

Jurassic Park?

Sunday's *New York Times Magazine* carried an article about the role of unions in the 21st Century called "The New Boss." Its author, New York Times reporter Matt Bai, visited Placid Harbor while putting the finishing touches on his article.

Here's how Matt Bai described the William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center at Placid Harbor:

The little campus features 87 hotel rooms, a library, a theater and a dockside dining room. There was no training going on that week, and as I wandered the empty halls, I peered into glass cases containing some of the products made by the heavy-machine operators and plant workers who make up much of the union's rank and file: a parking meter, aluminum soda cans, a Winchester rifle, a box of animal crackers.

There were black-and-white photos of the union's past presidents with Harry Truman, Hubert Humphrey and Ted Kennedy. I glimpsed an exhibit meant to celebrate what the machinists apparently consider a triumphant moment: the Eastern Airlines strike that began in 1989 and ended, two years later, with the destruction of the company.

It was as if I had wandered into the industrial economy's version of Jurassic Park: "Welcome to Laborland, U.S.A., and please be careful – there are actual union leaders wandering around." (Emphasis added.)

Now Matt Bai is entitled to his perspective. But he consciously chose to ignore the two computer labs; the display cases with space age rockets, satellites and jet fighters: and he failed to report that he visited Placid Harbor on January 4th during one of two weeks the facility does not hold classes throughout the year.

And Matt Bai wrote about his visit in a way that insulted the 47,000 IAM members who have attended classes at Placid Harbor and the hundreds of thousands of American and Canadian members whose products and services are on display here.

So, if you've been through training at Placid Harbor, if your members took so much pride in the honest day's work they placed a replica of what they make in those display cases, or if you are simply tired of elitists sneering at those who make things in North America, maybe you'd like to drop Matt Bai and the New York Times Magazine a line at mattbai@mac.com and magazine@nytimes.com.

Have you heard?

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