liquor ads to print media. That was then, this is now. Enough smaller TV stations have accepted Seagram's hard sell to make industrywatchers wonder when the major networks are going to cave in. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) head Reed Hundt has already cleared his throat, suggesting the FCC may have to take action if hard liquor ads become common practice.

# Wired in the public interest

In Taos County, N.M., Latinos and Native Americans are more likely than whites to suffer from diseases like diabetes and hypertension, and less likely to be able to travel to get medical advice. Over the last year, Taos County residents could click onto a Web site linking them with advice and with health care providers. They got training and access at schools, clinics, libraries and civic centers. The project was so successful it's expanding to more states this year. Project InterLinc in Nebraska has been getting government services to poor, rural and

minority residents. And in East Palo Alto, Calif., Project Plugged In has been busy setting up small businesses—desktop publishing, Web design—that both train and employ young and poor residents.

These endeavors and dozens more are fine examples of how government can spur nonprofit-sector innovation. They were all funded by the Department of Commerce's Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP), which encourages nonprofit uses of networked communications. Congressional Republicans cut the program's modest budget in half last year (to about \$21 million), and this year threatened it with extinction. Vigorous protest from children's advocates. computer professionals, librarians and others succeeded in alerting legislators to the danger. In the last hours of the congressional session, TIIAP was funded again for \$21 million. Of course, it

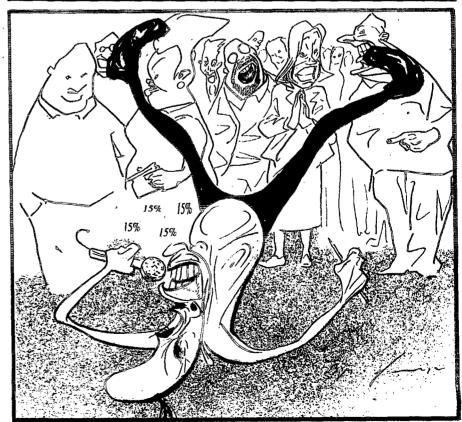
helped that TIIAP managers had funded a project in every single state.

#### The Newest Journalism

I ollywood has always fed on a diet of daily news dramas, turning them into weeper-of-the-week movies and special reports. But now Disney/ABC—the conglomerate most aggressively in search of synergy—has developed its own internal feeder system. Former Premiere magazine editor Susan Lyne, now a Disney Motion Pictures executive, is commissioning reporters to do stories for the company-not as journalism but as fodder for programming ideas. It's efficient, and it eliminates the sometimes expensive negotiations studios are forced to conduct with independent writers and publishers. By commissioning the reporting up front, Disney also avoids the unpleasant prospect of negotiating with the subjects of the story. © 1996 Pat Aufderheide

#### TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



Dole admits his campaign is street performance art project, parodying American politics. Big NEA grant floods coffers.

### UNION STRUCK

mong all the current strikes against oppressive employers across the country, one of the most controversial involves eight workers in Connecticut. Their seven-month-old walkout may have tremendous implications for the labor movement because their employer is a union.

The National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), represents municipal and federal workers. NAGE operates offices across the country, including one in Cromwell, Conn., just outside of Hartford. In April 1995, the Cromwell office staff of lawyers, worker representatives and clerical workers organized as members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 376. They wanted higher salaries and better-regulated hours. But in the 18 months since they organized, the UAW workers still don't have a contract.

The last straw came in September 1995, when NAGE fired Bob Cerritelli, who led the organizing effort, soon after the UAW workers began contract negotiations with NAGE. In January, the workers filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board alleging that NAGE fired Cerritelli for his efforts to unionize the Cromwell office.

After nearly a year with the UAW and still without a contract, the workers walked out in March. Awaiting a ruling on the original NLRB charges, they have filed other complaints, including one accusing NAGE of threatening strikers.

"We knew that we were on virgin territory with NAGE because none of their offices had been unionized before," says Cerritelli. "But we didn't expect this."

David Bernard, national vice president of NAGE, says the union fired Cerritelli for submitting fraudulent expense reports. He also dismisses as "frivolous" the claims that NAGE engaged in any anti-union activity,

### Party girl

THE CALIFORNIA CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROPOSITIONS WILL NOT APPLY, OF course, to federal elections. Nor would they necessarily curb the state's big-time contributors, such as Democratic Party activist Barbra

Streisand. At her open house last month, Streisand raised \$4 million for the Democrats, including \$140,000 she coughed up herself. The following exchange between *ABC Evening News* Brian Ross and Streisand took place prior to the party.

Ross: "Should any one person be able to give as much money as you do?"

Streisand: "If you have it, you can give it."
Ross: "How about those who do not have it?"
Streisand: "They can't give it. They can vote."

They can also eat cake. —J.B.



D 1996 TERRY LABAN

including charges that it threatened to lay off union organizers and refuses to bargain in good faith. "This is just an attack by the UAW to throw as much as possible against the wall to see what will stick," he says.

But NAGE must also contend with charges from within its own ranks. The presidents of six NAGE locals filed a complaint in early October with SEIU's national office, accusing NAGE officers of violating a SEIU constitutional provision that prohibits members from "acting as strikebreakers" by replacing striking workers.

"They think it's wrong for us to use management people to replace workers," protests Bernard. But Cerritelli alleges that it's not just managers doing the striking staffers' jobs. "They have also hired people from outside of NAGE who have never worked for NAGE before," he says.

This bitter fight highlights the debate, which came to life with the advent of business unionism, over whether to unionize union staffers. In the '50s and '60s, just decades after the modern labor movement's radical beginnings, unions, eager to institutionalize themselves, became their own companies. They acquired buildings and hired staffs to do the business of representing and protecting workers. Now unions themselves have workers—workers who, Cerritelli argues,

only want the same protections and provisions their union employers provide to their own members.

Peter Rachleff, a history professor at Macalester College in Minnesota who is himself active in the labor movement, says that this conundrum is only to be expected given the current state of trade unionism. "It's not just the worst unions that do this," he says. "Progressive unions have problems too. Make them an employer and they act like an employer." The debate is not likely to die soon, he adds. "If Sweeney and Co. can transform the labor movement from business unionism to a real social movement, this problem might disappear," he says. "But that's an awful lot to wish for."

-Leah Samuel

### DOWN TO THE WIRE IN WASHINGTON

wo years ago, with the Republican Contract with America in one hand and anti-incumbent sentiment in the other, state Sen. Linda Smith ousted three-term incumbent Democrat Jolene Unsoeld from the

Third Congressional District seat in southwestern Washington. Unsoeld, along with five other of the state's Democrats in Congress, fell victim to the 1994 Republican revolution. Now, it appears a 40-year-old psychologist could swing the district back to its Democratic roots.

At the outset, hardly anyone thought Olympia Democrat Brian Baird had a chance of defeating Smith. The incumbent's grass-roots conservative campaign volunteers, known as "Linda's Army," were expected to march right over Baird. These true believers—who, like their representative, denounce big government—have donated countless hours doing everything from making fliers to door-to-door campaigning. Not surprisingly, they've also kept Smith's campaign expenses low.

So imagine their surprise on September 18, when primary election returns showed that Smith led Baird by only a few thousand votes, and lost to him in four of the nine counties in the district. (Washington conducts a "blanket" primary, in which Democrats, Republicans and independents vote on the same ballot.)

"It was a wake-up call to my supporters," says Smith, who remains at least outwardly calm about her reelection chances. "Now, they know they have to get out and work."

Baird has focused his criticism on Smith's conservative voting record. "She's basically voted down the line with Newt Gingrich," says Baird, echoing a campaign theme used by many Democrats this year.

Baird's strong showing in the primary will mean extra cash for his campaign. The Democratic Campaign Coordinating Committee has promised to kick in an undisclosed sum of money. Baird has yet to hear from the AFL-CIO, which is spending millions on advertising it hopes will assist other Democratic congressional candidates in the state.

State Democrats have also benefited from President Bill Clinton's bus tour of western Washington last month and the near invisibility of Bob Dole's campaign in the state. Baird has traveled tirelessly in the 8,500-square-mile district, especially in Vancouver and along the coast, traditional Democratic areas of the district where Smith did well last time. Meanwhile, Smith, whose congressional schedule kept her away from the state for much of the year, admits she has a lot of people to visit before the election.

Smith is hoping to appeal once again to voters' mistrust of the political establishment, drawing attention to her record on campaign finance reform. She co-sponsored the Bipartisan Clean Congress Act of 1995, a bill that would have banned contributions from political action committees and set spending limits for candidates, although some say it has too many loopholes to be effective. (See "Reforming the beast," June 24.) In her campaign ads, Smith, who last year stopped accepting PAC

contributions, has portrayed Baird, who does accept PAC money, as a dupe of special interests. As of September 1, Baird had raised \$259,000 for his campaign and spent most of it; Smith had raised \$539,000 and spent more than half. When combined with the \$187,000 she raised in 1995, however, Smith's war chest totals \$726,000—more than \$100,000 over the \$600,000 spending limit called for in her campaign finance reform bill.

-Mindy Chambers

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#### THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan

