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COLUMN ONE

Labor unions' man of the hour

As anger against Wall Street runs high, AFL-CIO chief Richard Trumka sees a chance to reverse labor's long decline.

ALANA SEMUELS
REPORTING FROM
COLUMBUS, OHIO

The future of the labor movement may very well rest in the hands of a man who was sitting over a paper plate piled with spaghetti, amusing his audience by twirling a napkin in his ear, then hamming it up with a wink and a goofy grin that would make any teenager cringe.

He'd been working for 12 hours already, but AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka had every reason to be giddy. Ohioans had just voted down a law that restricted collective bargaining for public workers, and the American labor movement was savoring a rare victory.

"When our members are motivated, when they're united, no one can turn them around," Trumka shouted later that night to the raucous crowd that gathered outside the firefighters union hall where Trumka had wolfed down his spaghetti.

Union membership has been shrinking, down from 20% of the U.S. workforce in 1983 to less than 12% today. Union leaders are trying to hang on to one of their last remaining strongholds: government. Strapped for cash, many states are looking to cut costs by ending collective bargaining agreements.

To counter this — and a 2011 Pew poll that showed just 45% of Americans viewed unions favorably — Trumka is going on the offensive, trying to harness frustration with Wall Street and concerns about income inequality to build broader support for labor.

If he succeeds, he will help pro-union Democrats in the Nov. 6 elections and, perhaps, begin to reverse organized labor's long decline as a political force.

Trumka has "an impossible task," said Nelson Lichtenstein, director of the Center for the Study of Work, Labor and Democracy at UC Santa Barbara. "There's no way in which one leader, no matter how effective, can by themselves alter the structure in which they find themselves. The standard operating procedure of all businesses is to

[See Trumka, A9]



ALEX BRANDON Associated Press

AFL-CIO PRESIDENT Richard Trumka, 62, is going on the offensive.



CHRISTINA HOUSE For The Times

MARIA GOMEZ, left, her daughter Ana and sister Silvia pass a gas station in Los Angeles. Fuel prices are expected to rise further because of seasonal factors.

Rising gas prices stoke fear, anger

With no letup in sight, the surge could crimp the economy. Iran is a factor, but some are spreading the blame.

DON LEE
REPORTING FROM
WASHINGTON
MATT STEVENS
REPORTING FROM
LOS ANGELES

Just as the recovery is finally looking real, surging fuel prices are once again looming as a major threat to the financial health of U.S. consumers and the broader economy.

The price surge has been particularly steep in California, in part because of maintenance at some refineries that make the state's cleaner-burning gasoline. Statewide, average pump prices for regular gasoline crossed the \$4 mark over the weekend and reached an average of \$4.031 a gallon Monday, up 5% in just the last week and nearly 9% higher than a month ago.

"It doesn't bode well for the consumer," said Jeff Spring of the Automobile Club of Southern California. "By April or May you might see some isolated instances where you're seeing \$5" gas per gallon.

That could potentially sting President Obama's reelection efforts as well — with Republican primary hopefuls already blaming the Democratic incumbent for higher prices at the pump.

Oil prices have crept higher in recent weeks amid a brighter outlook for the U.S. economy and heightened tensions over Iran's nuclear program. And Monday, crude futures jumped to a

At the pump

Average daily price per gallon for regular gasoline in California:



Source: AAA Los Angeles Times

nine-month high after Iran said it had halted some oil shipments, raising the specter of even higher prices and tighter supplies ahead, especially for Europe.

Because petroleum makes up about 80% of the retail price of gasoline, increasing crude costs quickly find their way to the pump.

Nationally, drivers started this week paying on average \$3.565 for a gallon of regular gas, up more than 5% in the last month. The price surge and wide variance by geography have triggered consumer anger and cries of gouging and speculation.

Newport Beach resident Daniel Heaton said he "did a double take" over the price at a Shell station in downtown Los Angeles: \$4.599 a gallon for self-serve regular.

"I thought, 'Is this the lowest one?' It's ridiculous," Heaton said. Still, the 30-year-old attorney went ahead and put \$64.42 worth of fuel in his tank; his employer, it turned out, was paying for it.

Down the road at a 76 station, Marisol Lopez, 31, said [See Gas prices, A9]

Porn studios weigh fleeing or fighting L.A. condom law

Firms could deprive the city of a rich tax revenue stream, or stay and try to work around the rule.

RONG-GONG LIN II

For decades, the nation's pornographic film industry found a happy, largely accepting home in Los Angeles.

Producers operated lucrative businesses in anonymous office parks in the San Fernando Valley. In the city were a steady supply of ac-

tors and film production talent as well as opulent mansions that often served as theatrical backdrops. By one estimate, at least 5% of on-location shoots were for adult films.

But this coexistence has been suddenly shaken by sweeping health regulations that, starting March 5, will require porn performers to wear condoms while on location.

The landmark law marks a rare attempt to regulate how films are made, threatening an industry that has been a source of millions of dollars in revenue. AIDS activists are gathering signatures for a countywide ballot

measure that would extend the ban to dozens of additional communities.

The industry, however, is fighting back. Leaders say they are considering plans to fight back either in court or by moving filming out of town. It's a debate that pits the desire to protect the health of porn actors against the freedom to make films that audiences want to see.

The Los Angeles City Council acted earlier this year after a series of incidents in which adult film productions were suspended amid concerns that HIV had been transmitted among performers. [See Condoms, A8]

'This is an Egypt I do not know'

Carjackings, bank heists and other brazen crimes add to public unease

JEFFREY FLEISHMAN
AND AMRO HASSAN
REPORTING FROM CAIRO

The headlines reflect a previously unknown cruelty: a woman gunned down in a rich Cairo neighborhood, a rash of carjackings, a deadly soccer riot, a stream of smuggled arms that have given muscle to criminal gangs once easily outgunned by police.

The revolution that inspired this country one year ago has set loose a menacing air that Egyptians find unfamiliar. Bristling beneath the political battle for power against the ruling generals is an insecurity over crime and a bitterness that has darkened Egypt's congenial nature.

Soldiers guard streets but few people feel safe. Police have largely returned to duty after months of work slowdowns, but their presence is sporadic; they appear and disappear at whim. Many Egyptians wonder



NASSER NASSER Associated Press

IN CAIRO, a woman passes a mural depicting soccer fans slain in a recent riot in Port Said. The melee was among the latest incidents of unprecedented violence.

whether security forces are complacent about or complicit in the mayhem around them, a sense of unease felt by fruit vendors and bankers alike.

"This is an Egypt I do not know," said Tarek Fouad, a

sales manager at an international corporation. He said he saw this bewilderment in the faces at the funeral for a relative, who was shot in a January carjacking on the affluent outskirts of Cairo. The car he was driving

wasn't expensive, "but they murdered him to get it," Fouad said. "We kept hearing about such crimes in the news, but now they are common. We're having bank robberies, which is another [See Egypt, A5]

Jeremy Lin, an American success story

The overnight NBA sensation has revealed the casual prejudice and lazy stereotypes against Asian Americans, writes Bill Plaschke. **SPORTS, C1**

Meanwhile, Lin's story has been deeply felt within the Asian American community. Lin is seen there as turning the stereotypes on their head. **CALENDAR, D1**



JASON SZENES European Pressphoto Agency

Mexico prison riot led to escapes

Thirty Zetas gang members got away with the help of guards, and all 44 slain inmates were from a rival gang. **WORLD, A3**

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AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

Magic Johnson to run TV network

The former NBA star will create a cable channel with positive programming for African Americans. **BUSINESS, B1**

CAMPAIGN 2012

Character counts, say voters who gravitate to Santorum

PAUL WEST
REPORTING FROM
SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MICH.

Suburban mom Judy Dlugosielski is a liberal Republican who favors abortion rights.

Yet as a crucial set of primaries nears, her choice for president is Rick Santorum, who would be the most conservative nominee of a major party in decades and a man who gained national prominence as a warrior against abortion.

Her decision rests on her perception of his character.

"We need to elect the person who's going to do the best for the country. We need to have somebody who brings us back to the basics of home and family," said the 56-year-old mother of a U.S. Marine, who is active in a local military family support group even as she recovers from treatment for cancer.

For voters like Dlugosielski, the choice for president rests not on issues but on intangibles. Likability. Authenticity.

The contrast between Santorum's youthful and mostly sunny image and the older and colder persona of Mitt Romney is feeding a titanic struggle as the two head toward Feb. 28 primaries. [See Santorum, A7]

Campaign cash: Mitt Romney and his "super PAC" spent twice as much as they raised in January. **LATEXTRA**