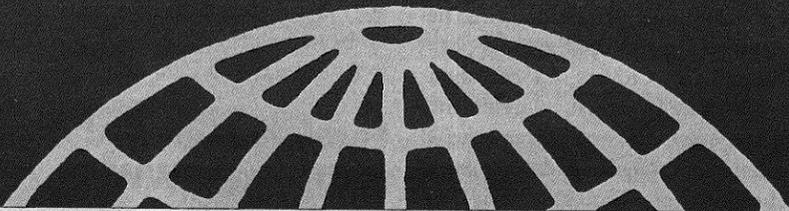


Industrial Worker



★ ORGANIZATION ★ EDUCATION ★ EMANCIPATION ★

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What happened to Teamsters & Turtles?

Arctic Drilling, the Labor Movement and the Environment

BY ALEXIS BUSS

"They couldn't have done it without the unions," is the sentiment echoed across the environmental movement, as U.S. President George Bush's energy plan passed 240-189 in the House. Although few expect the plan to drill for domestic oil in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge to pass the Senate (although with the potential for war around the corner, political dynamics are bound to change), many are left scratching their heads, wondering what the future will be for a fledgling environmentalist-labor coalition dubbed "Teamsters and Turtles" during 1999's anti-WTO protests in Seattle.

Media pundits had long labeled the ANWR drilling plan as politically unviable because of the Democrats' control the Senate. A last-minute intervention by the Teamsters played a major part in pushing the plan through the House, and Teamster President James Hoffa plans to help target the Senate when the bill hits the floor in late September.

The Teamsters came aboard as a lobby group for the plan after a closed-door meeting in May with Vice President Dick Cheney and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. Leaders from over twenty labor organizations were present, mostly from construction and maritime. The AFL-CIO also endorsed the Bush plan late in the game, which came as an unexpected move as several power-hitters in the federation including the Service Employees International Union and the Communication Workers of America had stated their opposition to the scheme. (The AFL-CIO's 1993 convention passed a resolution that, in part, called on the country to explore ANWR for oil with safeguards to protect the environment.)

Bush's energy plan – supposedly instigated by the California energy crisis and unstable gasoline prices – calls for building almost 2,000 new power plants and 18,000 miles of fuel pipelines over the next two decades. The Bush team's figures indicated that each new power plant would create 1,000 construction jobs and 200 permanent jobs, while every 1,000 miles of pipeline would bring with it another 5,000 jobs. And there would be another job boom if nuclear power plants came back into the picture. All told, over 700,000 jobs would be created, according to a 1990 report of the Wharton Econometric Institute, paid for by the American Petroleum Institute. (Not to mention the plethora of jobs to be had cleaning up from environmental disasters, guarding radioactive wastes for tens of thousands of years, and such.)

Unions at the Cheney meeting have joined a business-led coalition called "Job

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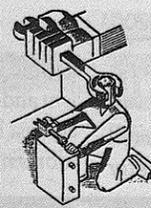
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Working longer, getting poorer

American workers now spend so much time on the job that they are putting in another week a year compared with 10 years ago, according to a new report from the International Labour Organization.

In 1990 the average U.S. worker put in 1,942 hours a year on the job; now they toil for 1,978 hours. "The increase in the number of hours worked within the US runs counter to the trend in other industrialized nations where we are seeing declining hours worked," said Lawrence Johnson, the economist who headed the team that drew up *Key Indicators of the Labour Market 2001-2002*.

Each Australian, Canadian, Japanese and Mexican worker devotes about 100 hours a year - or 2.5 weeks - fewer to their job. Britons and Brazilians work 250 fewer hours (roughly six weeks) and Germans put in 500 fewer hours, or about 12 weeks.

In countries categorized as developing or in transition, only South Koreans and Czechs put in more time than Americans.

As the work week lengthens, so do the unemployment rolls. In recent months, corporate America has issued a steady drumbeat of job cut announcements - more than 1.1 million this year.

The U.S. Labor Department's latest survey of workers who lost long-term jobs in 1997 and 1998 (conducted last year, during the economic "boom") shows that displaced workers take a big hit even in the best of

times. Over a fifth of workers were still unemployed two years after losing their job, 11 percent were working part-time or self-employed, and 26 percent had taken pay cuts to find new jobs. (Wage figures were not adjusted for inflation.)

Now that unemployment is rising and profits falling, in the U.S. and around the world, the situation is likely to get much worse.

Many workers putting in long hours on the job are not getting by. Personal debt has reached record levels, and 1.5 million workers have declared bankruptcy this year. "A job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it," says Holly Sklar, author of *Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies that Work for all of us*. "But as we celebrate Labor Day, hard-working Americans paid the minimum wage have to choose between eating or heating, health care or child care.

"At \$5.15 an hour [the minimum wage], they earn just \$10,712 a year. That's a third less than in 1968, when the minimum wage was about \$8, adjusting for inflation.

"A couple with two kids would have to work a combined 3.3 full-time minimum-wage jobs to make ends meet."

Of course, not everyone is hurting. A new study by United for a Fair Economy reports that top corporate executive's pay rose 571 percent (before inflation) between 1990 and 2000. Workers' wages rose by just 37

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Restaurant workers organizing in Portland

BY MORGAN MILLER

IWW members in Portland, Oregon, are opening new organizing opportunities with the formation of a Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Industrial Union 640 Branch. Our strategy is simple, we act as the union for anyone who needs us.

Our First Election Drive

Fourteen workers at a one-shop franchise of Godfather's Pizza have filed a recognition petition with IU 640 of the IWW through the National Labor Relations Board. The just above minimum wage workers will also pursue claims for unpaid wages and unauthorized paycheck deductions.

Conditions at the shop are terrible. The boss regularly has workers clock-off when business is slow and wait in the store until things get busier. Delivery drivers are forced to pay \$5 a paycheck for auto insurance that doesn't seem to exist. \$4 per check is also charged for soda pop.

A union representation election is scheduled for October 2.

A small victory

An example of the tactics Portland IWWs are using illustrates that you don't need an NLRB election to act as a union.

An IWW veteran of the Mallory Hotel strike was fired from her bar job recently. She had been \$12 short on a \$2000 till on the busiest night of the year. A couple of days later the owner asked for the \$12. Our wobbly wrote him a letter saying that she didn't think that making up for a short till was legal, but if he investigated it and found it was legal, she would be happy to pay the \$12.

The owner fired her. Bad move.

The 640 called Bill Bradley and myself. Then she went and did some research at the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries. Turns out she was right, an employee can't be forced to pay for a short till. If the owner had spent a couple of minutes calling around it could have saved himself a lot of grief.

The three of us came up with a plan. We knew we had him but we also knew that we couldn't get the other workers to participate. So how do we get a severance package and show the other workers they have some power as well as better the workplace?

We decided to:

- 1) Meet with the owner
- 2) Ask for back wages and severance pay
- 3) Ask for an end to the policy of making up short tills and reimbursement of money taken from any current employee.
- 4) Require management to post a notice stating the change in policy and the legal rights of the workers.

So the fired 640 and Bill Bradley met with the owner. We had thought we would meet him in his upstairs office, but instead he met the delegation in the bar itself. We told the owner our demands, saying we were sure he had been unaware of the law but it was a serious action which needed rectification. We allowed him time to cool down when he got angry and time to call his lawyer. After the last call he conceded on all demands.

All the coworkers were watching this happen. Hopefully this will teach them to stand up for themselves. Ironically, the regulars all asked the owner how he was doing and told the fired 640 they were happy to

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Subscribers: The number (top line) reflects the last issue due on your subscription

And more workers dead...

Fellow Workers:

As of this writing (9/12/01) the death toll from the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon hasn't been officially tallied - the guesstimate is over 5,000.

Given what U.S.-spawned corporations and the U.S. military have done to the rest of the world across the decades, it is not surprising that someone somewhere would want to strike back at the most visible symbols of U.S. imperialism, no matter what the cost.

But striking at symbols will not weaken the U.S. ruling class's ability to oppress and exploit. Nor is the tactic of turning commercial jetliners and their passengers and crews into flying fire bombs likely to rally workers inside or outside the U.S. to oppose the U.S. ruling class.

The actions of small groups of terrorists willing to martyr themselves cannot create a basis for organizing workers' self-management or industrial democracy (call it what you will), which is the only thing which really will weaken the bosses' power. Instead the U.S. working class is likely to be convinced that it does have interests in common with the employing class.

The most probable outcome of all of this is increased authoritarianism in the U.S. in the name of security and more U.S. bombs directed at targets abroad. And more workers dead.

Penny Pixler X331052

Together against barbarism

Dear comrades,

We hope that all members of the IWW are OK after the terrible tragedy that occurred in New York City this week.

We are strongly determined to help the

people, as well as to fight against imperialism and fundamentalism. We are by your side against both threats, now and during the dark moments you'll have to face.

Together against barbarity...

Revolutionary regards,
Fabrice, CNT-F
International Secretariat
Paris, France

Readers' Soapbox

Writing for the Industrial Worker

That is the title of the first in a new pamphlet series titled *HOW: Help for Organizing Wobblies*. The pamphlet offers suggestions for gathering information and writing effective articles, as well as tips on capturing striking images on photograph and submitting material to the newspaper.

Branches are encouraged to elect a correspondent who will report on local activities and keep an eye out for labor struggles of broader interest. A copy will be sent to all branches. Others can get a copy for \$1 from IWW headquarters.

In November We Remember

In keeping with long-standing IWW tradition, our November issue will feature articles on IWW history, and remembrances of those who fought to build our union and emancipate our class from wage slavery. We hope to produce 16 pages for the occasion.

Greeting Ads (no commercial notices please) are available for \$10 per column inch. A \$70 1/8 page ad is 3.5 (height) by 4.9 inches; a 1/4 page ad (7.5 inches tall) is \$150. No larger greeting ads can be accepted. We can design the ad for you from your text, or you can send it in camera ready to arrive no later than Wednesday, October 10.

Wobs organize Peltier teach-in

BY EUGENE PLAWIUK

The summer was busy for the Edmonton IWW branch. We began by organizing a June 21 teach-in on Leonard Peltier. This was a follow-up from last year's protest at the constituency office of the Federal Government Minister of Justice, Anne McLeenan. We work closely with the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee of Canada and the teach-in kicked off for a new campaign in Canada to demand the government accept that they illegally extradited Leonard to the U.S.

Our teach-in covered Leonard's arrest in Alberta, the continued cold war against native activists in Canada and the U.S. Speakers included Barry Chivers, a local labour lawyer who was involved in defending Leonard and other AIM activists arrested in a native camp and transferred to Edmonton RCMP headquarters. Professor Tony Hall from the University of Lethbridge spoke on the native occupations and the post-AIM struggle of the first nations. We also had spokespeople from the first nations address us on their personal and political struggles here. The Canadian Labour Congress rep for Alberta spoke about the CLC's program on affirmative action for aboriginal workers. Over 60 people attended and over \$200 was raised for the LPDC of Canada.

Following the teach-in two days later we held a protest in the rain at the Justice Ministers office attended by 35 activists. The Secretary Treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour, a young high school activist with Amnesty International, and FW Eugene Plawiuk addressed the protestors on Leonard's struggle and the continuing struggle of workers and activists in an increasing police state over dissidence.

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640 organizing...

continued from page 1

see her back working!

Upshot

A 330 Industrial Union Branch carpenter/delegate was sitting in a cafe having his morning coffee. No union pin on or nothing. A woman started talking to him about the crappy conditions at her restaurant job, concluding "I need to join the IWW!" A stealth delegate announced that he could sign her up then and there. Our newest 640 had heard about the grievance victory and decided that the IWW is the way to go.

Portland 640 IUB meets every Sunday at 1PM at Red and Black Cafe. Out of town Wobs are welcome to visit, call 503-231-5488 to let us know ahead of time.

Farmers Milk and Cream recognizes IWW

A small distributor of dairy products agreed to voluntary recognition of the Portland IWW after all of the employees requested representation. The employer has signaled a willingness to a model union contract aiming toward a wage scale upward to \$18 per hour.

Nature's Fresh workers resist firing on suspicion

Workers at the Division Street Nature's Fresh Northwest, part of the Wild Oats chain, are fighting five unfair terminations through their IWW IU 660 organizing committee. This has included a dramatic confrontation/meeting with the General Manager Sept. 14 that drew strong support from workers on shift - many of whom stopped work to ask about how to join the union, when the next meetings were, etc. Nature's employs over 500 workers in the Portland Area.

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Organizing the OBU in New Jersey

BY DOMINICK BRUNO, X353571

The newly formed Central NJ Organizing Committee cut its teeth supporting IBT Local 125 in their strike against Pepsico. IWW members led job actions in support of the Teamsters, openly distributed boycott literature after management ordered IBT representatives off store property, and dissuaded customers from buying Pepsi products.

They also took the opportunity to point out how having One Big Union would have helped the Teamsters even more. "We're union; if the IBT is on strike, we shouldn't be forced by management to sell scab-delivered Pepsi products" said one UFCW Local 464a member during one of many informal discussions on the OBU held during the strike. IWW members also accompanied a solidarity sharing held by members of New Brunswick Food Not Bombs at the IBT picket outside Pepsi's Piscataway, NJ, warehouse.

The Organizing Committee has also received a favorable response from local collectively run record label M-26-7 Music, and have been discussing the requirements for them to become a union shop. The label has agreed to release a benefit CD for the CNJOC and National Clearinghouse.

The benefit, a compilation of oi! and streetpunk bands, is entitled "Oi! I'm a Bit Wobbly" and will feature the following bands: Brigada Flores Magon (France), Dread Fabrik (NJ), The GC5 (OH), The Generatorz (Canada), the Hardsoles (CO), Hudson Falcons (NJ), Klasse Kriminale (Italy), Red London (UK), and Wildcat Strike (Sweden). Questions regarding the compilation may be directed to: m267music@hotmail.com

The NJ Organizing Committee plans to solidify its support in the supermarket industry by encouraging more supporters to actually join the IWW, and constantly reach out to other disaffected workers looking for a truly worker-oriented union.

Santa Barbara GMB forming

Wobblies in Santa Barbara, California, have petitioned for a General Membership Branch charter. The branch plans to concentrate our organizing in two industries: education (IU 620) and restaurants (IU 640). Currently, the majority of Wobblies in Santa Barbara are in IU 620. There is one university and several colleges in the immediate area and dozens of private and public schools.

The other industry they will focus on is IU 640. Santa Barbara is a tourist town, packed with low wage jobs in restaurants, cafes, hotels, and stores for the idle rich. Many of the lower paid workers in this industry are from Mexico and Central America. Several of us speak enough Spanish for organizing. The IU 640 workforce tends to be more stable than the IU 620, though recently some have had to leave town because their wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of housing.

Fired SFSU recyclers settle

BY STEVEN TOFF

Recycling workers at San Francisco State University have settled their Unfair Labor Practice charges. Workers began organizing with the Education Workers IU 620, IWW, in Fall 1999, but each time the union signed up a majority of workers the university would fire them.

Shortly before the ULPs were to go to trial, administrators offered cash payments to the affected workers. While SFSU does not admit to violating labor laws, the workers are relieved to have the process over with, and their settlement.

Quickie strikes hit Portland programs

IWW social service workers with the Janus agency have upped the pressure to get a contract. IU650 members staged a number of quickie strikes in August and September. Lasting around two hours each, the strikes were conducted at the Streetlight, Harry's Mother and Garfield House programs. On Sept. 21 IU 650 members met management with intention of reaching agreement after nearly 18 months of collective bargaining.

The strikes began at Janus Youth Programs' Street Light shelter at the beginning of an August 23 staff meeting. Management was much relieved when workers returned to work at the beginning of scheduled shifts.

Also that day, several local stations and newspapers reported on the closure of the Salvation Army's Greenhouse School, Drug and Alcohol Program, Day Center, Recreation Services, and Softball Program. The Salvation Army closed the fully funded programs shortly after workers voted for union representation. Workers, also represented by IWW IU 650, have filed for an injunction through the NLRB to prevent the closure and are encouraging the community to bring pressure on the Army to reverse this transparent bit of union-busting.

Meanwhile, bargaining has begun for Salvation Army Greenhouse Workers, and management has agreed to concessions including back pay for workers who have been paid lower than classification wages and reimbursement of medical costs for workers improperly denied medical benefits.

Boston Wobs picket scabs

Boston Wobblies picketed the Quincy Marriot in August, carrying "Scabs Go Home" banners in the first of planned actions to target the professional scabs prolonging the Brockton nurses' strike. Hours later, hospital managers resumed bargaining, reaching an agreement to restrict overtime.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalist, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.



The Boston GMB's table at the annual Labor Heritage festival in Lawrence drew a steady stream of visitors, while the Provincetown Players performed a play based on the Lawrence Strike, and the IWW Preamble was read from the stage.

Homeless newsies win toilet

BY PETER RILEY

The long-term homeless and unemployed are "piece-workers" who sell Australia's Big Issue street paper for \$3 and keep half the money. Most have been disorganized and fearful for a long time. Some vendors signed up with the union then dropped out, back into addictions or cynicism. Organizing is a long haul task.

Those who signed up agreed to campaign for a toilet – a small but achievable goal. The magazine's paid staff have a toilet and amenities. A meeting between IWW members and the managers was frustrated by the paternalism of the staff. IWW member Phil Doyle, who wrote for the magazine, has been banned for speaking out about the vendors' situation.

The magazine was "relaunched" by management on May Day in the City Mall. Activists, students and workers were out in the streets celebrating and protesting. The IWW was also out and about with a sticker campaign using the logo Big Issue and asking

"Where's The Toilet? Management Have Toilet, Vendors Do Not Why?" etc.

These were seen all over the city, particularly in the Mall and at the vendors' selling spots. It took a few months of agitating, but finally an "official vendor's toilet" was made accessible via a key from the office staff.

IWW delegate Peter During has been encouraging organization for a long time. There has been mixed results due to the pressures many street vendors endure: homeless, poverty, street hassles, weather, patronizing bosses... Peter used to work on the Melbourne tramways and lost his job when it was privatised.

Unionism is combination; it gets for a group of workers what they cannot achieve alone.

It is a 'small' result, but still a victory.

The vendors continue to sign up more members. The IWW is campaigning for amenities like a room out of the weather. The space will have lockers for vendor's personal possessions, chairs couch and a table.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

- I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Purdy's strikers in hard fight

BY GORDON FLETT

105 members of the Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union of Canada Local 2000 have been on strike at the Purdy's Chocolates production plant in Vancouver, B.C., since April 30th.

Bargaining resumed July 10th, but the July 12th mediation session was cancelled by the company an hour and a half before it was supposed to start. Issues include wages, a closed shop, and long-term disability. Purdy's President Karen Flavelle then sent out aggressive propaganda to individual union members, including bargaining proposals, resulting in the union filing an unfair labour practice against the company.

An organizing drive has been initiated at the unorganized Purdy's retail outlets, along with leafletting at the stores.

The company insists on negotiating using a lawyer, and they now have a new one, but there still hasn't been any attempt to negotiate since July 11th. Picket support continues to be fantastic. On August 7th the strikers held a well-attended rally on the picket line to mark the 100th day of their struggle.

The strikers are a strong, determined group of mostly ethnic women who are trying to make the point that women's labour is not cheap labour; they will not give in until this point is made. There are also men in the bargaining unit, a fact often overlooked, equally determined to fight for the right to bargain collectively regardless of the company's intransigence.

Boeing ex-workers win benefits after 8-year legal battle

A federal judge in Oklahoma has ruled in favor of more than 1,000 older McDonnell Douglas Corp. workers, finding that the company, now owned by Boeing, closed a plant in 1993 in order to avoid paying pension, health and retiree medical benefits.

Judge Sven Erik Holmes found that the company hired consultants to advise it on how to save money by selecting older workers for termination in the plant closing. Workers rarely win this kind of case because the burden of proof is on the employees.

Boeing has been ordered to negotiate with the plaintiffs over back wages, pension payments, and restoration of lost health benefits. The judge also indicated he might impose additional sanctions because of Boeing's "failure to respond to discovery and repeated false statements under oath."

While the plant closure was being planned, McDonnell Douglas urged workers to lobby Congress in support of a contract to sell F-15s to Saudi Arabia. They were told that if the contract was approved, the plant would stay open for at least three more years, but after the contract was secured, the company transferred the work to St. Louis.

The average worker in Tulsa was almost 51 years old; 300 of them were about to become fully eligible for retirement benefits. The company reaped \$24.7 million in benefit savings by closing the plant, and grabbed another \$11 million from its pension fund.

Half of British workers look forward to going to work

A survey commissioned by the British Trade Union Congress found that "only 49 percent of the workforce look forward to going to work on an average day." This compares to 66 percent of U.S. workers, the report's authors claim. We're not sure who they've been talking to.

One in ten said they work very hard at jobs they do not enjoy. On a more positive note, 62 percent of non-union workers agreed that "strong trade unions are needed to protect working conditions and wages."

Whatever Happened to Union Solidarity?

BY DIANE ALBRECHT

April 15, 1999, will be a day long remembered for a small group of people who work in a automotive plant in Stratford, Ontario. This was the day they occupied the plant in order to force the bosses to rescind outsourcing that would have taken the plant to levels where closure was highly likely. The Canadian Auto Workers national union, pressed by a massive rank-and-file movement, organized a plant occupation which resulted in gains that exceeded most workers' expectations, all within 24 hours.

So what happened? In the two years since that memorable day the workforce has once again dwindled to April 1999 levels. Since the last major layoff in May 2001 we have been subjected to overtime. Overtime has been steadily increasing, starting with

one hour four days a week, then adding 5 hours Saturday, and now every night and 8 hours Saturday. This translates into almost the entire plant (313 people) working 12 hours overtime every week with 185 on lay-off.

There are a few who have so far said no to overtime, bring people back instead. But with the union committee all working and reminding us of our obligations to the company the numbers are small. Whatever happened to union solidarity?

Instead of being reminded daily of our brothers and sisters who are out of work we instead are reminded that we need to remain competitive. Competitiveness being defined as line speedup and overtime (we have to make up for lost production of those on lay-off), and cooperation with the bosses (it

seems management rights clauses are the only enforceable part of the contract).

Jobs in the automotive industry aren't being lost, they are being outsourced to non-union shops where minimum wages and benefits prevail, pitting worker against worker. A close look shows the same bosses, in some cases the same workers, only lower wages and benefits, longer hours and increased safety concerns being the norm.

A friend defined the lean manufacturing claims of working smarter, not harder as jargon used to sell us mind-numbing, carpal-tunnel-twisting, repetitive-trauma disorder.

It's high time we, rank and file workers, stopped accepting cooperation games and got back to our roots. We are the means of production - without us everything comes to a standstill.

Who pays the price for terrorist attacks?

BY BRIAN OLIVER SHEPPARD

As we are bombarded with mainstream analysis ranging from jingoist hysteria to cathartic melodrama, it is worth remembering that the suicide attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon primarily killed working people.

The American Skandia investment firm claims "[t]he financial services industry was hit hardest" by the terrorist attacks. But the fact remains that the largest number of casualties were suffered by office temps, janitors, secretaries, receptionists, firemen, and other working-class people.

These deaths fall into a basic historic pattern: Workers suffer negative outcomes of catastrophic events first (in this case, death and loss of family members, but usually layoffs and wage concessions) but are always the last to enjoy positive outcomes such as pay raises or job security.

International policy, crafted by the wealthy to suit their own interests, calls upon the poorest and hardest-hit working people to pay its price; as a result, workers suffer sanctions and die violent deaths while the bosses and other order-givers profit. Continental Airlines announced it would lay off

12,000 workers just four days after the attack in order that it might remain profitable.

CBS Market Watch's Larry Kramer commanded the faithful to "fight terrorists by buying shares" when the stock exchange reopened Sept. 17. "We're all in the mood to send a message [to the terrorists]," he wrote. What will "we" do? "Buy! That's right. On Monday invest as much and as often as you can in America... Execute those trades early and often. It's as close as you can get to feeling like you are pulling the trigger against our enemies."

While "experts" like Kramer wed stock trading to flag-waving patriotism and bloody vengeance, the working class will continue to pick up the debris, will continue to suffer layoffs, and will continue to bear the heaviest burden of the current recession economy.

And what about workers outside the United States?

They will see the hope of global working-class resistance shattered by these terrorist acts, acts that will serve as the perfect pretext for America to flex its military muscle around the world and further alienate the working classes of Third World countries from their privileged Western counterparts.

We recognize no national barriers. The world is our country.

SEIU Local 100 organizers unionize

BY ALEXIS BUSS

Workers at the San Antonio office of SEIU Local 100, affiliated with the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, have formed a new independent union and filed for a union representation election with the National Labor Relations Board.

Wade Rathke, whose name will be familiar to Wobblies because of his key involvement with busting several IWW drives among ACORN workers earlier this year, is up to his usual tricks - demanding that the workers in the San Antonio office cannot organize a local unit for their own office (although they eventually hope to organize all Local 100 workers) but must instead have the initial bargaining unit be nationwide.

The United Union Workers was born to address the same basic set of concerns that inspired the IWW's ACORN organizing drive: low pay (Local 100 workers make less than \$14,000 per year), long hours, and an undemocratic and highly competitive work environment. Robert Perez, president of UUU Local 1, has been in contact with Wobblies who were active in the ACORN campaign, and we hope to help them win their recognition campaign.

Local 100, which was founded in the mid-'80s in a deal with then-SEIU president John Sweeney to reinvigorate locals that had trouble organizing and were hemorrhaging members, is not new to union efforts among its workers. In *To-Gather #2*, a newsletter co-published by the IWW with ACORN work-

ers, Jay Arena recalls a drive in 1987 in New Orleans. When the workers asked for union recognition, Rathke, along with his wife and brother, who are also high-up officers in the ACORN empire, immediately began to bust their union.

Workers were given assignments in other cities to disarticulate the movement. "Other leaders of the campaign were given more onerous and unnecessary assignments. [Wade] also worked to get ACORN members to denounce us," wrote Arena, who still believes that unionizing Local 100 workers, "is part of a broader struggle to establish truly democratic organizations that can lead a real fight against this racist, capitalist system."

Retaliation against UUU organizers has already begun, with five workers put on probationary status or issued other forms of bogus discipline almost immediately after they requested union recognition.

Ironically, Local 100 takes the position with the bosses they encounter that workers' unions should be immediately recognized when a majority declare that they have formed a union. However, for their own workers, it appears that the union/ACORN bosses will insist on a protracted legal battle, arguing over every possible detail of what rights its workers do and don't have.

The UUU can be contacted by e-mailing UUUlocal01@hotmail.com. Your messages of solidarity will help encourage them as they face retaliation and legal opposition from the union bosses.

The American State will clamp down on civil liberties at home and abroad and accuse unions of acting unpatriotically if they demand democratic rights for workers.

From time to time the IWW has been accused of being unpatriotic. Thousands of our members have been imprisoned and even killed because we refused to abandon the class war and do what the bosses wanted.

When asked if the IWW was unpatriotic, John Sandgren, editor of *The One Big Union Monthly* during the 1910s, explained the IWW's position well: "[W]e recognize no national barriers. The world is our country. In fact we recognize only two nations, the working class and the exploiting class, and we are exceedingly patriotic to the working class. If by patriotism is meant the drawing of national lines for the purpose of having one people take every advantage of the other people, if by patriotism is meant that the people shall hang solidly together for the oppression of smaller and weaker nations, then we are not patriots."

The American working class must make the following decision: will it hold fast to the bonds of international working-class solidarity and refused to be duped by a feverish "patriotism" that serves only the bosses' interests, or will it forfeit the rich potential of global workers' resistance and instead blindly follow the flag, convincing itself that its class interests are one and the same with those who exploit them?

Windows on the World

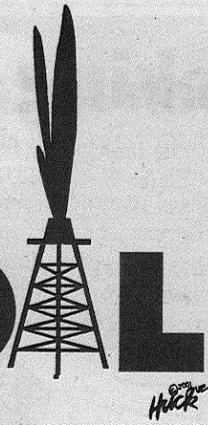
This account by a former HERE organizer is excerpted from *Radicals at Work*:

"I had one shop that broke the pattern, Windows on the World, the restaurant located atop of the World Trade Center. The 250-plus members there worked under a weak contract negotiated before any workers were even hired. Shop leaders and active members took the lead in organizing job actions to win cooked food for the night crew, better scheduling for the dishwashers, and better treatment from the supervisors and executive chef. Members ... learned that 'We are the Union' can be more than a slogan and that their actions could win change."

Seventy members of HERE Local 100 who were working at Windows on the World restaurant are still unaccounted for. Another 200 who worked at the building have lost their jobs. And hundred of hotel workers have lost their jobs due to the collapse of surrounding buildings.

The city has set up assistance funds for the fire fighters, police and EMT workers, but has forgotten about the low-paid hospitality and service workers. The union is asking for donations for the families of these workers and for the displaced workers themselves. Donations should be sent to the HERE New York Assistance Fund, 1219 28th St. N.W., Washington DC 20007.

AFL-CIO



Turtles & Teamsters...

continued from page 1

Power: Americans for Energy Employment." It's worth noting that Cheney earned more than \$20 million last year as CEO of Halliburton, an oil-field services company that would benefit greatly from loosening regulations on refineries and pipelines.

Steelworkers sought an agreement that steel used in construction would come exclusively from American plants, but no such commitment was made. This, of course, is prevented by international free trade agreements that multi-national corporations enforce with vigor. There was also no guarantee that the jobs created would go to union workers, who are a distinct minority of available workers for any major construction job, as only around 20% of the industry is organized. However, the House of Representatives voted to allow the use of project labor agreements on such jobs, which can help unions get a foothold in the work at the cost of strict no-strike pledges.

Bush's energy plan also included higher fuel-efficiency standards for SUVs and minivans, a provision vigorously lobbied against by the United Auto Workers, who argued that the policy would prefer foreign imports and economically devastate American car manufacturers. As initially proposed, car manufacturers would need to average 27.5 miles per gallon by 2007. The auto companies say this would be too expensive, and with lobbying assistance from their friends in the UAW, that requirement was replaced by a "goal" for automakers to reduce gas consumption by 5 billion gallons between 2004 and 2010.

Polls indicate that most Americans favor energy conservation over building energy plants and drilling for fossil fuels in order to keep up with current energy usage levels. A recent Gallup poll shows 52 percent favor conservation while 36 percent lean toward the Bush plan to increase production.

"What the administration has announced is not an energy policy but an energy rip-off by big oil companies and utilities," said Andrew Stern, president of the SEIU. This sentiment appears to be echoed in a majority of American union households. According to a poll conducted by Hart-Tetter for NBC News and the Wall Street Journal in March 2001, more than 60 percent of union members oppose President Bush's plan to allow oil and gas drilling in the Arctic Refuge. The poll shows that 62 percent of union members, compared to 56 percent of respondents in non-union households, oppose drilling in "protected areas, such as the Alaskan wilderness," and want to "keep these areas off limits and consider other solutions." The World Wildlife Fund insists that more jobs can be created by investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency than by ANWR drilling.

The National Federation of Independent Unions, a coalition of non-AFL-CIO unions whose numbers add up to well over 100,000 members, believes that ANWR drilling would not solve the problem it is designed to fix. President Francis Chiappardi voiced his disagreement with the plan "to plunder the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to extract a supply of oil that would be available a decade or more from now, and even then would last us a mere four to six months." NFIU,

interestingly enough, is affiliated with the AFL-CIO's Laborers Union, which strongly favors ANWR drilling.

Set aside in 1960, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a 1.5 million acre swath of land near the US-Canadian border north of the Arctic Circle. Although the energy plan that passed the house says that no more than 2,000 acres of the plain will be disturbed for oil production, environmentalists say the limit is meaningless because the acres could be scattered across a broad area. Drilling is predicted to alter vast portions of the refuge.

According to an environmental impact statement by the U.S. Department of Interior, opening the area would require construction of hundreds of miles of roads, pipelines and air strips, drilling pads and other infrastructure to accommodate production. Riverbeds and streambeds would have to be stripped for gravel for roads and air strips.

Reasons to oppose drilling are numerous, ranging from arguments that say the oil in ANWR is not enough to make any significant impact on the domestic oil supply, to protecting the pristine habitat that is home to large populations of caribou, moose, wolves, grizzlies and polar bears, and migratory birds. The potential for oil spills is high

— many people will remember the 10-million-gallon Exxon Valdez disaster — but smaller spills are commonplace and dangerous to the environment.

The attention lavished on labor to lobby for ANWR has been seen by many environmentalists and unionists as a ploy by the Bush camp to bust-up the AFL-CIO's Democratic Party vote-getting machine. Endorsements from labor now will strengthen Bush's position with union voters later — the same votes who were aggressively mobilized to support Gore (and other oil-baron Democratic politicians) in 2000. A wedge is most easily driven in the Federation by targeting the construction unions as they have historically been among the most conservative. The 500,000 member United Brotherhood of Carpenters recently left the AFL-CIO. At the time UBC Secretary-Treasurer Andris Silins said, "The AFL-CIO has strayed to social and environmental issues that have nothing to do with getting better wages and working conditions for working people."

The Teamsters could have other reasons to get cozy with the Bush Administration. The IBT, who endorsed Reagan in 1980, want to be rid of the federal control of the union established 12 years ago to settle a racketeering lawsuit for mob ties. Hoffa says those days are over and the union is moving toward democratic control. His critics, including the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, say that corruption is still a problem and the union hasn't developed the resources needed to expand organizing efforts and increase membership. TDU's case has been bolstered by accusations that a top aide to Hoffa masterminded a sweetheart deal to undercut Teamsters members in Las Vegas by giving jobs to non-union workers.

When the AFL-CIO mobilized its members to march alongside environmental and other activist groups in Seattle — and again at protests against the World Bank in Wash-

ington, D.C., and the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City — many heralded it as the dawn of a new era of socially responsible unionism. While there was always reason to doubt the sincerity of the AFL-CIO piecards' commitment to such a vision, many rank-and-file union members were eager for a unionism that addressed not only their immediate job concerns but also the long-term degradation of the planet on which we live and work and the immiseration of our fellow workers around the globe.

However, the rank and file do not control the business unions, and AFL-CIO officials evidently have no problem mortgaging the future of the planet in exchange for promises to create a handful of jobs building the means for our own destruction.

The alliance was captured in the slogan, "Teamsters and Turtles, Together at Last." Are the Teamsters now offering a new slogan, "Turtle Soup, Anyone?"

Unions for Bush?

The International Association of Machinists has produced a jingoistic video featuring its president encouraging IAM members to support George Bush's Star Wars II program. Meanwhile, the Teamsters invited Bush to speak at Labor Day celebrations.

Bush spoke August 26 at a West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, USX plant, apparently invited because he has begun an "inquiry" into steel imports. "I support anybody that supports labor," said Howard Graham, 56, chairman of the trustees of Local 1219 of the United Steelworkers of America, during the event.

How Bush falls into that category is anyone's guess. However, one union member said he couldn't do much worse than the Democrats. "With all the money we gave him, Clinton didn't do much for us," said Frederick Nicholas, 80, a retired steelworker at the event. Hard to argue with that.

Campus Equity Week actions to demand equal pay, benefits, respect

A week of coordinated activities on campuses across Canada and the United States seeks to educate students, parents and the community at large about the exploitation of part-time (adjunct) faculty, and to lay the groundwork for future organizing.

Campus Equity Week events will run October 28 - November 3. While the primary focus will be on the situation of part-time faculty, many local events will also confront the broader issue of declining labor standards and the increased reliance on poorly paid part-time and temporary labor for all campus work.

The campaign, which was initiated by adjunct activists in the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, has been endorsed by the major faculty unions, as well as by other unions of education workers, student organizations, and the National Alliance for Fair Employment. The Boston Branch of the IWW's Education Workers Industrial Union 620 is an active member of COCAL, and is helping to coordinate events including demonstrations exposing the general degradation of working conditions in the education industry, a protest at the Board of Higher Education office to demand health and retirement benefits for adjuncts in the state system, release of a report card exposing conditions at 35 area colleges, distribution of thousands of pieces of literature to adjuncts and students, and meetings on campuses across the region.

Events in other parts of the country will range from rallies to teach-ins to film showings to tabling and distributing information. The CEW Steering Committee is encouraging local groups to take the initiative to organize appropriate events for their region and campaigns, and has made available a variety of organizing resources on its web site, at

www.cewAction.org. Boston EWIU (PO Box 391724, Cambridge MA 02139, ewiu@parsons.iww.org) can provide leaflets and other material Wobblies are distributing.

Only about a third of college faculty now hold traditional tenure-track positions. According to U.S. Dept. of Education statistics, 43 percent of faculty now hold part-time positions while another 18 percent are in full-time non-tenure-track positions, generally working for lower wages without any job security. More than half of part-time faculty across the country are paid less than \$2,500 for teaching a semester-long course. "Part-timers" often cobble together teaching schedules at two, three or even more campuses in order to make ends meet, working far longer hours than do their "full-time" counterparts for less pay, no benefits, and no job security.

Over the last year, adjunct faculty have won a number of victories in their efforts to improve their conditions. In California, \$62 million has been earmarked to reduce wage disparities between part-time and full-time faculty in the state's community college system. In Washington state, adjuncts have won a lawsuit challenging the state college system's systematic miscalculation of their hours. In Chicago, part-time faculty at two private Chicago campuses have unionized. In Quebec, faculty unions across the province have launched a coordinated campaign to fight for basic equity, including setting up a joint strike fund. In New York City, adjunct activists were part of a coalition that swept an entrenched bureaucracy out of the leadership of the union representing City University of New York faculty. In Boston, adjuncts at two Universities voted for union representation this year, and activists are campaigning to win benefits for thousands of part-time faculty.

In some cities, activists have begun to reach out to other education workers, building alliances with clerical workers, custodians, food service workers, building maintenance and other education workers who face the same corporatization pressures that confront the faculty.

However, much more work needs to be done to build networks of activists at college campuses, to reach out to students, to build day-to-day solidarity among the faculty and with other education workers, and to develop new strategies for organizing in the very difficult private sector.

We encourage all Wobblies, particularly those in the education industry, to help organize Campus Equity Week events in their area, and to help force the issue of second-class part-time labor onto the public agenda.

Temp firms hire substitutes

Several suburban school districts in the Boston area have turned to Kelly Services, a major temp firm, to hire and place substitute teachers for elementary and high school classes. Kelly has contracts with more than 800 schools in 100 school districts in 30 states. And it is just one of several job shark agencies competing for this lucrative business.

School districts have long hired substitutes to fill in for sick teachers. But education "reform" typically requires teachers to leave classrooms for meetings and other "professional development" activities, dramatically expanding the need for substitutes. Because the work is poorly paid and school districts refuse to hire a pool of qualified teachers who could fill in, many slots have been going unfilled. However, the temp firms are able to divert workers from clerical postings and other jobs.

VW's boundless profit seeking

BY NINA VÖLKER

5000 for 5000 - this slogan, promoted by the Volkswagen group, has caused commotion in Germany since it has been made public by the media in June. VW management proposed to create 5,000 new jobs at a new factory in exchange for major concessions on work rules and hours. Although the IG Metall union initially rejected the proposal after long negotiations, under intense political pressure from the "socialist" government the union finally agreed to a revised proposal.

VW had initially promised to create 5000 new jobs, each paid 5000 marks a month (up to 15 percent above average), by building a new factory in Germany where they plan to produce a new model of minivan, the AMPV. VW hoped to introduce a new era of production at the new plant — slashing the wait for a new car from as long as 12 months, from order to delivery, to two weeks at the very most.

The union action was denounced by representatives of nearly every political party and by economic pundits when it rejected the proposal.

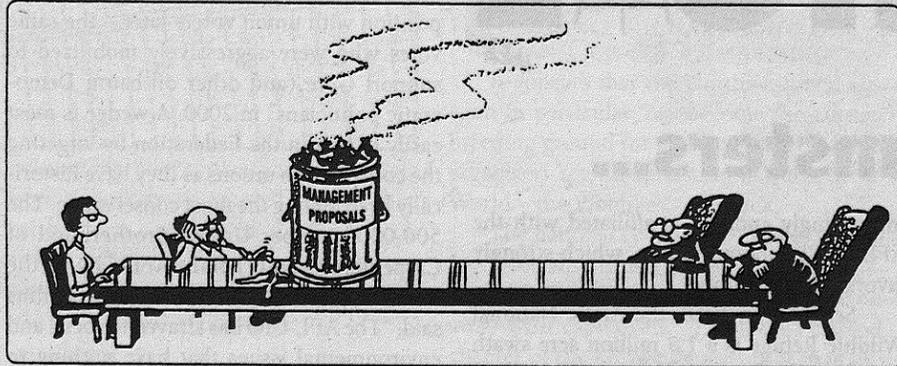
However, workers had good reason to say no. Well-regulated working hours, fixed by a collective bargaining agreement, would have been replaced by "flexible" working hours; if production required it, workers would have to work up to 20 hours more per week than before. VW workers work 28.8 hours in a four-day week, and are paid by the hour. VW intended to move to a payment scheme based upon cars produced. No matter how long they worked they would get the same wage. In addition, nightshifts and overtime would be paid at normal rates. Adding all this up, the seductive 5000 marks came down to an income 7000 to 8000 marks below the annual average.

IG Metall rejected this type of employment, saying that it would have meant a general return to the working conditions of the 1950s and would touch off a wave of attacks

on wages and working conditions. VW's attack against industry-wide collective bargaining agreements and against their own contract with the union would have been a dam-burst that would have destroyed the union's work of the last two decades in a single blow.

What IG-Metall criticized as unbearable

didn't seem at all harsh to Peter Hertz, a member of VW's personnel board, who insisted that the union could not say "No" to the new jobs. VW apparently assumed that they could push through any plan by blackmailing workers with unemployment. They seem quite confident that they will easily find



VW threatens to leave Mexico for U.S. in search of more docile workers

Volkswagen AG announced that it is suspending investment in Mexico and considering expanding production in the United States in the wake of its Sept. 5 agreement with an independent Mexican union to end a 19-day strike that halted production at the world's only factory making the German automaker's popular New Beetle.

The Puebla plant, which employs 16,000 workers, also makes the classic Beetle, Jetta and Golf Cabrio models. It produces 8,920 cars a week with about 80 percent going for export to the U.S. and Canada, and also supplies engines to VW plants in Argentina, Brazil, the Czech Republic and Spain.

VW Mexican union workers won a 10.2 percent wage hike, as well as increased special payments for buying food and school supplies for their children adding another 4.5 percent to the package. VW also agreed to pay workers 50 percent of wages lost during the strike. Before the strike workers made

approximately \$25 per day.

Volkswagen complained that it had been taken "hostage" by the strike, and suspended a previously announced \$1.5 billion five-year investment plan hours after settling the strike. "The premises have changed. Therefore, for the time being it has been decided to halt the investments in Mexico," VW vice-chairman Francisco Bada said, adding the planned funds would now be spent in Asia. During the strike, the company had threatened to shift production to the United States.

The Puebla Workers are represented by the Independent Union of Volkswagen Auto Workers (SITIAVW), which initially sought a 30 percent raise

"It is unjust that they can pay us so little compared to workers in the United States or Germany when we produce so much," said Roberto Perez, a metal foundry worker with 20 years at the factory. "In Germany they get a 15-minute break every two hours. Here we get a half hour for lunch every day."

television and provide a convenient rationale for police excesses while distracting people from the issues.

But there is another element in these protests that is becoming increasingly conspicuous: young college students or recent graduates. What are they doing protesting? Aren't they the yuppies of tomorrow, the favorite sons and daughters of the New Economy? Shouldn't they know better than to indulge in such foolishness?

Indeed they do "know better," and it is this knowledge, as well as their idealism, that has brought them into the streets. While a handful of this "elite" will pass from the Halls of Ivy to the Halls of Power and Privilege, no such destiny awaits the vast majority. They will enter a world of work without end, where working hours have already increased 15 percent and leisure time diminished by 21 percent in the last 20 years alone. This toil, as they have discovered, will bring them very few rewards.

They are weary of hearing the establishment talk out of both sides of its mouth. On the one hand they are urged, "Live the good life. Be a good citizen. Get a good education, marry and have 2.3 children, two cars, and a spacious home in the suburbs. Shop 'till you drop. It's the American way."

On the other hand, they are told, "Even after you get this education, you have no assurance of the steady employment and stable income you will need to have this 'good life.' You will come out of college with a huge debt that you may never be able to pay in your new role as a white collar migrant worker. To keep your job, you will have to be ready to uproot yourself and your family again and again at the whim of some corporation, not just for a few early years, but for your entire working life.

"You may be laid off at any time for any

5000 workers out of 4 million unemployed people in Germany willing to work under any conditions.

This led to another critical point in VW's plans. VW intended to employ only workers with no prior experience in the automobile industry. VW said it wanted fresh, young "talents" who were willing and flexible. Yet the most important requirement was that none of the new workers should have any experience with wage and working conditions in the VW group. The new states of former Eastern Germany seemed to be an ideal place to look for these new "talents."

These demands were simply too much and the union ended negotiations. But the union left itself a way out by saying that they were willing to continue the discussion.

Under the three-year agreement announced August 28, every new VW employee will get the same wage (5000 marks), but with a personal achievement bonus. Working hours will average 35 a week, which means that they remain flexible to a certain extent. If production requires a six-day week, workers will be obliged to work up to 42 hours a week.

Workers will not be paid for overtime work, instead their additional hours will be credited to an overtime account. But workers can only take time off to make up for their overtime if orders decline. And if production targets (which will be set substantially higher than current production levels) or quality standards are not met they will be forced to work overtime without being paid at all. These additional hours are not even credited to their overtime account.

VW says it will employ 3,500 workers in its new Wolfsburg plant.

The company and the union both say they are happy with this new contract. But one could easily suppose that VW is a little happier. By pushing through their plans, even under slightly different conditions, they have introduced a new and a very old type of employment at the same time — one which leads to more profit, and to worse working conditions.



Wobbling the World Bank

As we go to press, the World Bank and IMF appear set to suspend their annual meeting in Washington, D.C. However, the process of corporate globalization will continue, as will the need for our resistance...

BY JOHN GORMAN

Ever since the Battle in Seattle, opposition to the New World Economic Order is becoming more visible, larger and more militant. Seven protesters have already been killed this year: Steven Kil, Peter Noki, Thomas Moruwo and Mathew Paven in Papua New Guinea; Carlos Santillán and Oscar Barrios in Argentina; and Carlo Giuliani, slain by police in Genoa when some 150,000 people showed up to let the world know they wanted no part of the global economy.

Who are all these people, and what are they so riled about? For some, the answers are clear. They have been protesting for decades, first in the Civil Rights Movement, then against the Vietnam War, aid to the Contras, corporate pollution, the death penalty, and many other injustices. For them, the World Bank and its minions are just another gang of money-mad pirates trying to hijack the world, one more injustice to expose and fight. They have run out of patience with "success stories" of economic benefits that somehow never quite trickle down to those who have to pay the cost. Two decades of suffering, rising unemployment, endlessly mounting debt, and endlessly increasing poverty are enough.

The trade unions are coming on board,

too. Although the leadership has been out to lunch at corporate tables for far too long, the rank and file have not been napping. They are fearful, and rightly so, of having their jobs shipped off to poverty-stricken lands where wages are abysmal, labor rights virtually nonexistent, and the race to the bottom in full swing. They see the gains their fathers fought for and their grandfathers may literally have died for threatened in the name of "competitiveness." They see themselves being squeezed downward into a proletariat with just enough wages earned today to buy tomorrow's bread and no real hope of a better future for themselves or their children.

Ecologists are angered by trade agreements that would nullify environmental protections they fought for decades to create, leaving dolphins and sea turtles to die in nets long banned in the United States, communities awash in pesticide-laden foods, our roads swarming with unsafe trucks, and leaving to succeeding generations an environmental mess that may never be cleaned up.

Increasingly prominent in European protests and somewhat here as well is the Black Bloc, a loose collection of masked anarchists seemingly ready to battle the police and generally raise hell wherever a suitable venue presents itself. Their antics make exciting

reason, or for no reason at all. You may have to move thousands of miles in search of a new job. How your family will be affected by these uprootings is not the company's concern. How you will cope with being discharged at 50 with poor prospects and a worse pension, if any, is your problem.

"What's more," they are assured, often by professors of economics with life-time job guarantees, "this uncertainty and anxiety is good for you, helps you stay flexible and keep up with the global economy."

Lies are always dangerous. As these young people grasp their real situation, their anger grows. Borrowing from the poet Langston Hughes, they have seen the future, and it doesn't work.

For them, as for anyone battling the global economy, the struggle is about far more than a personal future. It is about the future of the planet. Will we live in a stable and prosperous world where people enjoy the fruits of their labor in peace, or will the earth be turned into one vast plantation with a tiny ruling class enjoying indescribable wealth and luxury, protected by a bloated military from an outraged proletariat lucky to own the shirts on their aching backs. In that world, there will be neither prosperity nor peace, only an "order" maintained by terror.

The streets, some claim, are not the proper place to decide these issues. But they will have to do until another more sedate and more effective forum offers itself. Workers will have to resort to strikes wherever the global economy is most vulnerable or injustice most outrageous, even to a general strike on the order of what took place in France in 1998, before they and their concerns are heard. The future is too important to be left to the bankers in their board rooms. The future belongs to the people — all the people — who will have to live it.



UNI first world congress admits business union role in globalization

BY BRIAN OLIVER SHEPPARD

One thousand union officials met in eastern Berlin September 5 - 9 during the Union Network International's First World Congress. The international labor organization, born in January 2000, claimed representatives of unions from the United States (the AFL-CIO's SEIU and UFCW), Germany (Verdi), and 148 other countries. Delegates were present from unions representing over 15 million workers.

The global trade union association was formed in response to corporate globalization. UNI president Kurt van Haaren claimed that now, more than ever, "a strong global labor union is forcefully necessary." The internationalization of corporate rule "calls for control and a counter-power, calls forcefully for a labor union counter-power," he stated.

Finland's Maj Len-Rehmal was elected president through 2003, at which time Joe Hansen, from the UFCW, will serve as president until 2005. The next UNI Congress will take place that year, tentatively in Chicago.

Highlighted at the Congress was the role that many business unions play in encouraging corporate globalization. "Unions have been silent partners in writing the rules of globalization that are bad for workers," Eliseo Medina of the SEIU admitted before the au-

dience. \$17 trillion of workers' pensions are put by fund managers into the stock markets of the world, leading to a state of affairs where workers finance their own continued wage slavery as well as the subjection of other countries to capitalist rule.

The UNI Congress adjourned after agreeing to "minimum" global labor standards to be "recommended," including a promise to invest workers' pensions in a more "socially responsible" manner. Support was solicited for UN General Secretary Kofi Annan's "Global Compact" initiative, which is a basic set of unenforceable standards that corporations are encouraged to voluntarily sign onto.

The business unionist domination of the UNI Congress led to lackluster resolutions, and will doubtless leave many workers unclear as to what the organization can actually accomplish, given that all the proposals simply "recommend" or "strongly urge" that this or that reformist initiative be undertaken. Though the call for building union alliances across borders is well intended, it remains to be seen how such alliances will actually play out and function as a "labor union counter-power," especially given that such alliances as defined by the UNI would largely be between class collaborationist union officials.

U.S. longshoreman honor Genoa picket

Some 60 Portland, OR, activists showed up early in the morning of August 15 to picket an Italian ship, recently privatized into the hands of a member of the Italian elite, to protest police murder and brutality at the recent G8 meeting.

It was a beautiful sight as longshoreman refused to cross the picket line for eight hours. Their cars were lined up for a half mile down the road. Electrical workers and others also honored the picket. Many truckers showed solidarity with clenched fists and thumbs up, going in only to turn around and leave. Some went in to find no workers there and had to leave.

The ship, the Cielo Di Francisco then headed to the San Francisco Bay Area, where it was again met with a picket line. Anti-globalization activists set up their picket line August 19 at 7 a.m., well ahead of the ship's arrival. However, by coincidence, the Cielo Di España, managed by the same Italian maritime company (both ships are actually German-owned) happened to be at the same pier, and so protesters decided to picket both ships. Although ILWU members initially crossed the picket line at 8 a.m., an hour later they stopped work on the grounds that the picket line represented a health and safety hazard. Work was resumed after an arbitrator ruled that the line was not a legitimate safety issue.

However, when the Cielo di San Francisco arrived that afternoon, a boisterous, angry picket line was on site and longshoremen honored the picket line until the next

morning, when a heavy police presence resulted in another adverse ruling from the arbitrator.

The human rights activists got a lesson in the power the working class has in its power to shut down production. The dock workers and port truck drivers had the opportunity to learn what really happened in Genoa, and what the globalization drive of world capitalism is really all about.

Chasing her own job

Lisa Wang has worked at Power One Intl. in Boston since 1994, shortly after she emigrated from China. Earlier this year she learned that her plant is closing, putting hundreds of workers - most Chinese immigrants like herself - out of work.

The work will be shipped to one of Power One's operations in China - the very place most of these workers left in search of decent jobs. Workers here are well aware of the fact that daily wages in China are equal to an hour's pay here.

Sodexho: global privateer

Sodexho alliance is a global outsourcer, providing food and management services at 12,543 sites in 70 countries around the world ranging from waste management for Turkey's military to building maintenance for Poland's Supreme Court. Companies like Sodexho realize management "efficiencies" by slashing workers' wages, eliminating benefits, and cutting corners.

Rights for corporations

While the labor protections "enshrined" in the North American Free Trade Agreement have proven to be empty shells, the July 5 *Chicago Tribune* reported that corporations have found NAFTA's Chapter 11 a potent weapon against inconvenient labor and environmental laws.

At least 20 corporations have sued governments for enforcing their own laws. Chapter 11 enables corporations to sue governments and collect damages if existing laws damage their business. The proceedings, held before special NAFTA tribunals, are conducted in private, far from the prying eyes of those who will be affected.

Methanex Corp., a Canadian company, makes the gasoline additive MTBE, banned by California after a study found the possible carcinogen in 10,000 groundwater sites in the state. Methanex claims \$970 million in damages. The case is before a tribunal that includes former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Loewen Group Inc., a Canadian funeral company, wants \$725 million from the U.S. government because a Mississippi jury convicted it of illegally trying to drive a Mississippi funeral home out of business and fined it \$500 million.

United Parcel Service has sued for "a minimum of" \$230 million, alleging that Canada Post is unfair competition.

Mondev International Ltd., a Canadian real estate development company, has filed a \$50 million claim against the U.S. government because the Massachusetts Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court rejected

its suit in Massachusetts over a Boston project that went sour.

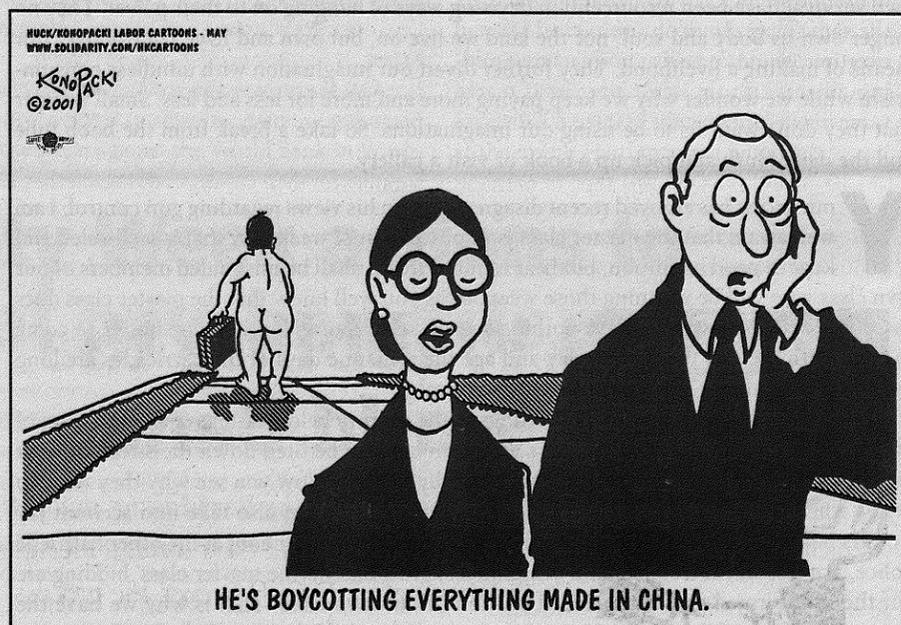
Metalclad Corp., a U.S. waste handling company, reached a \$15.6 million settlement with the Mexican government last month. Metalclad said it had done extensive work to clean a landfill and build a hazardous waste plant in San Luis Potosi when a new state government killed the project. The landfill stood above subterranean streams supplying water to local residents.

NAFTA tribunals can hear only cases against governments filed by foreign investors. Thus American-based UPS can sue the Canadian government but has no claim under NAFTA against the U.S. government, even though it feels the U.S. Postal Service also benefits from official U.S. subsidies. Canadian or Mexican couriers, however, could sue the U.S. government.

The tribunals have no right to order governments to change laws. At most, they can award damages if an existing law hurts an investor. But the threat of a NAFTA action can persuade a government to change its practices.

In 1998, U.S. Ethyl Corp., maker of a gasoline additive called MMT, sued after Canada banned MMT imports on environmental grounds. Canada reversed the ban and agreed to pay Ethyl \$13 million.

The Ethyl case often is cited by environmentalists as an example of NAFTA's chilling effect on environmentalism. The mere threat of a NAFTA suit can force governments to change environmental laws or stop enforcing them.



Chinese workers organize

BY JIANG XUEQIN

Outraged at the sight of former managers looting assets at state-owned factories, workers are launching rank-and-file struggles across China.

Workers at Zhengzhou Power Generation Apparatus Works have been battling for years to stop managers from looting the company, which closed several years ago. Under Chinese law, workers are supposed to receive a substantial share of the proceeds from the sale of the factory's assets. But workers quickly discovered that managers were selling them at fire sale prices to their friends.

Five years later, 1,800 workers continue to battle the looters. On July 24, 300 gangsters rushed the plant, trying to dislodge the workers who occupied it. They ring the factory bell, and within minutes a thousand workers materialized to beat back the assault.

Similar battles have taken place at state-owned enterprises across China as the country moves to a market economy. Tens of millions of workers at state-owned factories have lost their jobs in the process.

The culture of corruption has aggravated inefficiencies built into the structure of these enterprises, and managers have seized the opportunity to enrich themselves.

Anger over such acts is one factor in the

huge rise in spontaneous worker protests. On July 9, for instance, about 10,000 workers of the state-owned railway blocked a major railway line in Jilin province demanding unpaid wages. According to the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, there were nearly 100,000 labour protests in 1999.

Underground labor organizers have been encouraging workers to fight back, through plant occupations, public demonstrations, and law suits.

Relatively few labor disputes have broken out at capitalist enterprises. Instead, it is the Communist Party that has most to fear - both because its officers are the main beneficiaries of the corruption and because the lack of an independent voice for workers allows officials to sweep injustices and growing inequality under the mat.

Following the clash at Zhengzhou, workers say the municipal government now seems ready to talk to them about turning the factory over to its former employees.

"We can manage the factory ourselves," says Zhou Jinduo, an activist whose role in leading the fight landed him in jail for two months last year. "Back in 1996 we let factory managers just tell us what to do - now we want control of our fate."



Having read one of the recent issues of a local cultural rag, your scribe spotted an article entitled "News They Can't Use," which would more accurately be entitled "News They Won't Use." Said article complained about the dearth of arts coverage on the ten o'clock news. The boob tube will broadcast everything from hog calling contests, what and who the movie stars are sleeping with, and other such trivia — always leaving enough minutes for the commercials. God forbid that the viewers should be deprived of their injection of consumerism, even at the expense of world-shaking catastrophe.

I remember a placard a colleague had put in one of my rooms, "The arts use your imagination." Even if one is only a spectator of the arts, be it of the visual or non-visual variety, the imagination is being simulated and furthermore may be stimulated to the extent of indulging in one's own creativity. Such can be quite detrimental to the interests of those who would prefer to see us proles unstimulated. Small wonder that a former chief executive said he saw no need for government support of the arts as they were already well supported by the private sector.

Which means that creative imagination should be kept safely in the hands of those economic overseers whose imagination can be used to keep the rest of us unimaginative. It was for that reason that one of the kings of England said "I hate all poets and painters"; why Hitler condemned one of the greatest visual arts movements of the past century as degenerate; and why the former Soviet Union would bulldoze or burn any art that wasn't government approved.

Our peasant ancestors in the distant past, despite the drudgery they had to endure, still found time to create their folk art and folk music — music which inspired the symphonic composers — and because of the vitality of their creativity were able to overthrow their overlords and improve their own lives a bit. Of course the master class in their evolution from slave owner to feudal lords and culminating in monopoly capitalism, by dint of their own survival have been resourceful in devising ways of hanging on to their power. They no longer own us body and soul, nor the land we live on, but own and have control over our means of making a livelihood. They further divert our imagination with mindless consumerism while we wonder why we keep paying more and more for less and less. Small wonder that they don't want us to be using our imaginations. So take a break from the boob tube and the daily blurb and pick up a book or visit a gallery.

Your scribe has enjoyed recent disagreement on his views regarding gun control. I am well aware that the master class is in possession of weaponry that is well-oiled and kept in good condition, but bear in mind that it shall be misguided members of our own class who will be manning those weapons as you well know that the master class does not do its own dirty work. I have nothing against self defense, but it is imperative to come to grips with the fact that in this day and age the romantic days of the barricades are long over. Yes, self defense is important to our survival.

Friederich Engels, in one of his writings in the century before last, gave a description of the structure of the modern city where a cannon ball can be fired down the street without hitting the walls on either side, and concluded by saying, "Now you see why they want to get us where the cannons roar and the sabres rattle!" We must also take into account Jay Gould's boast that he could hire one half of the working class to shoot at the other half. The police, armies, storm troopers and other mercenaries that do the master class' bidding are but the ill-informed and unorganized portion of our own class. That is why we have the slogan, "Draftees of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals!"

As can be seen by recent events in Washington, Quebec and Genoa, the massive gatherings of protest were sufficiently diverted by the well-armed guardians of the parasites.

I wholeheartedly agree that workers have a right to self-defense, but there is a potential weapon that can render their weaponry impotent. Ghandi, knowing that he people were weaponless, with his doctrine of non-cooperation pulled the fangs out of the British empire. Unfortunately, the same doctrine was not used against their own upper class, who eagerly stepped into the throne vacated by the British. The bus boycotters down South brought the Jim Crow bus companies to their knees, out of which the charismatic figure of Martin Luther King arose.

I maintain that all this talk about gun control is a bunch of bovine by-product, as the undeniable fact remains that guns shall still remain in the hands of the wrong people.

It is incumbent upon us to think in terms of our own potential weapon, the general strike. True, with so many unemployed, it is easy for them to hire half of us to shoot the other half, and that shows how much organizing has yet to be done. Those who dominate our existence are indeed well organized and well armed, but they are shaking in their boots that we have the potential to break their haughty power. Just remember, there are so few of them and so many of us!

Draftees of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals!

— C.C. Redcloud

Did you know?

Honus Wagner, considered by many to be baseball's greatest all-around player, was a member of the IWW. One of the first five players inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, he led the league in stolen bases on six occasions, with a total of 720 steals. The Honus Wagner baseball card, one of the most valuable in existence today, was recalled in 1909 because the cards were distributed in tobacco packages and Wagner did not want to set a bad example for children.

from *Prairie Fire*, the new newsletter of the Madison GMB.

Working hard, getting poor...

continued from page 1

percent over the same period. If our pay raises had matched those at the top, the average worker would have earned \$120,491 instead of \$24,668 and the minimum wage would have climbed to \$25.50 an hour.

CEOs of major firms that announced layoffs of 1,000 or more workers this year were paid an average of \$23.7 million last year; that compares to an overall \$13.1 million average.

Bosses wary of Wob resurgence

Wobs recently obtained a copy of *Employment Update*, published by the union-busting law firm Bullivant Houser Bailey. No doubt other Wobblies will find it of interest, despite its many errors of fact.

Union Organizing: The Wobblies are Back

BY BONNIE RICHARDSON-KOTT
AND CHRYS A. MARTIN

It appears that the Northwest, and Oregon in particular, has become the chosen breeding ground for a "new" kind of union organizer. Yes, the Industrial Workers of the World — the Wobblies — are back.

The national IWW touts itself as pursuing a socialist cause, stating that the "historic mission of the working class [is] to do away with capitalism." The local Portland chapter of the IWW espouses collective decision making, and large numbers of union members participate in the negotiating process, making negotiations extremely time-consuming.

The IWW has been targeting the non-profit, social service sector of the workforce. Many small, non-profit Portland employers have been caught off-guard by the sudden

move to form unions in their organizations. These employers are non-profit organizations with only 15 to 45 employees in each location. Yet the local IWW has announced its intention to unionize employees "throughout the non-profit social service sector," which has had a huge impact on these non-profit employers.

The local IWW has now requested reclassification in order to unionize other types of employment, including: "all kinds of public employment, office work, legal services as well as workers employed in the public interest." Because the IWW makes no secret that its motto is "Fire the Boss!" and the local IWW has engaged in public acts of picketing employers (and their attorneys), employers should beware... the Wobblies are back.

If you hear of union organizing attempts in your workplace, do not be complacent or wait until the union has the necessary support to petition the NLRB for an election. Call your counsel immediately for advice. Open up lines of communication immediately with your employees to address their concerns directly so they don't feel compelled to have a union act for them.

Edmonton Wobs mobilizing community

continued from page 2

Support for the teach-in and protest was mobilized by the branch with the help of the Woodsworth Irvine Socialist Fellowship, Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Edmonton and District Labour Council, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401, People's Action Network, Student Worker Action Group, Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Once again the branch showed it could mobilize a broad range of union, community and political activists around a campaign. In this case we also were influential in helping revive the spirits of activists in the Leonard Peltier Campaign in Canada who suffered many dark days after Leonard's clemency appeal was denied by outgoing U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The branch also did outreach towards organizing bike couriers, who were having their international Bike courier championships here. Contact was made between local postal workers and the international Bike couriers association. This is an area where we will look at developing a more focused campaign in the future.

Fighting privatization

Meanwhile the branch was active along with PAN and SWAG in mobilizing opposition to the privatization of custodial work at the University of Alberta.

The workers being threatened with privatization are members of the Non-Academic Staff Association on campus, and the union joined with student activists to organize a mass mobilization to protest at the Board of Governors. The university tried to bring this in after classes ended for the summer. This campaign will resume as students return to campus.

Several activists from the People's Action Network who got temporary jobs with Statistics Canada to do census filing and processing approached the branch about their sweat shop conditions (see Sept. IW). We organized a fax/email out to unions and the press, organized three days of information picketing, and had a successful campaign to draw attention to the exploitation of temp and casual workers by the Federal government. We also tried to bargain on behalf of these workers but were rebuffed by their bosses, who ironically belong to the Public Service Alliance of Canada, a trade union for federal government workers.

Confronting these trade union bosses we told them they should be ashamed for not defending these workers' rights. However we did manage to leaflet about these temp workers plight during the PSAC one-day rota-

tional walk-outs that happened every Wednesday in August and September, winning support from other PSAC rank-and-file workers. We will be following up via the Federal Labour Relations Code now that these student-workers are back in school.

On August 1 the Alberta Labour History Institute, which several FW's are members of, held its first Edmonton Labour History Day. Our literature table was a big hit at the event. We found many archival labour history photographs to display. Retired and senior labour activists gave oral histories about Edmonton during the 1930s with a focus on the 1932 hunger march here. 10,000 people marched on the legislature demanding relief for the unemployed only to face police attack. At that time the city council was run by trade unionists from the Edmonton Labour Council, while the Communist Party organized the unemployed.

The branch is also setting up a broad-based committee to work towards building a memorial for Alberta Veterans of the Spanish Civil war. This committee will include all left organizations and individuals interested in preserving this lost history.

The branch continues to develop an excellent literature table as its main source of fund-raising and now has enough material to be a small traveling bookstore at various labour and activist community events.

LaborTech 2001: Labor, Information Technology, Telecom & Organizing

The LaborTech conference will be held December 7-9, at the University of San Francisco. The conference addresses two related questions: How are corporations using media and information technologies against workers? How can workers put media and information technologies to our own use?

Unionists from Canada, Japan, England, Belgium, Korea and other countries will participate. The conference will also screen labor videos from around the world.

Workshops will include: the globalized workforce, high technology & work-related injuries, streaming video & audio, broadband access, setting up a micro-radio station, independent media centers and labor, using labor multi-media in the schools, workers, chip mills & organizing, permanent temp workers, cross border organizing, building a labor web site, labor tv and video, spying on workers & workers' rights on the job, etc.

For registration and additional information: LaborTech 2001, PO Box 425584, San Francisco CA 94142, lvpsf@labornet.org,

Remembering Fiddlin' Dan

BY ARTHUR J. MILLER

There are those who view working people as an uncultured mass of laboring muscle. This image is seen on TV, written in books, and taught by professors who view themselves as authorities on labor. This image has become a part of the market-driven commodity called American Culture.

But those who take the time to look under the layers of fabricated deceit will find working-class culture. There among the toiling masses you will find storytellers, poets, artists, songwriters and musicians. Their culture is not produced for the marketplace, but rather is an expression of their desires and lost dreams.

There are some very unique characters out there, and I can honestly say I have learned more from just sitting around listening to them than I ever learned from reading books.

One of the more interesting and tragic stiffies I ever met was Old Fiddlin' Dan. I had gone through truck driving school and had my CDL Class A License. Trucking companies have their own training which starts off in a classroom; after you pass a bunch of tests, they send you out on the road with a trainer.

My first trainer was a real ass who taught me very little and went out of his way to make my life harder than it already was. One day he turned over the truck to me right before we were to cross the Sierras. I started doing my pre-trip inspection, but the ass told me we did not have time for it, because he wanted to be across the mountains before dark. He added that he only inspected the truck, at most, once a day. And just like an ass's fool, I went along with his foolishness.

Up the road I fell in line with other trucks at the inspection station. After I was weighed, I was told to pull over to the inspection bay. They found that the trailer brakes were misaligned and a leaking air hose. We had to pay some weigh station vultures to get us legal, for the law says that we cannot do it ourselves unless we are certified. I quit when we got back to our terminal. I did not want to learn truckin' from an ass.

I hooked up with another company and they sent me out with a trainer who turned out to be Old Fiddlin' Dan. If you were just a slacker who did not care about real learning, Dan could be a real terror. On the other hand, if you really wanted to learn about trucks and truckin' there was no better teacher around.

On the second night out, Old Dan pulled into a high desert rest stop and pulled out a beat-up violin case. He told me that we were going to be here a little while and to stretch my legs. He jumped out of the rig and walked over to a far corner of the rest stop. I watched him out of curiosity as he stood close to the edge of a bluff, looking out across the land. It was dusk time and the sun was not long to

be seen. After standing there a while, he opened up his case and pulled out a fiddle.

Now Old Dan did not have the greatest fiddle technique my ears had ever heard. But he played as if there was a real connection between him and his surroundings. That is something that all the high-class technique could never produce. I sat down and listened as the sun went down below the far-off mountains. It was one of those life experiences that will never leave you. A gift, a treasure to hold on to until buried in a hole.

When Dan came back to the truck he told me that I would take over driving for a while. Unlike the ass, Dan insisted on a pre-trip inspection every time we changed drivers. He would say, "Only trust another person with your life when you have to." He would watch my inspection every time I did one, not because he did not trust me but because he did not have to trust me.

After an hour or so of driving, I asked Dan about his fiddle playing. He told me that he had started playing when he was young, but for a number of years working, he just never had time for it. He had found that truck driving was something that was hard to get away from, even when you are not driving. It hangs on you like a dead weight upon your shoulders. Watching TV or shooting the shit with other truckers just did not relax him. So he brought out his old fiddle and started to play it when he needed a rest of both body and mind. He would pick some of the nicest looking natural places to take his rest and then go out by himself and just fiddle away. Sometimes, he said, at special places, as the sun went down or came up in the morning, he felt connected to everything around him. It was, to him, almost a religious experience. Even when he could not find that special place, you might hear him fiddlin' away in some corner of a truckstop. He told me that with his fiddle he was able to make peace with himself for all that he had given up on the long hard road of truckin'.

Old Dan was not a book-learned socialist or any other kind of 'ist, he just could see things without blinders that society installs upon most people. He could think things through and come up with logical conclusions. Most of the time those conclusions were very close to my learned radicalism. But coming from Dan it did not seem like an ideology, it was plain old common sense.

He did not much care for the bosses. He called them vultures preying upon the honest work of common folks. Nor did he care much for politicians or the government, who he viewed as always sticking their noses into other people's affairs. He talked about the day to come when common folks will have taken all that they can and rid themselves of the bums and slackers who make a living off the common folks. In a lot of ways he sound like

The Commuter Dreams of Bertha

for Box Car Bertha

Bertha, let me come with you.
I'll travel light,
blanket roll on my back,
fry pan, stew pot, tin cup.
We'll flip the freight,
ride the rods and bumpers.
With luck we'll deck a passenger train
and go in style, lying down looking up
at sky blue as the swimming hole
we'll skinny dip with other free lovers.
Beating our way from job to job, we'll
fling hash in Muncie,
empty bed pans in Sioux City,
seal envelopes and lick stamps in Boise,
model for art classes in Seattle,
bed down with wob soap boxers
until the springs are busted and
there's no more gin, then
we'll exchange their snores
for the train's hoot
and settle in to the cool corner
of a box car.

But you rode your last rail long before I was born
and I'm the commuter who dozes off dreaming of you
every morning on the 7:08 out of South Station,
the wage slave who won't look out the window
at what she has stopped seeing.

— Willa Schneberg, 1987



PHOTO: DAVE TUCKER
Fellow Worker Maureen Burns in side-door Pullman, circa 1984.

some of the old-time Wobblies I had known.

Late one night driving the North Dakota road, we were listening to the news on the radio that was telling about some Black workers suing their boss for discrimination. Old Dan gave out a loud yap and said, "Kick that boss in the ass once for me!" That rather surprised me because Old Dan was a southerner; he had come from the East Tennessee hill country. He saw the look on my face and asked me if I was prejudiced. I said no. He went on to say, "God had placed all people on this earth and that most all people worked hard for the same things. It was only the bums and the slackers that try to get common folks hating each other. Common folks must stick together or else the bums and slackers will have easier prey."

Old Dan would often speak of his dream of owning his own truck and no longer having a bum on his back. He said he was close to having the money he needed for a down payment. In time he quit the company and got his truck. He ran harder than he had ever done before to keep up the payments on his truck and on his home.

As is the case for many working folks, fate doesn't seem to let them escape to their dreams. Within a year Old Fiddlin' Dan suffered a stroke and could truck and fiddle no more. The bank got his truck and home and his family had to move out of their beloved Tennessee Hills to the city.

I was told by a friend that when Dan lost

everything his lost his will to live. After going to sleep one night Old Fiddlin' Dan never woke up again.

No matter what the doc said, Old Dan died of a broken heart. Why do we live in a world where the dreams of the many are trampled upon by the greed of a few bums and slackers? Did some God up high, decree this as our fate?

All I know is that as long as the few want more than they can use, the many will do without what they need. And our dreams are not a slacker's fantasies, they are a necessity of life itself. For what would the existence of the toiler be worth without the dreams of something better?

Whenever I am out on the open road, I try to stop at some special place. There I will just sit and listen. And sometimes I can almost hear a far-off fiddle play. Old Fiddlin' Dan was a hard-working common man, but to me he will always live on as a true working-class saint.

Grizzlies & Leeches

BY CA CANNY

The White House and the governor of Idaho have joined forces to protect all Americans from Grizzly Bears. Our masters want to make sure we are not mauled by wayward bruins. Hurrah for them! They do love us after all!

According to the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, one death every several decades would occur if Grizzlies are reintroduced into the central wilderness of Idaho. That one death is too much for the good governor and the White House - err House. No Grizzlies! No Death! There will be no Grizzlies in Idaho.

But when will they do anything about deaths from killer leeches? Haven't heard of them? Why this variety of leech causes the deaths of 40,000 working people a year in the U.S. alone! And this same variety of leech appears throughout the world, causing even more deaths!

The government bans grizzlies. Yet they press for introduction of killer leeches everywhere. Why this puzzling double standard? Do Grizzlies compete with leeches for salmon fishing holes? Can Grizzlies kill leeches?

As good environmentalists, we Wobblies know how to identify the killer leech and methods to eradicate it. Since the government won't stop killer leeches, we must organize folks to do it themselves. Perhaps then the world will again be safe for Grizzlies and other working folks.



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Reviews: Quality of work, or quality of life?

The Quality of Work: A People-Centred Agenda, by Graham S. Lowe. Oxford University Press, 2000, 213 pp.

REVIEWED BY JEFF SHANTZ

Any Canadian college student who haplessly stumbles into a course on the "Sociology of Work," perhaps looking to understand a little more about their rotten job or why their folks always seemed so worn out, has likely had to plow through one of the many works of supposed lefty Graham Lowe. The guy keeps churning out books and students keep getting stuck having to read them.

The current book suffers mightily from Lowe's usual class-collaborationist perspective. Lowe views "quality of work" as a point for common ground between workers and the bosses. This desire for common ground drives Lowe's book and is returned to repeatedly.

He argues right off the top that "the most pressing issue about the past, present, and future of work is, in a word, quality" (ix). Really? So much for ownership, control, alienation and other less-pressing issues that have caused so much strife and struggle over the centuries. Certainly from a boss's perspective quality seems to rank well down the list if one looks at all the shoddy, dangerous, useless, and obsolete products that they have foisted upon us. Alum in your bread? It's all about our commitment to quality.

What is the impetus to develop quality work? "The objective is to create resilient workers who can cope with multiple and often intense demands" (77). According to Lowe, the "quality goal" can serve more than the interests of management or customers. Quality of work can satisfy bosses' concerns for productivity and "individuals" (Lowe backs away from talk of workers) desires for meaning. "High-quality work as I will define it serves both humanistic and economic ends" (6-7). Get real.

"Indeed, what should distinguish affluent, highly developed economies like Canada's from others is the ability to ensure as a basic right the opportunity to do personally meaningful, socially useful work" (6). Sure, if only capitalism would just stop getting in the way.

"Arriving at that ground will require some adjustments to the balance of power in workplaces, so that workers can become equal partners in discussions about the future of work. But this direction is the only one that offers the possibility of social reform that will allow Canadians employees and employers alike to shape their working futures" (8). Equal partners? Without any transformation of property relations or the state.

"Yet the idea that human resources are the most valuable resource in a global economy that rewards knowledge and the creative use of information is far from radical. As employers and government policy makers frequently say, national competitiveness depends on creating flexible workplaces, 'learning organizations,' and effective education and training systems" (8).

Lowe's vision of the "new" quality work environment comes right out of the mouths of management consultants and downsizers. "Individuals, employers, communities, and governments can work together to fashion a coherent vision of work reforms that mirror the kind of society and economy we value" (2). Not if the kind of society we value is one without employers and governments.

Lowe's favourite models for a quality workplace are almost invariably drawn from union-management deals. This is reflected in the fact that the one union that shows up most in his discussions is the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers, noted for their many quality deals.

Lowe's vision of the "new" quality work environment comes right out of the mouths of management consultants and "downsizers" ...

"Security and flexibility are often at odds, but there are small patches of common ground where innovation can be cultivated" (142). Examples of such innovation? How about wage rollbacks and freezes, even in times of growth, in exchange for promises of job security? That ground yields a bitter harvest indeed.

Elsewhere, and without any sense of embarrassment: "The[se] examples show gains for both management and workers, although in some cases the trade-off was a loss of jobs. In other cases, the end results

have done a lot more for productivity than for the quality of work or job security" (146). It's in these parenthetical comments that the real story comes across. Lowe lauds Bell Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for innovative approaches and then, literally parenthetically, notes: "Yet what-

ever positive reputations either employer had in the past has been tarnished by recent staff cuts and, in Bell's case, resistance to pay equity for some female workers" (144). Lowe states this without any sense of irony, and leaves it at that without any discussion.

While commending New Brunswick Telephone for its "team approach" which sees workers doing more work, Lowe seems puzzled that "the compensation system has not been changed to reflect their increased contributions. Furthermore, stress levels have risen" (149). Of course, "to address compensation would mean challenging the traditional prerogatives of management. This may be the ultimate test of the new team-based system" (149). This is apparently what gets passed off for sociology.

Lowe also reveals a nationalist concern for the "viability" of Canada. While bemoaning the fact that few Canadian bosses have followed the path of "workplace innovation," Lowe hopes to overcome this by offering a "business case" for improved work quality. "Our point of departure is the idea that a workplace, like a society, can be democratic" (139). This shows part of Lowe's problem: he does not seem to recognize that present society is deeply undemocratic and that this impedes the development of democratic workplaces. In any event, Lowe's biggest concerns with workplace democracy are for possible increases in employee commitment and productivity. Seems like a waste of perfectly good democracy.

Somewhat more positively, Lowe suggests that workers would benefit from industry/occupational-based union membership that is portable as workers change jobs. He says little about this, however, and never makes any mention of industrial unionism.

Indeed, when it comes to the labour movement, and its current sad condition, Lowe provides little analysis of the failings of craft unions and business unionism. Instead his recommendation for revitalizing unions is, what else, a work quality agenda. Apparently unions just aren't familiar enough with management "how-to" literature. (Really, he actually says this.)

A novel for younger Wobblies

The Skull of Truth, by Bruce Coville.

REVIEW BY MORGAN MILLER

Being a parent requires sorting through all sorts of books to choose something that both interests your children and is OK with your families' beliefs.

Being a Wobbly dad, kids books that come close to my world view are few and far between. The last Harry Potter book had some interesting bits obviously alluding to factory labor in third world countries. For

the picture book set, the Mr. Lunch series by J. Otto Siebold is a great lampoon of business practice and even 'justice.' But in how many novels, for adults or children, can you find a line like, "Your father is a nature-destroying capitalist swine"? Perhaps B. Traven, and Coville's *Skull of Truth* is just as engrossing as anything Traven wrote. My 9- and 7-year-olds and I finished this in two marathon sessions encompassing dinner, past-their-bedtimes and breakfast readings.

A quick plot summary: The hero of the story, Charlie, is compelled to steal the Skull of Truth from a mysterious magic shop. The skull is none other than Yorick, you know him well, of Hamlet fame. Yorick, the skull, is sentient and has the curse of commanding truth be told by anyone near him.

As all families have their secrets, Yorick causes chaos in Charlie's. At one fateful dinner Charlie discovers his grandmother was a stripper in her youth and his favorite uncle is gay. Yorick's curse also causes the evil capitalist who wants to drain a nearby swamp to admit: "From a personal point of view, the downside is I could be arrested for several violations of federal wetlands law... From the town's point of view, there's a small but significant possibility that we could mess up the water table and ruin several hundred wells."

The entire book is written compellingly with special care dealing with pubescent Charlie's confusion and anger with his uncle's sexual orientation. Charlie's world isn't sugar-coated for kids. A friend has cancer and still has cancer at the end of the book. He may get better, he may not. Charlie isn't totally comfortable with his uncle, but he accepts him and his partner. What's great about Coville's books (and he's written 80 or so) is they don't patronize kids, but accept them for the humans they are.

Convict labor & the Banner Mine tragedy

Convicts, Coal, and the Banner Mine Tragedy, by Robert War & William Rogers, University of Alabama Press. Available from IWW Literature Department, \$10.

BY MARILYN SHEIDENBERGER

The history of the mining industry is abysmal. It has dehumanized humans, debased the environment and depleted natural resources. One sad chapter of that history is related in *Convicts, Coal, and the Banner Mine Tragedy*.

In the southern United States, as the 19th century evolved into the 20th, there existed several exploitative institutions that coalesced into a vast system of inequities. The victims, as we all know, were black men and their families – families that had been trying to find their way through the maze of the Reconstruction Era and then into the turn of the century.

One entrenched institution in the south was known as the Convict Lease System. While the general population was in a state of flux, the prison population was constant. There were always convicts. Men, however, were expensive to feed and maintain. As a consequence they were leased out by the state and counties to mining companies and other businesses who paid a fixed rate for their labor. The Convict Lease System was a major source of revenue especially for counties.

Another inequitable institution experienced by these men was the criminal justice system, which had convicted them of offenses such as "public drunkenness or profanity, riding trains illegally, vagrancy, and for violating Sunday 'blue' laws" (p. 54). They were fined and charged with court costs, neither of which they could pay. Hence, they became convicts and provided a ready supply of labor. One has to wonder about the incentives involved in the incrimination of these men.

The Banner Mine was located near what became the city of Birmingham. Technologically, it was a model mine – a "showplace of modern mining techniques." It was known as "the safest mine in Alabama" (p. 10). And yet it was not safe. It was a mile-deep mine that was noted for being gassy. In addition, there were breakdowns in routine inspections and in reportage. There may have been faulty installation of equipment. The United Mine Workers fought to improve conditions for miners in that region but were unable to be effective. One strike in the early 1900s lasted for 26 months before ending in total defeat. It was into this abyss, then, that these enslaved convict miners were lowered and died, when there was an explosion on April 8, 1911. Of the 128 victims, five were free workers. Official Bureau of Mines reports noted that there were dangerously high levels of methane gas in the Banner Mine at the time of the explosion.

The owners' reports exonerated themselves, of course. Reports by the Coroner's Jury also vindicated the owners. In the lawsuits that were filed by the victims' families, there were very few decisions rendered for the plaintiffs. The owners had pursued legal machinations and had, no doubt, friends in the courts as well.

There were political machinations too. Legislative bills for improved mine safety had gone through a torturous process but ultimately resulted in a new but flawed mine safety law on April 18, 1911. In addition, there were legislative attempts to abolish the Convict Leasing System, but due to successful lobbying by the corporate interests it was to continue until 1928.

This is a small but excellent book written by two southern-bred academicians who have taught in southern universities. Each chapter has notes and there is a Select Bibliography. It is an angry condemnation of some well-entrenched institutions rife with inequities. It is a good attempt to raise the consciousness of all who are unaware of those institutions as well as the Banner Mine Tragedy. Most significantly, though, is the attempt by the authors to rehumanize those men whose memory had almost been lost to history. For they have listed each man's name. The victims of this needless tragedy have been given a memorial of sorts.

Divided Planet

Divided Planet: The Ecology of Rich and Poor, by Tom Athanasiou. University of Georgia Press, 385 pp. \$16.95

BY PENNY PIXLER

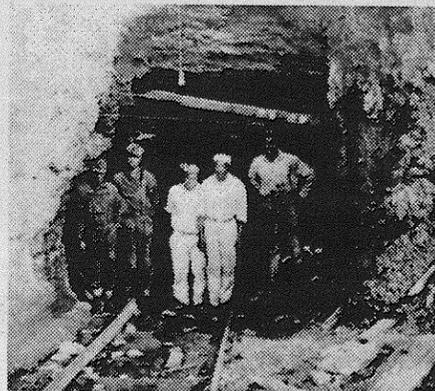
The development of a class conscious, green politics can come none too soon. This book at least grapples with combining class and ecology as it interweaves the history of the environmentalism movement with analysis of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and dissections of corporate greenwashing and anti-environmental propaganda.

The author points out that environmentalism as we know it has reached the end of its "alarm function"; anyone who cares to know knows the world is sliding toward an ecological catastrophe. Everyone who has thought about it also knows that nothing likely to reverse the ecological degradation is feasible as long as the world is divided into rich and poor. For ecological renewal we need economic democracy on a global scale.

To implement this, supporters of a new green economics will have face the powers that benefit from present situation and fight until we can change what constitutes economic development and world trade into something that will bring security, dignity and freedom to the world's poor and curb the world's rich. To the author's credit, he doesn't suggest any glib answer.

BOOKS FOR REBEL WORKERS

NEW THIS MONTH



Convicts, Coal and the Banner Mine Tragedy

by Robert David Ward and William Warren Rogers

This book throws a new light on mining practices in Alabama during the early 1900s and deals at length with the evolution of the state's convict lease system (see review on page 10). One of the worst mine disasters in Alabama's history, the Banner Mine explosion killed 128 convict miners. The tragedy set off public reforms as public opinion reacted to the catastrophe. A very interesting study of the people caught up in an exploiting economic establishment that underwrote and profited from a vicious penal system.

159 pp. Originally published at \$24.95, available from the IWW Lit Dept. for \$10.00

The Wobblies at War: A History of the IWW and the Great War in Australia

by Frank Cain

The Australian IWW, which got started in 1907 to bring the flag of "One Big Unionism" down-under, was a major force in opposing Australia's involvement in World War I. So efficient was its Anti-War campaign, which opposed conscription, blind nationalism, and the thirst for blood of the employing class all over the world, the Australian government banned the union in 1916, and attempted to drive the organization into the ground in 1917 by deporting prominent leaders.

300 pp. \$16.00



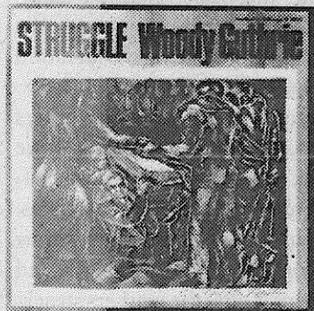
A People's History of the United States: 1492 - Present

by Howard Zinn

Consistently lauded for its lively, readable prose, this revised and updated edition of People's History turns traditional textbook history on its head. Howard Zinn infuses the often-submerged voices of blacks, women, Native Americans, war resisters and poor laborers of all nationalities into this thorough narrative that spans American history from Christopher Columbus' arrival to an afterword on the Clinton presidency. There's also extensive coverage of the IWW's heydays. Addressing his trademark reversals of perspective, Zinn explains, "My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, too save us all) - that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth."

688 pp. \$18.00

Songs for Struggle



Woody Guthrie: Struggle
Twelve songs documenting the voices of working people, minorities and communities fighting for their rights around the world. **\$17.00**



HAZEL DICKENS

Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People

Hazel Dickens: Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People

Hazel Dickens combines elements of Southern church singing, bluegrass and country music while using her music to inspire and give comfort to people faced with struggle. **\$15.00**

Environmentalism for workers

The Fate of the New Carissa

by Arthur J. Miller A first-hand account of a ship explosion which filled Oregon's Coos Bay with chemicals, fuels, and filth. Also discusses the "flag of convenience" system which allows ship owners to escape safety, environmental, and labor laws. **16pp \$2**

Dangerous Premises: An Insider's View of OSHA Enforcement

by Don J. Lofgren. A former inspector for the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration tells a compelling tale of corporate disregard for worker health and safety in conversational, accessible language. In the format of eleven case studies of different kinds of worksites, Lofgren maintains a critical tone towards OSHA, a toothless law that has been worsened by politicians since its inception. Lofgren's case studies and analysis also make it clear that workers with strong and responsive union representation gain the most from OSHA, as union representatives are generally not afraid to make complaints. **244pp \$12.00**

Union Democracy

Democracy Is Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom Up

by Mike Parker & Martha Gruelle. This book offers practical ideas of how the rank and file can run unions. Major discussion of Teamsters for a Democratic Union experiences in this area. **254pp \$17.00**

Labor History

Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology

Compiled and edited by Joyce L. Kornbluh Culled from Wobbly periodicals from the movement's founding in 1905 to the present, *Rebel Voices* presents pamphlets, stories, songs, poems, courtroom testimony, skits, cartoons and illustrations that bring the story of the "minutemen of industrial unionism" to life in native accents. - *Detroit Labor News* **\$24.00**

The Great Bisbee Deportation by Rob E. Hanson Wobblies so worried the authorities of Bisbee, Arizona, that the state ran them out of town. This comprehensive account brings the events of the day alive. **\$2.00**

Solidarity Forever by Stewart Bird, Dan Georgakis, and Deborah Shaffer Oral histories of IWW members. **\$10.00**

Strike! by Jeremy Brecher A classic text - a history of American workers' struggle from a working-class viewpoint, arguing that class upsurges are based in everyday life and rank-and-file initiative. While this edition is somewhat less optimistic than the original, it still provides rich detail of workers' rebellions throughout American history, and abundant evidence for the proposition that workers are fully capable of making our own history, should we set our minds to the task. **\$22.00**

IWW Literature

Little Red Songbook 36th Edition

103 labor songs to fan the flames of discontent from around the world, with music. Includes songs by Joe Hill, Billy Bragg, Anne Feeney, Utah Phillips, and more. **\$10.00**

One Big Union An introduction to the structure, methods and goals of the Industrial Workers of the World. **\$2.00**

A New Union Vision by Arthur J. Miller A discussion of the present-day need for democratic, revolutionary unions. **\$2.00**

The General Strike by Ralph Chaplin The classic text - a call for organization. **\$2.00**

Organizing Help

A Troublemaker's Handbook: How to Fight Back Where You Work-and Win! by Dan La Botz. An encyclopedic work on worker initiative and organizing on the job. Shows that sitdown strikes still aren't dead and immigrant workers can be organized. **262pp \$17**

The Couriers are Revolting!

by Des Patchrider A lively and candid pamphlet on how the Dispatch Industry Workers Union organized English bike messengers from 1989 to 1992. Eventually this effort petered out but their innovative style of organizing provides an inspiration to all of us. **26pp \$3.50**

Cool Stuff

Solidarity of Labour t-shirts

Walter Crane design, specify size. **\$12**

Strobing Bike Lights Two-inch red reflectors printed with the IWW's logo. Clips onto the belt or pocket of runners & riders. Battery included. **\$4.50**

Music for Rebel Workers Compact Discs

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A live concert by Utah Phillips. **\$15**

Anne Feeney: Have You Been to Jail for Justice? 16 fightin' songs **\$15**

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14 songs by and about Joe Hill, labor martyr. Includes performances by Billy Bragg, Utah Phillips, Pete Seeger, Hazel Dickens, and Paul Robeson **\$17**

Bucky Halker: Don't Want Your Millions

Includes little-known songs such as "New Made Graves of Centralia" and "Death of Mother Jones." Also features Wobbly classics "Rebel Girl" and "Dump the Bosses" and spoken word by Studs Turkel. **\$15**

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Workers resist bosses whole world 'round

Maquila workers too poor to live

BY DAN LABOTZ, UE

Workers in foreign-owned export assembly plants in Mexico are not able to meet their family's basic needs on sweatshop wages, according to a comprehensive study conducted in fifteen Mexican cities. Over 3,500 maquiladora factories employ an estimated 1.2 million workers, manufacturing products for export to the United States. "The wages paid maquiladora workers for a full work-week do not enable them to meet basic human needs of their family for nutrition, housing, clothing and non-consumables," declared Ruth Rosenbaum, executive director of the Center for Reflection, Education and Action (CREA), who conducted the research. "In the 15 cities surveyed, it would take between four and five minimum wage salaries to meet the basic needs of a family of four."

"In community after community, maquiladora workers can afford only to live in make-shift houses without water, electricity, and to even talk about nutritious diets for themselves and their children is a luxury," stated Martha Ojeda, a former maquiladora worker, now executive director of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras. "They work long, productive hours for the world's biggest corporations and still cannot provide the most basic needs for their families," she added. "They cannot even afford to consume the items they produce."

Although maquiladora workers are paid low wages, the cost of living is high. In Matamoros, across from Brownsville, Texas, a family of four needs 193.86 pesos a day to reach a sustainable living wage. Based on pay slips collected from several maquiladora workers, most take home less than 56 pesos a day, 28.6% of what a family of four needs. One minimum wage salary in Matamoros provides only 19.6% of family needs.

U.S.-based firms operating maquiladora factories in Mexico include many of the Fortune 500, such as, Alcoa, Cooper Industries, Delphi, RR Donnelley, Emerson Electric, Ford, General Electric, Johnson Controls and Johnson & Johnson. While most are paying above the minimum wage, they are nowhere near paying a sustainable living wage.

In another recent study, the Workers University of Mexico (UOM) reports that across Mexico, inflation-adjusted wages fell 33.7 percent between 1994 and 2000.

Fuji Film union-busting

Fuji Photo Film, the world's second-largest film maker, dissolved subsidiary Shizuoka Fuji Color in March, firing more than 70 workers and transferring operations to Fuji Color Mishima, another subsidiary.

Workers of Shizuoka Fuji Color, who are union members, have refused to accept the dismissal notices. Signs at Shizuoka Fuji Color were changed overnight to "Fuji Color Mishima," but the business remains the same: printing color film and selling machines for development.

Though Fuji Color Mishima refuses to hire former Shizuoka Fuji Color workers, it hired 32 new workers, which clearly shows that the reorganization was a means of dismissing workers.

'Man Who Worked Too Hard'

Centrelink worker Geoff Scott has been reinstated after the Australian Industrial Relations Commission gave his employer 14 days to take him back and awarded back pay.

Centrelink sacked Scott Dec. 29, alleging he had failed to follow instructions. His union and workmates agreed that he had been victimized for assisting workmates and clients when the office was under pressure.

The media quickly dubbed him "the man who worked too hard."



CLIFF HARPER

Making strikes popular again

When Belgian transport workers ended their strike last year, many commuters were sorry. Instead of a general shutdown, striking workers in Brussels closed the ticket offices and allowed a grateful public onto trains and buses for free.

The number of strikes in Britain has plummeted in recent years, a casualty not only of harsh new legal restrictions but also of economic hardship and a burgeoning ideology (which the TUC has signed onto) of social partnership. Increasingly, the TUC lobbies for new laws rather than organizing workers to defend their interests through industrial action.

Faced with a new wave of privatization, British public sector unions are trying new tactics. In the 1980s, a year of industrial action by the National Union of Teachers resulted in terrible headlines as children were sent home and after-school activities were cancelled. Then unions changed gears in the fight against the tests. Exams were marked and returned to pupils - keeping parents happy - but teachers refused to feed the data into national records. The government was forced to hire external markers the following year.

Other unions have turned to publicity actions, such as Rolls-Royce workers who turned up one day in gardening clothes in order to draw public attention to their grievances without taking strike action. And the one-day strike is coming back into vogue, as many unions see it as an effective means of bringing management to the table without the high risks associated with drawn-out strike action.

Jobless killing selves

The Japanese unemployment rate hit a record 4.9 percent in June, contributing to a sharp increase in the suicide rate. Some 31,157 people killed themselves in 2000, the third straight year with more than 30 thousand suicides.

The National Network on Karoshi (death from overwork) has received many calls from families who lost their breadwinners. Many say the deaths were caused by corporate restructuring or pressure brought on workers for early retirement

French workers fight plant closing

Workers at the Mossley wire spinning mill in Hellemmes, France, are now in their third month of a plant occupation which began when Mossley officials announced plans to close the mill and throw workers on the street.

On August 22, the 60th day of the occupation, Mossley workers dumped piles of the wire they manufactured in the garden of a former director, and set several balls of wire aflame at the Damart company in Lille. Damart was the mill's principal customer, their decision to stop buying its product led to the decision to shut down operations.

Mossley officials refused to negotiate an adequate severance package, and so workers are holding 700 tons of wire (with a commercial value of 3 million Euros) hostage. Citing the example of chemical workers who won a generous severance package by threatening to pour toxic chemicals into a nearby river, Mossley workers say they will burn the entire remaining product of their labor if an acceptable solution is not reached and if police enter the factory.

Amazon.com union-busting

Amazon.com personnel officers have been writing letters resigning from the union at the Internet bookseller's warehouse near Milton Keynes in England, and handing them to workers to sign. The letters are part of an anti-union campaign that also includes the dismissal of union activists.

British law provides for automatic union recognition when unions sign up at least 10 percent of the workforce. The GPMU union has nearly 100 members out of some 500 workers on the job, but Amazon has been refusing to recognize the union — instead mounting its anti-union campaign in advance of a poll it intends to conduct itself in order to challenge the workers' union rights.

The union is refusing to participate. "They have played every trick in the union-busting book to keep us out of the plant," said organizer Peter Lockhart. "How can Amazon lose their own ballot? We do not want to lend any credibility to the ballot by being involved in any way."

Workers sued for demanding rights

Almond Company Thailand filed suit against the Almond Labour Union in August, seeking 46 million baht (just over US\$1 million) in damages for seeking international solidarity and exposing their employers' labor practices. The company claims in the suit that the union campaign has cost it so heavily that it will be obliged to lay off 250 workers without paying the legally required compensation.

Workers at Almond produce gold and silver jewelry for export, mostly to the United States. Since the union was formed in December 2000, the company has fired 45 union members and core union leaders, brought false charges of stealing against two workers, refuses to negotiate with the union and has run a campaign of continued harassment of union members...

Almond has also filed a complaint with the Ministry of Labour claiming that the union's letters to customers appealing for help violated the law because a fired union member signed one of them. On August 18, the company suspended nine union committee members for wearing their shirts untucked. Workers have been fighting against this new policy, as it is extremely hot and muggy in the factory where they work manufacturing jewelry for the export trade.

Ten days earlier, union activist Prathum Khamdiwan was attacked by a motorcyclist swinging a long metal rod after leaving a union rally to pick his child up from school.

The Ministry's Labour Relations Committee ruled in April that 41 workers had been unjustly fired and should be reinstated, but the case is still making its way to the Labour Court. Worker's complaints about discrimination against union members and unjust discipline have gone unheeded. However, the employer's complaints about the union prompted an immediate response from Ministry of Labour officials.

The U.S.-based Michael Anthony Jewelers is Almond's most important customer, and a union delegation delivered a letter from the workers calling on the company to take responsibility for labor conditions in the Almond plant August 8.

Indonesian Adidas unionist freed

Ngadinah Binti Abu Mawardi, head of an independent union representing workers at one of Adidas' Indonesian suppliers, was acquitted August 30 on all charges brought against her at the behest of the PT Panarub company. She had been imprisoned for a month on charges the judges ruled were wholly unsupported.

Ngadinah had been charged with "using violence or force or provoking others to use force" and "committing unpleasant acts" during an 8000-worker strike at her factory last September. The law relevant to the latter charge dates back to colonial times and is used frequently to criminalize industrial action.

Throughout the trial Ngadinah maintained that the strike was a spontaneous eruption of frustration at years of starvation wages, forced overtime and other issues.

"In the factory, each lane of 47 workers has a target of 620 shoes per day... 720 if we work overtime... If we don't reach our target the management gets very angry with us. Angry to the point that sometimes they throw shoes at the workers," Ngadinah explained to the judge. "This is why the workers struck, not because I told them to."

More than 150 of Ngadinah's fellow workers attended the trial wearing black and red bandanas emblazoned with the slogan, "Free Ngadinah! Labor Organizers are Not Criminals!"