

Industrial Worker

★ ORGANIZATION ★ EDUCATION ★ EMANCIPATION ★

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Edmonton IWW presses living wage

"I Won't Work" for poverty wages; say Canadian Wobblies **7**

High-tech hell holes

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New Wave of General Strikes in Ontario?

Canada's largest public sector union is calling on other unions to join it in an Ontario-wide general strike later this year, as part of a civil disobedience campaign to turn back Ontario Premier Mike Harris' attacks on workers' rights.

CUPE president Judy Darcy told delegates at the Ontario provincial convention of the Canadian Union of Public Employees that it is "time to move the struggle to a whole new level. ... We have to make it impossible for Mike Harris to govern and for them to get away with their agenda."

The proposed Government Efficiency Act would strip workers of the right to reject unsafe workplaces. Other proposals would move toward privatization of health care and education.

In a speech peppered with references to the civil disobedience in Quebec City at the Summit of the Americas in April, Darcy said

all unions must be prepared to join to paralyze Canada's industrial heartland with a general strike.

"We have to, as a union, be prepared to take part in civil disobedience and economic disruption if that's what it takes to stop this agenda," said Darcy, who was interrupted by chants of Strike! Strike! Strike! from the delegates.

"And if we're going to be effective ... we have to be highly organized, we have to be well-trained, we have to be well prepared in advance, including in being prepared to deal with tear gas."

Darcy said afterward that the union will have to buy gas masks if it is serious about challenging the Harris government.

"Yes, it does mean people have to be organized in affinity groups, they do have to have gas masks, otherwise we're leading people into disaster."

Globalization, corruption and the American way High and Dry Dock

BY X345757

In the eyes of the boss press, the story of the Portland, USA, shipyards is one of an industry in decline due to global competition. In reality it is a perfect example of the shifting strategies of global capital. The privatization of industry and pensions, corporate raiding and labor union collusion and corruption all play a part in this sordid story.

In no way is this business soap opera unique. One can find similar tales in every city on the globe. But this one is so perfect in its archetypal way that it illustrates everything the IWW has warned workers against for 100 years.

Privatize the public!

Portland, Oregon, is one of the largest inland ports in the U.S., located almost 100 miles up the Columbia and Willamette rivers from the Pacific. For a century the state-sponsored Port of Portland has administered the dredging of the Columbia to allow passage and built and overseen the use of contracted port facilities. During World War II Portland was also a major ship building center for the naval and merchant marine fleets.

In 1963 and 1976, the Port Administration asked voters to finance a series of bond measures to build new shipyard facilities, specifically dry docks for ship repair. The docks built in the '60s were the largest on the west coast. With public funds obtained in 1976, the Port built the largest dry dock in the Western Hemisphere - Dry Dock 4. At that time, the facilities were publicly owned, administered by the PoP and contracted out to several competing ship repair companies. Under this model, employment and revenue reached an all-time high in 1991. Dry Dock 4 is the only West Coast Dry Dock which can repair Alaskan oil tankers.

But a successful public/private venture isn't the current model of capitalism. Like the liberalization models imposed on the industrially developing world, in 1994 the Port of Portland decided that the ship repair yards needed to be leased to a single company or privatized. While there had been a revenue

slump, this had been true for the ship repair industry as a whole and not just the Portland yards.

In 1996, the Port entered into a lease agreement with Cascade General. Cascade was financed by Cammel Laird, a UK-based ship repair company, and Capital Consultants, a Portland finance company. The lease included an option to negotiate to buy the repair yard from the Port.

Cascade took advantage of the option in 1998. For \$30.8 million, they bought an entire shipyard for which \$84 million in public bonds had been raised in 1978. The shipyards not only include the facilities, but 90 acres of some of the best industrial lands in Portland. This is clearly a steal. In a confidential business report in Wobbly hands Cascade crows, "Through Cascade's net \$31 million purchase of the Shipyard, it will acquire real estate, dry docks and equipment with an appraised value (12/98) in excess of \$54 million."

In exchange for this massive give-away, the Port of Portland extracted a promise from Cascade to not sell any part of the facility for five years. Now, eight months after taking control, Cascade General has announced the sale of Dry Dock 4. The Port has evidently OK'd the sale even though, according to Cascade, "under current IRS rules, Dry Dock #4 and other bond financed facilities must remain in shipyard use until 2007, when the bonds are scheduled to mature."

You scratch my back...

I'll stab yours. This is the best way of describing the actions of Cascade General financiers Capital Consultants (CCI). CCI owns \$4.5 million in Cascade General preferred stock. Capital Consultants President Barclay Grayson and principal Jeffrey Grayson are spending their time in federal court these days. They have been accused of looting union pension funds and bribing union pension officials to do it. In typical capitalist class fashion, Barclay has turned state's evidence against his own father, saving his own

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No poor wanted

A Society by the Rich, for the Rich

BY BRIAN OLIVER SHEPPARD

In the USA of 2001, the notion of "class" is still suppressed in popular discourse. Speaking about any class aside from the almighty American "middle class" is generally frowned upon. To discuss the lower class, the upper class, or - God forbid - the working and ruling classes, is to invite accusation, scorn and derision. To even admit that such distinct classes exist might be seen as mind-blowingly radical. You are speaking from a disproven Marxist standpoint, you will be told. There are no real class divisions in America because here you are pretty much what you make of yourself. Or so we are told.

This being the case, it is interesting to catch the wealthy discussing class in terms that might make the most doctrinaire of Marxists look flaccid. A June 1 Associated Press article captures such a moment. The article, by Chuck Bartles, reports Walmart's partnering with AOL Time Warner to begin offering Internet service at reduced rates. As if the new company, Wal-Mart Connect, were not enough to cause concern, Bartles quotes a business analyst remarking on the new joint venture:

"As the price of PCs are dropping and penetration is reaching the lower economic classes, we will see Internet penetration in that demographic region. Wal-Mart's strategy might make sense. But the question is, is this the customer they really want? At the end of the day, you have to make a profit. This may be a test."

The statement comes from Rob LaBlatt of the Gartner Group, an industry trend-watcher that sells its consulting services to large corporations. LaBlatt's point is that with poor people increasingly getting computers, it is to be expected that they will also get Internet access. But since they are still poor, does it really make sense to try to sell things to them? He seems to believe that it doesn't. And from the standpoint of the business community, he is right. Poor people make lousy customers since, by definition, they have little purchasing power. It makes good business sense not to provide services for them, but to instead cater to a wealthier clientele.

LaBlatt is a business consultant, hired by corporations to help them generate profit. If an advocate for the poor had said exactly what LaBlatt said, however, s/he would be called a Marxist and would be chastised for "preaching class war" and making people think that we are not all part of one gigantic middle class - one big happy family with a common interest. S/he would be reprimanded for implying that we live in a society with clashing class interests. But LaBlatt is being honest: is a poorer person the customer that Walmart or others really want? Well, no.

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Readers' Soapbox

Snide, sectarian coverage

I'm writing to congratulate the IWW on the sprightly new(?) look of the *Industrial Worker*. I hadn't seen it in some time, had let my subscription lapse (it's now being renewed) and was surprised by the effectiveness of your make-over of the paper. Of course, when there are exciting events to report like the IWW's role in the JeffBoat walk-out, it makes labor journalism a lot more interesting.

The range of viewpoints on the recent Labor Notes conference in Detroit was also a welcome addition. In the past, there's been too much of the snide, sectarian put-down coverage that unfortunately still characterized Jon Bekken's article on the meeting.

As readers of Josh Freeze and Staughton Lynd's accounts could see, it was a diverse and lively gathering, encompassing a wide range of viewpoints about how to revitalize the labor movement and, yes, "change the world."

Bekken's most outrageous claim is that many of the 1,000 LN activists in attendance "are now entrenched in the labor bureaucracy, where they find themselves allied with crooks to try to hold on to a share of power, threatening members with firings or lawsuits for challenging union policy, and giving union money to Democrats."

I've been going to LN conferences for 20 years. I haven't run into many people who would approve of any of the above – but I have met hundreds of people who've been on the receiving end of threats, firings, lawsuits, and other undemocratic maneuvers by union bureaucrats intent on maintaining their power.

Bekken may have legitimate disagreements with radicals who've chosen to work within existing union structures and/or run for union office vs. trying to revive older

structures like the IWW or create new independent unions (like CUE and UHCW, that were both represented at the conference). But these political differences ought to be aired and debated without recourse to such an obvious misrepresentation of the network of activists associated with *Labor Notes*.

Fraternally, Steve Early
Labor Notes Policy Committee Member
Arlington, Mass.

Editor's Note: Ironically, Early need not look very far to find an example of what I was talking about. As the January/February *IW* reported, he was obliged to sign an official NLRB notice last July pledging that the union he is an official of (CWA) will no longer threaten to sue workers or have them fired for opposing a concessionary contract.

Similarly, Teamsters for a Democratic Union's transformation into the administration caucus during the Carey presidency left TDU and *Labor Notes* in a very awkward position when Carey was forced from office for embezzlement; an awkwardness still evident as they try to dance around the nationalist demagoguery of their new candidate for Teamsters president – to say nothing of some very unsavory characters among their allies in Teamster officialdom.

Certainly most participants in Labor Notes conferences are sincerely committed to building a strong labor movement. These activists are increasingly influential in the business unions, with many holding local or even national office and staff positions. But there is very little evidence of much-needed critical reflection on the contradictions intrinsic to such positions, or of serious attention to the need for the rank-and-file movement to maintain an independent, critical stance even toward those they helped propel into office.

Some work overtime, May Day in Salt Lake City

BY JAY HANSEN

Mayday has become something of a tradition in Salt Lake, and this year was no exception. We met at Sugarhouse Park on the site of Joe Hill's execution with a fine roster of entertainment including headliners the Dolly Ranchers, Infrared Roses, Scott Fife, and Guerilla Protesta. Food was provided by Food Not Bombs, and was delicious.

A contingent of building trades unionists arrived but hesitated to associate with Wobblies. Individual members of that contingent did participate, however.

Presumably because of Utah's upcoming Olympics, there was a large police presence, but there were no incidents. Members of the audience reported that the police filmed the proceedings.

As always, the Boss Piñata was a big hit. It was reported that a policeman took a swing at it, but I am unable to confirm this.

All-in-all, I would estimate the total attendance at about 300 during the afternoon. Literature was distributed along with posters, buttons, and other items.

A good time was had by all.

Union steelworkers benefits, jobs stolen

LTV Corp. went to federal court June 11 to overturn its union contract. The United Steelworkers had offered management deep pay cuts and loans from benefit funds, but refused to slash workers' health benefits. Unable to persuade workers to slit their own throats, LTV is now hoping the courts will do its bloody work.

Meanwhile, GST Steel has finished shutting down a Kansas City steel mill that had operated since 1888. GST, too, has filed for bankruptcy, laying off hundreds of workers and terminating their health insurance even while paying \$10 million in bonuses to 30 top executives.

While GST is in bankruptcy court, parent GS Industries is sitting on millions of dollars of profits taken out of the company.

Irish Wobbly jailed

IWW member James McBarron and two other members of the Cork-based Householders Against Service Charges were imprisoned May 16 as a result of their stand against the service charges. This is an attack against the right of working-class people to organize and campaign against an unjust law.

IWW members have been active in the campaign against the bin tax in Cork City. When the city withdrew garbage collection service from non-payers in selected parts of the city, the campaigners began bringing their rubbish to City Hall. Several people were fined as a result, including McBarron. The campaigners refused to pay the fines and now three are in prison as a result. Several more are due to appear in court.

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Berkeley Recyclers Sign First Contract

Wobblies and management at the Community Conservation Centers buy-back recycling center in Berkeley signed the first union contract June 6, following a NLRB representation election earlier this year with resulted in a unanimous vote in favor of the IWW. The new contract raises wages by more than 20 percent across the board, and expands health coverage to employee's families, as well as providing workers with a real voice in their jobs.

The CCC workers are the second recycling shop represented under contract with the IWW in Berkeley, joining the Berkeley Ecology Center curbside recyclers, who have been represented by the IWW since 1989. From residential curbsides and now through the processing center, the IWW union members make recycling in Berkeley a reality.

Organizing efforts continue at other job sites throughout the Bay Area.

Lane County, Oregon

Two local Wobs traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, in May to offer solidarity in the JeffBoat workers' efforts. Seeing such a large-scale, successful IWW-inspired effort helped give everyone a morale boost which was certainly welcome.

A job branch is forming at a private social service agency which contracts with the county government to provide service for developmentally disabled adults, and a regional drive among printing and publishing workers is in the early stages. A well-received IWW organizing workshop reviewed the basic tools of a union drive. And Compass Publications, a local IWW job shop, has released a new book, "Fixed and Confused," a comic play by FW Bill Bradley.

The branch has launched a four-page tabloid newsletter, *Gettin'-by*. The first issue included discussion of day-care for working-class families, reports on local labor struggles, an interview with local woman who talked about jobs she has had in the county for the past three decades, and more... including labor horoscopes.

Ottawa-Outaouais

The Ottawa-Outaouais GMB has been involved in a number of activities lately, including organizing busing to Quebec and other anti-FTAA coalition work to mobilize our community going back to January. Members faced down riot police and the fence in Quebec city at the recent demonstrations against the FTAA and hemispheric capitalists on April 20-21.

Wobblies have been active in Welfare Recipients for Fair Employment, an action group targeting workfare and defending the rights of social assistance recipients. The medium-term goal of WRFE is to support the organization of workfare placements into unionized paid employment through direct action strategies, including strike activity.

Sabotabby, the musicians' IU job shop, has returned from Europe and is playing local gigs. A regional organizer training workshop is planned for the end of July. There is some interest in this from Montréal and Toronto fellow workers. The focus is on education on the ins and outs and simulations of organizing drives. For information, drop us a line at ott-out-iww@iww.ca.

Salvation Army lining up

Portland Public Service Workers IU 650 Salvation Army workers have filed for a union representation election and need to make contact with workers in other cities. Wobs have already forced the Army to restore cancelled vacation time and treat workers more respectfully.

If you know anyone who works for the Army (or could help bring pressure on them) please contact branch secretary Bill Bradley, c/o Red & Black Cafe, 2138 SE Division, Portland OR 97202.

March for economic justice

BY JOHN BARANSKI

Over 600 tenant union members, unionists, environmentalists, Grey Panthers, college professors, homeless people, students, anarchists, and Wobblies took to the streets May 12 for the First Annual Santa Barbara People's March for Economic Justice. We wended our way through one of the few remaining working-class neighborhoods in Santa Barbara, California, before turning onto the town's lavish main street, chanting in English and Spanish, wearing puppets, and carrying signs with messages that ranged from "Feminists Against Racism" and "Smash capitalism" to "Rent is Theft."

As the march moved down the main street, hundreds of shoppers and tourists stood on the sidewalks in disbelief. How could anyone protest in this town? To many, Santa Barbara is a paradise. Palm trees and cafes line the streets. White buildings with arches and red-tiled roofs conjure up a mythic time of Spanish rule and fiesta days. This well manicured town sits in a small valley which opens to a blue harbor, complete with sail boats and beautiful beaches. No surprise that tourists and the idle rich flock to Santa Barbara from around the world.

To many of us who work here, Santa Barbara is not a paradise. Many of us work two or three jobs and turn over half or more of our wages to a powerful rentier class. More and more, those working here are being driven from our community by high rents and starvation wages. The average cost of a home here now stands at \$630,000.

The march ended at the County Courthouse with music and speakers. United Farmworker Jose Luis Luna and environmental activist Julia Butterfly urged the crowd to continue fighting capitalism every day. University of California Santa Barbara professors Alice O'Connor and Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval denounced the poverty in our community and linked it to global patterns. The theme throughout march was



Bruce Valde held the IWW banner on a walkway overlooking the Santa Barbara County Courthouse's sunken garden as it filled with marchers

that the extremes of wealth and poverty in Santa Barbara are replicated throughout the United States and the world and that we must act locally to change these patterns.

Santa Barbara Wobbly Glyn Hughes went further, saying that "The massive turnout for this march and our resolve to continue orga-

nizing will make it difficult for the powers that be in Santa Barbara to perpetuate policies that put profits before human needs... Wobblies are going to build on this momentum by implementing an organizing drive in the service and education industries."

Stay tuned!

Killing picket no big deal

A New Zealand judge has sentenced a scab - convicted by a jury of manslaughter for slamming his car into Christine Clarke, who was picketing the Port of Lyttleton 18 months ago - to little more than probation.

The scab's driving license will be suspended for two years, and he will have to spend an occasional few hours in jail over the next nine months. The judge ruled he had "overreacted to the picket's disruption to traffic flows," according to local newspaper accounts.

London IWW reorganizes

An active IWW branch is once again up and running in London, after a successful May 14 meeting. There was lively discussion about globalisation, the recent May Day action, which a number of members were at (including on the 5,000-strong May Day union march) and the failure of reformist trade unions. Plans were discussed for a membership drive amongst information workers (many of whom are on short-term contracts), shop and postal workers. An IWW London hotline is being set up.

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.

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: _____
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 Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Speeches, trinkets failing to motivate workers

Although U.S. companies are spending billions of dollars on efforts to motivate workers to work harder, researchers say there is no evidence that workers are responding to the high-paid speakers and other glitzy campaigns.

In the multibillion-dollar motivation business, speakers are paid up to \$65,000 to propagandize workers. Billions of dollars of rewards are sold to companies – from T-shirts to exotic vacations – to be dangled in front of workers to boost performance. Other companies pay to send workers sky diving or walking across hot coals. Other companies buy books and tape recordings about people who have overcome enormous odds to succeed.

Business writer Tom Peters works dozens of \$65,000-a-day gigs every year. Data storage giant EMC has paid Insight Development Group about \$625,000 over the past six years to have more than 5,000 new hires walk across 1,500-degree coals.

Spencer Johnson has sold three million copies of "Who Moved My Cheese?," a 92-page parable about creatures in a maze reacting to change. Animated versions for corporate seminars go for \$495.

Companies spent \$3.6 billion last year on coffee mugs, sports tickets and other trinkets to motivate workers, a 50 percent increase from five years ago.

But workers are too smart to be taken in by such gimmicks. Gallup surveys indicate

that 55 percent of workers have no enthusiasm for their work, reporting that one in five are so uninterested or negative about their jobs that companies might be better off if they called in sick.

Some companies are so desperate that

they're trying to convince workers that their work matters. Holiday parties at medical product maker Medtronic now feature customers speaking about how they might have died without a Medtronic pacemaker. The company claims to believe happy workers and customers are more important than stock owners. Even so, Medtronic surveys show that four of every 25 workers do not agree that the company mission is consistent with their personal values.

General Electric says it has given up on the unmotivated. Instead, CEO Jack Welch has decided to terrorize GE workers. "A company that bets its future on its people must remove that lower 10 percent, and keep removing it every year," Welch wrote in his annual letter to GE stockholders.

But even as they subject workers to intolerable conditions, many bosses still want to be loved. For them, "socialist" David Whyte, author of "The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America," will read inspirational poems for \$25,000. "It's only a very small proportion of humanity who tap-dance into the office every day," Whyte says. "Unfortunately, all of them are motivational speakers."



Bosses give selves clean bill of health

BY JON BEKKEN

The boss press has recently heavily promoted a new study by the Mayo Clinic which shows, according to the headline in the local rag, "Heavy computer use doesn't cause carpal tunnel."

Even workers putting in as much as seven hours a day at the computer were at no greater risk of carpal tunnel than the general population, the researchers say. Good news, no?

No. Setting aside the fact that a great many of our fellow wage slaves are putting in more than seven hours a day at the keyboard, the headline writer – and apparently the researchers as well – has entirely missed the point.

The study of Mayo Clinic employees, began with a survey which asked workers

whether they suffered numbness in their hands and sensation of "pins and needles," symptoms often associated with carpal tunnel syndrome.

Although a third of all respondents indicated that they did suffer these symptoms, "only" 10.5 percent met the clinical standards for carpal tunnel syndrome.

The others were either suffering some other, undiagnosed, malady (the researchers made no effort to find out what was wrong with them once they decided that they did not have carpal tunnel syndrome) or had not yet deteriorated to the point where they met the carpal tunnel test. But they are nonetheless working in pain, pain that will only get worse as they continue working long hours in unsafe workplaces.

None of the reports I've seen indicate

who paid for this study, so it's hard to say whether the researchers (and the journalists who reported the results without any attempt to present an alternative interpretation) are so blinded by capitalist ideology that they can not see the crippled workers staring them right in the face, or were bought and paid for by companies who find it cheaper to cover up this epidemic (nearly one in ten U.S. workers will develop carpal tunnel symptoms according to the most recent data) than to redesign workplaces to prevent it.

But it really doesn't matter.

Whether a third of us are being crippled, or "only" 10 percent – whether it's happening because of stupidity or malice – it's high time we organize and take direct action to rid ourselves of this scourge, and of the system which created it.

Organizing call center workers

BY KOLINKO

ISI Marketing (Germany), a telemarketing company with call centres in Bochum, Essen and Duesseldorf, has gone to court to get an injunction against online distribution of a leaflet about their lousy working conditions. The conditions at ISI – unpaid training sessions, low basic wage and uncertain bonuses, loss of bonuses in the case of illness – are unfortunately not exceptional. Whether we work in call centres, behind a bar or on conveyor belts, all workers are confronted with similar problems.

This is not about just improving the conditions a bit. The decisive question is how we can develop a new strength and prevent the managers from pushing through these conditions. They have high unemployment on their side. They can count on a government that tries to force us into lousy jobs. And in some cases they can rely on union bureaucrats who help bring down conditions by agreeing to more temporary workers or "flexible" work hours.

So who will change things if not we ourselves, the workers? We have to develop a strength and power in order to change the situation. And we have to share information on each others' struggles.

We work in call centers and elsewhere and produce a series of leaflets to support discussion among workers. We need to stand together against work stress and the constraint to work. We can only do that by self-organizing and by finding ways – together with other workers – to react against management measures and to push through our

own interests.

Our strength lies in the fact that we can quickly agree with other workers on – for instance – refusing overtime, ignoring boss's orders or reducing the call-rhythm.

We are also doing a "workers' inquiry" on call centers around the world. We have exchanged information on working conditions and conflicts, as well as political discussions on the work in call centers.

Now we want to develop a mailing-list for conflicts in call centers. It is important for the workers' discussion to give detailed examples of struggles in other regions.

We have seen a range of struggles in call centers against the extension of working hours and the intensification of work (Citibank, British Telecom, Telecom Italia Mobile, Verizon, etc.). The struggles were over wages, temporary work, relocation or closing down of sites, technological control, management rule, etc.

We need to learn from these struggles. We need to determine where the weak points of the companies lie and in which situations our actions can be successful. We need to overcome the limitation of departments, companies or "nation states" and to establish contacts between workers in different call centers and companies.

Email your answers to these addresses: hotlines@free.de or hotlines@disinfo.net

Websites on call centre work, including the censored leaflet, can be found at: www.free.de/prol-position (German, English, Italian) www.callcenteroffensive.de (German) and hackwork.org (English).

High tech workers want unions

A recent survey of information technology professionals found 45 percent interested in joining a union.

The Communication Workers of America and the International Federation for Professional and Technical Engineers both report growing interest from high tech workers. Others are forming their own unions, such as the Seattle-based Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WashTech), which has organized programmers at Microsoft, recently forcing the company to compensate long-term contract workers who were denied benefits as temps.

"We have to reinvent what it means to be a union," says WashTech cofounder Mike Blain. "A lot of unions or locals don't understand that traditional bread-and-butter issues are not necessarily at the forefront of most IT workers' minds."

He says workers are interested in training opportunities, establishing standards for software development, protecting benefits, and ending forced overtime.

Many workers have become frustrated by corporate policies crafted by CEOs who are as ignorant of the needs and working conditions of their information technology workers as they are of those of workers on the assembly lines many CEOs are trying to turn programming into. As bosses try to force projects out on ever-shorter deadlines, high tech workers face long hours on the job and enormous pressure to turn out substandard work to get the job out the door.

iYo no quiero Taco Bell!

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida is urging consumers to boycott Taco Bell in solidarity with farm workers who pick tomatoes for supplier Six Ls Packing Co. Tomato pickers are paid just 40 cents for every 32-lb. bucket they pick, picking and hauling two tons of tomatoes to make \$50 a day. The rate hasn't gone up since 1978.

Taco Bell is the largest buyer of Florida tomatoes. The Coalition wants it to agree to pay 1 cent more per pound – about half a cent per chalupa – and the growers to agree to pass the penny along to the workers. If they did, it would double the tomato pickers' earnings.

Florida tomato pickers earn about \$7,500 a year, well below the minimum wage (which does not cover farmworkers). Farmworkers' income has been falling in recent years as fruits and vegetables become global commodities.

Immokalee is in southeast Florida, near the Everglades. During the winter tomato season farmworkers gather in parking lots for the shape-up every morning at 5:30; those who are hired for the day are bused up to 200 miles to fields where they work until sundown to pick the crops.

Taco Bell has refused to meet with workers, insisting that it is not responsible for the conditions of the farmworkers who pick the food it sells. Call or write Taco Bell President Emile Brolick, 17901 Von Karmen, Irvine CA 92614.

Give up right to strike says knighted labor misleader

The general secretary of Britain's AEEU engineering union has called on unions to accept "no-strike" deals with binding arbitration as part of "modernisation" of the country's public services. Ken Jackson has close ties to Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose Labour Party government was just re-elected.

"Just as in manufacturing we need to see greater competition and higher productivity in the public services," Sir Ken told the Financial Times.

He proposes replacing shop stewards with "professional negotiators" who can manage the transition to a private sector model – or increasingly to the sell-off of public services to private firms.

He also announced plans to double his union's membership in the next few years. "Unions have a good product," Jackson said, "but they market it badly."

Thousands rally for South Carolina dockers

Chanting "Free the Charleston Five!" more than six thousand union activists from across the country marched on the South Carolina statehouse June 9 to support five dockworkers facing felony riot charges stemming from a police attack on a picket line 18 months ago. The five are now scheduled to be put on trial sometime in September.

Dockworkers from Korea and Sweden were on hand to promise that longshoremen at ports around the world would strike on the first day of the trial if the charges are not dismissed, prompting chants of "Shut the port down!"

Noting that most International Longshoremen's Association members in Charleston are black and the local has been active in civil rights campaigns, several speakers railed against racial injustice. Motioning toward the Confederate flag listlessly drooping on the statehouse lawn, NAACP regional director Nelson Rivers told the crowd, "South Carolina has the mind of the Confederacy. It is the home of the Confederacy, and Charlie Condon is a lieutenant in the Confederacy."

Speaker after speaker derided Condon, the state's attorney general, who is running for governor and trying to boost his political stature in a state known for its strong anti-union laws. Cecil Roberts of the United Mine



More than 6,000 rallied for workers' rights and to Free the Charleston 5 June 9. An International Day of Action is planned for the first day of the trial scheduled in September.

PHOTO: BRETT BURSEY

Workers shouted, "Back in West Virginia, we have a saying: Don't kick the bear when it's asleep. Well, Charlie, you kicked the bear."

Because the Charleston 5 are under house arrest, none were on hand, but demonstrators held poster-sized photographs of the men. Several family members spoke at the rally, including Franklin Washington, son

of Charleston 5 dockworker Peter Washington, said his father was unable to attend his recent baptism and was barred from attending a memorial service for Franklin's grandmother in April.

Newspaper reports indicate that some shippers fear what might happen if the men are convicted. "If they're feeling pressure,

then they should apply it to Charlie Condon," said Charleston ILA President Ken Riley. Meanwhile, Condon told reporters his goal was "jail, jail and more jail."

What's really behind this attack?

A strong union movement in South Carolina would damage one of the state's major corporate draws, says South Carolina AFL-CIO president Donna Dewitt.

"The last thing state officials want to see is workers standing up to corporations, organizing and winning. That means better wages and standards of living for workers, but it's sort of hard to sell to a company looking for a low-wage, docile workforce," Dewitt said.

"The police... are clamping down on the workers' rights to peacefully protest. If they don't have that right, then effectively workers don't have any kind of rights to organize, no matter what's on the books," she added.

Riley notes that the largely African-American Local 1422 shows that workers who face real discrimination and a difficult time finding good jobs can unionize and organize for a better life — offering an message anti-union forces and state officials would just as soon silence.

To join the solidarity campaign call 888-716-7362, or email network@scpronet.com.

Bangladeshi garment workers to strike July 1

BY MARK HARRIS

The General Secretary of the Bangladesh National Garment Workers Federation reports that the Federation has called for a general strike throughout the entire garment sector on July 1.

In addition to demanding wage hikes and improved working conditions, the Federation is demanding that the right to bargain collectively be respected. Although these rights are legally "guaranteed," they are denied with impunity in the Orwellian "Free Trade Zones" around the world.

Garment workers marched June 1, protesting the bosses failure to implement a 1997 agreement to set an industry-wide minimum wage and a six-day week.

Six other garment workers unions have joined the NGWF in the national strike campaign, demanding immediate implementation of a minimum wage, health and safety protections, union rights, and implementation of the 1997 agreement.

Wobblies join New Zealand dockworkers picket

Two IWW members were among five workers arrested June 4 while picketing the Bluff waterfront in solidarity with members of the Waterfront Workers Union, which is under an injunction barring picketing.

Dozens of protesters turned out to show support for watersiders who have lost work since Carter Holt Harvey decided to replace them seven months ago with non-union crews imported from the mainland to load its logs. Police attacked when they tried to stop vehicles carrying the scabs from entering the port.

Auto workers seize GM plant

Nearly 1,000 workers seized General Motors' newest factory in Brazil as part of a strike aimed at ousting a company union. Workers at the plant in Gravatai, southeast of Sao Paulo, are demanding representation by the local Metalworkers Union in upcoming negotiations.

Workers said they would not return the plant to management until it agreed to negotiate with the union.

GM manufactures 40,000 vehicles a year in Brazil at three plants.

British postal workers wildcat

British postal workers returned to work May 25, ending a strike that quickly spread from one depot to include some 50,000 workers across the country, creating a backlog of some 47 million letters.

Postal management inadvertently took the strike national when they attempted to divert mail from the struck Watford facility. Workers at other depots refused to serve as union scabs, quickly winning their demands.

Workers at Liverpool's Copperas Hill sorting office were among the first to join the wildcat solidarity action. Royal Mail had announced plans to close Copperas Hill in 1997 and to remove the work to a site on the outskirts of Warrington.

Opened in the 1970s, Copperas Hill occupies acres of what has become prime land in the city centre. The revitalisation of Liverpool in recent years has left developers crying out for land for hotels and other leisure amenities, and the site would bring a fortune for Royal Mail coffers. However, a year-long campaign with national support from other postal staff, forced Royal Mail to relent, rescinding the decision to close Copperas Hill.

Management then began to employ heavy-handed tactics in order to intimidate staff and instigate industrial action which might offer an excuse for closing the facility. A walk-out in January, after staff were victimised by managers, spread with such speed that Royal Mail were forced to order an investigation into management intimidation across the whole of the postal service with particular attention to Oxford, Cardiff and Liverpool.

On May 18th, an official 24-hour stoppage at Watford was used as an excuse to get Liverpool staff to sort Watford mail. Royal Mail bosses wanted to change shift patterns for night sorters at Watford by bringing them in one and a half hours early. A handful of workers were suspended for refusing to carry out the task. This led to a walk-out across Liverpool which spread to other towns in northwest England and North Wales. The huge mail sorting centres at Manchester and Preston were affected, and this in turn spread the dispute to London.

Predictably, managers condemned the action as 'unlawful,' which seems to be their favourite word lately. In truth, 50,000 staff do not simply decide to hit the streets for no reason and the whole affair is symptomatic of failing industrial relations within Royal

Mail.

Heavy-handed management has seen staff given warnings for absences which have included hospitalisation for meningitis and injury caused by accidents on duty. The introduction of 'The Way Forward' deal, a co-operation scheme which management and union leaders forced through last year, has added to the problems faced by workers who face mounting work loads, but reduced overtime rates because of the deal.

The sooner workers realise their hopes will not be met by 'sweetheart' deals struck between union leaders and managers who do not have the interests of the rank and file at heart, the better it will be for postal workers. The sooner union leaders realise there is

Nurses fight overtime

Brockton (Mass.) Hospital nurses have been on the picket lines since May 25, with management refusing to meaningfully address issues of staffing, mandatory overtime, reassigning nurses to wards outside their area of expertise, and salary.

Similar disputes have been breaking out across North America as nurses fight to reverse declining working conditions that leave them exhausted and endanger their patients.

A strike by some 7,800 Minneapolis-St. Paul nurses was narrowly averted June 1 when ten area hospitals made last-minute agreements to give nurses more say over staffing levels. 1,350 nurses struck two other Minnesota hospitals which refused similar terms.

In Hawaii, Molokai General Hospital registered nurses struck May 12 after going three years without a pay hike while staffing levels were slashed in half.

Nurses in British Columbia have been refusing overtime in order to pressure hospital administrators to reach a new contract.

In Ontario, nurses are threatening an overtime ban and work-to-rule if hospitals continue to refuse to hire more nurses and ease crushing workloads. That dispute is apparently headed to binding arbitration.

In Brockton, management refuses even to meet with the nurses, instead spending millions to bring in nurses from scab agency Fast Staff—a subsidiary of U.S. Nursing Corp. of Denver, which provided nurses to St. Vincent's Hospital in Worcester, Mass., when nurses struck last year against mandatory

overtime. Nurses won that strike.

Management's efforts to portray nurses as abandoning patients have backfired. When the hospital tried to hire masseuses for their scabs, they instead volunteered their services to nurses on the picket line.

Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Butler proved more sympathetic to the bosses, issuing an injunction prohibiting nurses from picketing hospital entrance ways. The hospital had complained that scabbing doctors were slowed down as they drove through the picket line.

Nurses at Brockton Hospital have been struggling over the issue of mandatory overtime for several years. While management promised in 1998 to eliminate the problem, staff shortages have led to even more demands to stay on the job after shifts end. Now the union is seeking the same contract language it has won from three other area hospitals in the last year. Management is insisting that nurses trust them to do better in the future.

(The IWW is active in Royal Mail)

National studies indicate that thousands of patients die every year across the United States because of inadequate staffing. A nationwide nursing shortage is causing emergency-room shutdowns and increasing the risk of dangerous medical mistakes. Rather than increase wages and improve conditions to reduce the high numbers of nurses fleeing the profession, hospital management has doubled the number of patients nurses are responsible for and called on nurses to work double shifts.

Protests hit EU summit

Thousands of activists converged June 14 on the Swedish port city of Göteborg as European Union leaders met to pursue capital's project of "harmonizing" European labor and social welfare policy.

IWW members from around Europe and from the United States participated in the demonstrations and meetings, and the IWW's International Solidarity Commission sent a message reading, in part: "The struggle of workers around the world is one struggle. ... Whether it's the new union or the New World Order, or the FTAA, or the IMF and the World Bank, we will resist capitalism by any name."

The Central Organization of Swedish Workers (SAC), a syndicalist union with which the IWW has long enjoyed close ties, played a key role in organizing the protests and hosted an international conference the preceding day, with union activists from

Nepal, Bangladesh, Chile, Russia, South Africa and across Europe.

Participants made it clear that they were not in Göteborg to influence the politicians gathering for the summit. Instead they met in recognition of the fact that the working class, wherever it lives, is fighting the same struggle.

The protests forced the cancellation of some summit events, and prompted articles in leading newspapers about the danger of "a widespread sense of disconnection" between the EU and its citizens – something reinforced by Ireland's rejection of the Nice treaty, aimed at expanding the European Union.

Hundreds were arrested and at least three demonstrators shot by police so determined to keep protestors away from the assembled politicians that they attempted to barricade hundreds inside buildings where they were

sleeping. Police penned activists in with freight containers, unleashed attack dogs on them, and in a number of instances pelted them with rocks. While most protestors remained calm in the face of these attacks, several responded by smashing store windows.

Two shootings occurred when a small group of riot police trying to break up a street party began hurling rocks at the dancers. Vastly outnumbered, they began shooting into the angry crowd as it chased them away. As we go to press, one of the wounded remains in intensive care and may well die.

Frenzied police continued attacking activists even as they were returning home. A bus chartered by the Free Workers Union of Germany (FAU-IWA) was raided June 16 by black-masked police who herded the syndicalists on and off the bus, beating some, before finally allowing them to leave.

What the bosses are worrying about

Working at the IWW's office, all kinds of interesting mail comes into our post office box. I feel greatly privileged to get news from all over the world about the struggles of working people. It's with great anticipation that I hear about the activities of Wobblies and our fellow travellers. We also get interesting queries from people doing research on the union, notices of cultural events, and invitations to rallies.

And then there's the junk mail. I think we get more than our fair share of catalogs of "teamwork" office propaganda – you know, those posters with a sunset, a cliff, and dutiful proles in silhouette cooperating to climb up a rope, risking life and limb for the sake of the company. These things are among my favorites – sometimes on slow days, I like to take the little pictures of the posters and make them more truthful: "Downsize: Thanks for the great job, You're All Fired!"

But the very best entertainments that come in are from the anonymous souls who – without notes, return addresses or any identifying features on the envelopes at all – send us anti-union propaganda, presumably received during a campaign: Or maybe they are managers with a conscience, just trying to ease it a little by cluing union people in on what sorts of things their bosses are thinking about.

A tiny compact disk from a Chicago-based union-busting law firm came recently. It's a marketing piece for current and potential clients citing their major victories, and it also has a top ten of what they consider to be the most important employment law developments from the past two years. I figure it could be instructive for us to take a look at some items from this list too.

Epilepsy Foundation of Northeast Ohio 331 NLRB no. 92 (July 10, 2000) This is a case concerning Weingarten rights for non-union workers. Weingarten rights, the right to have a union representative present during an investigatory interview that could result in disciplinary action, now apply to workers in non-union settings – they may have a co-worker present. I discussed Weingarten Rights in a column a few months back (write me if you'd like it).

California's new overtime regulations. The state of California changed its overtime rules as of January 1, 2000: you now get overtime after working 40 hours in a week, but you also get time-and-a-half for time worked in excess of 8 hours per day and for the first 8 hours on a seventh consecutive day of work in a workweek. It also imposes double-time for time worked in excess of 12 hours per day and for time worked in excess of 8 hours on a seventh consecutive day of work in a workweek.

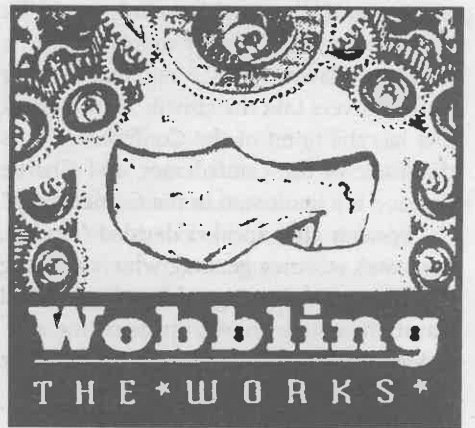
Kolstad v. American Dental Association 527 U.S. 526 (June 22, 1999) This is a Title VII civil rights discrimination case. The de-

Protests against police brutality were organized in several cities around the world.

Politicians are responding not by democratizing their procedures, but by retreating into Medieval fortresses. The British newspaper *The Observer* reports that, "European leaders are to introduce Draconian measures to deal with the growing threat of violence from anti-capitalist protesters (sic). They are bringing forward plans to stage all European summits in Brussels behind tough new security barriers."

The Italian government has announced plans to seal off the city of Genoa for the G8 world economic summit, closing airports, railways and roads July 18-22.

Italian newspapers are speculating that the talks might be moved to a more secure venue such as a castle, or even a cruise liner, to keep away even local residents.



cision severely restricted punitive damages workers can collect as part of an award on civil rights cases. In a five-to-four decision, the Supreme Court ruled that when a company has made "good faith efforts" to comply with civil rights law, it cannot be required to pay punitive damages for discriminatory actions of managers who don't abide by the company's policies.

Flamingo Hilton-Laughlin, 330 NLRB 34 (Nov. 20, 1999). This case relates

It's just plainly weird to call any boss-written rule neutral, since they wrote it and they enforce it...

to an employee handbook of a non-union workplace. An unfair labor practice was filed because of several problems within the handbook relating to workers' rights to engage in concerted activity and to form unions. A rule prohibiting the sharing of confidential information was found to be unlawful because it could be viewed as limiting the comparing of wages. A dress code policy was found to be unlawful because it might be interpreted to prohibit the wearing of union buttons. A rule against soliciting in customer access areas was also found unlawful because it could prevent workers from airing their grievances, and the Board invalidated a rule barring the dissemination of "merely false statements."

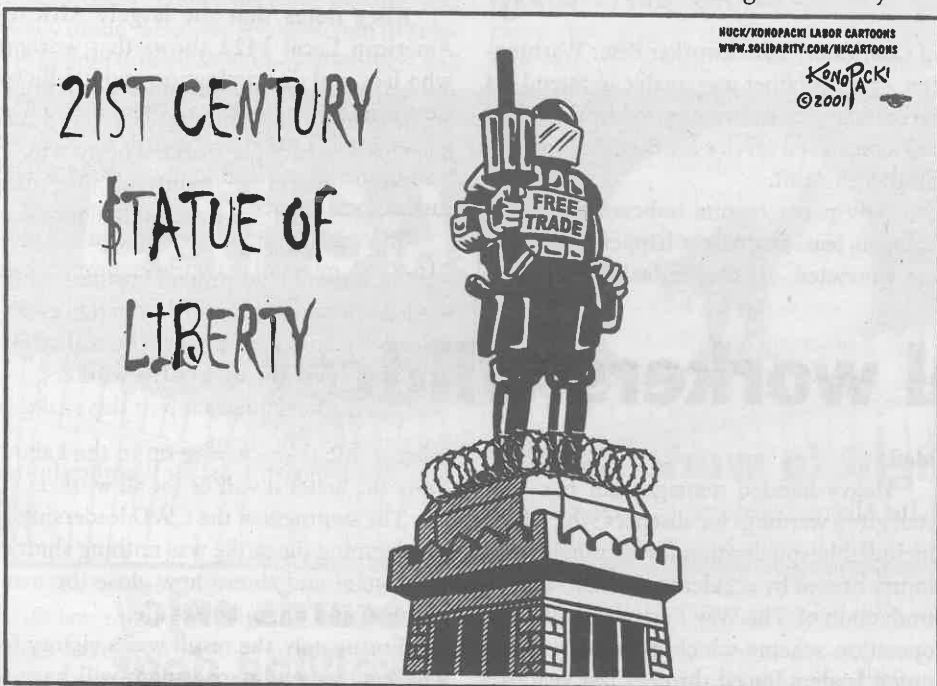
This decision is obviously hated by managers all over, but I guess it works out well for the attorneys who get to review all those employee handbooks they wrote before this decision came about.

It's interesting to see what the attorneys say about this: "The case underscored the vagueness of Board decisions on handbook rules and policies which will likely create new tension between the (National Labor Relations) Board and the courts regarding how far seeming neutral rules may be regulated by the NLRB in a nonunion setting."

Neutral rules? It strikes me how different the meaning of the word neutral is when used by management attorneys as compared to when anyone else uses it. Aside from the law, it's just plainly weird to call any boss-written rule neutral, since, of course, they wrote it and they enforce it.

In my next column, I'm going to share some points in anti-union handbooks that we've received over the past couple of years. If you have something to share, please send it on. In campaigns that I've worked on, it's been useful to show workers these books so they can spot the tactics and more easily see the strategies the bosses are using to thwart their efforts.

Alexis Buss



High and Dry Dock

continued from page 1

worthless ass in a plea bargain deal.

CCI was able to use union pension money for very questionable loans by bribing pension officials. One Laborers' Union official has already pled guilty to accepting tens of thousands of dollars in kickbacks and bribes. Over \$243 million in pension funds have probably been lost through these corrupt dealings. This includes the retirement income for 20,000 working-class families.

And most of the unions participating in Capital Consultant's pyramid scheme were the very unions down on the waterfront. Rank-and-file members of four unions – the Laborers, the Electricians (IBEW), Plumbers and Office and Professional Employees – have sued district pension boards over investments in Capital Consultants.

One boss web site reports: "Andrew McPherson, a member of the Int'l Bhd. of Elec. Workers, filed a similar suit against the 25 trustees of the 8th Dist. Elec. Pension Fund and Health & Welfare Fund of Aurora, Col. The funds, which cover workers from 5 Western states, could lose more than \$30 million of its members' money in failed Capital Consultants investments, the suit alleges."

"The 19-page complaint charges that some trustees and their spouses might have received 'special favors and gifts' from Capital Consultants in violation of federal rules governing pension plans. The complaint further alleges that trustees, after learning Capital Consultants was on the verge of collapse more than a year ago, failed to disclose the financial losses to plan participants and continued to pay excessive fees to the firm. The suit seeks damages in excess of \$40 million, the appointment of a new money management firm and the immediate removal of the defendant trustees." http://www.nlpc.org/olap/UCU2/03_24_05.htm

The employing class & unions have something in common?

So where is the new AFL-CIO in this mess? Out protecting the American worker? Hell no! The Metal Trades Council, whose unions 'represent' the workers at the yard have "remained neutral" on the sale of Dry Dock 4. While being neutral, they also have offered retraining classes for those losing their jobs. They have even let Cascade be the only large contractor in Portland not to participate in the apprenticeship program. Instead Cascade can train non-union workers for \$12-an-hour jobs which cross the trades.

But why? During a Port of Portland meeting, Commissioners teased rank-and-file workers that no union trustees were wanting to save Dry Dock 4. The point was obvious. The unions have a financial stake in Cascade General. If they are to have any hope of seeing return from their pension fund mismanagements they need to screw over the workers at Cascade today.

Rank-and-file shipyard workers have organized meetings and protests. This has been done in spite of hostility from union officials. The IWW has been involved in this committee and its demand for a thorough investigation into the ties between Cascade General and Capital Consultants.

It boils down to this: A crooked financial company bribes union officials to invest in a privatization venture. The taxpayers lose millions of dollars in investments. When the investment company goes bad, the company has to sell off its prime asset. Union workers lose their jobs and the unions won't defend their membership because it's bad for their investments.

But Cascade's investments are secure and, like the Port of Portland Commissioners June 13, they are laughing at us.

Organize Fellow Workers!

Living Wage Campaign

BY RYAN VAN DEN BERG

The Edmonton Branch of the IWW has launched a Living Wage campaign as the outgrowth of our Unionize Whyte efforts. We leafleted during the Edmonton May Day parade, and are now postering the city and developing a propaganda card for dropping off in stores, restaurants, etc.

The vast majority of workers in Edmonton, especially in the service industry, are not unionized and are paid just barely above the minimum wage, with little or no benefits. The Edmonton Social Planning Council has done a shopping basket account of what it would take for a worker to support himself or herself in this city. That would be a wage of \$10 an hour and full benefits.

Even at these wages the average worker would only be making \$80 a day, not exactly a king's ransom, or even 1/1000 of most CEO salaries. And of course if we had a living wage, perhaps we would at least ameliorate the conditions that see people having to dumpster dive, panhandle, etc.

Paying a living wage, employers in trendy Whyte Avenue and Old Scona would then actually be contributing to the end of poverty, rather than having to resort to charity parking meters.

Workers in the service industry need unions, not just to get them living wages, but to defend them against abuse by employers. Every worker deserves a living wage and full benefits, whether they are unionized or not. We encourage workers to demand a living wage and full benefits, this will be more effective in alleviating working class poverty than plugging spare change into hip capitalist parking meters.

The IWW was active in getting relief from the Edmonton officials for unemployed workers in 1913. Having fought city hall before and won, we believe that a Living Wage can be won by workers. We are told that unions are a thing of the past. We are proud to be a union from that past.

Timor unions back Shangri-La workers

The fledgling East Timor union movement has joined an international campaign of support for Indonesian hotel workers who have been in dispute with their Hong Kong-based employer for six months at the Shangri-La Jakarta hotel.

The Shangri-La hotel workers have been subjected to a brutal campaign of thuggery and violence ever since they were locked out of their workplace at the end of December 2000.

The Shangri-La hotel dispute has become an international symbol of the new struggles by working people in Indonesia for decent wages and conditions. An international campaign has managed to focus worldwide attention on this dispute with union activists and supporters organizing protests and rallies in Australia, Korea, Hong Kong, Europe, the USA and Canada.

Workers seize nylon plant

Armed with steel pipes, angry union members seized control of South Korea's largest nylon manufacturing plant on May 28. Nearly 130 people were injured, some of them seriously, after 300 unionists fought with security and management officials at the plant, owned by Hyosung Corp. in Ulsan, 160 miles southeast of Seoul.

Workers were protesting a company decision to relocate workers whose jobs have been automated. The union fears the relocations are a prelude to mass layoffs.

A general strike called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions for a five-day week and against structural adjustment policies in mid-June failed to take hold, although air transport and hospital workers did win some concessions before returning to work.

I Won't Work Without A Living Wage

\$10 an hour and full benefits for all workers, Part-time or Full-time

In Alberta the minimum wage is a guarantee of living below the poverty level. It forces workers to have to work longer, harder and in more than one job just to make ends meet. *We demand a living wage now!*

While the province is booming, it's not a boom for us. It's a boom for business, especially big business. In the last provincial budget, business taxes were lower than even those paid by the lowest paid worker. What's wrong with this picture?

As workers we are tired of living from hand to mouth, of having to work longer and harder just to get by. "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go" is nothing to be proud of, especially when the bosses are pocketing the profits of the boom, giving us the crumbs.

Every business can afford to pay a living wage and give us benefits (coverage of our Health Care premiums, a supplementary medical and dental plan).

And we deserve it! Give me a Living Wage! I don't need a Tax Break I need a Work Break.

It is time that all workers, especially those who do not have a union, demand your right to a living wage.

Tax Breaks are for the rich and for the bosses — *We want a living wage.*



Don't Work For Less! You are worth more!
If you would like more information on our Living Wage Campaign, contact the Industrial Workers of the World — The Union for the rest of us!

Edmonton General Membership Branch

Box 1075, Edmonton, T5J 2M1
email: iww-edm@iww.ca
Web Page: edmonton.iww.ca

Alberta Wobs fight "right to work" law

Proposed "right to work" legislation died on the Alberta Legislature table recently after Edmonton Wobblies campaigned against the measure which would have outlawed the union shop throughout the province. FW Eugene Plawiuk more than held his own against two right-wing defenders of unfettered boss rule on a local radio talk show (a tape is available from the Edmonton IWW).

Alberta has the worst labour legislation in Canada and has been identified as being in violation of international labour standards by the International Labour Organization and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The IWW is committed to defeating any Right To Work legislation, and calls on the labour movement in Alberta to join us in this effort.

The Education Industry: Campus Equity Week on part-time work

Faculty activists across the US and Canada have banded together to designate October 28 to November 3 as Campus Equity Week. The week will promote campus activities highlighting the poor pay and working conditions of part-time and non-tenure track faculty.

Part-time faculty now account for 43% of all faculty appointments. Graduate student assistants and full-time contingent faculty are other growing segments of the teaching profession without adequate compensation or academic freedom protections.

An international steering committee has been formed including representatives from sponsoring organizations including: American Association of University Professors, American Federation of Teachers, Canadian Association of University Teachers, California Part-time Faculty Association, Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association, Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, Communications Workers of America, Federation nationale des enseignants et enseignantes du Quebec (FNEEQ-CSN), National Alliance for Fair Employment, National Council of Teachers of English/Conference on College Communication and Composition, National Education Association and others.

Campus Equity Week will focus attention on issues of fairness and quality of education. Our message: teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions and equal work deserves equal pay. The week of action will also promote local organizing.

Campus Equity Week will also challenge declining labor standards and increasing use of temporary and part-time labor for all campus work. Campus Equity Week endorses the adoption of equitable labor policies and standards that encourage fairness and dignity for

all members of the campus community.

For more information, including a list of local contacts, visit our webpage at: www.cewAction.org

U.S. teachers work more, earn less, OECD reports

U.S. teachers earn less relative to national income than their counterparts in most industrialized countries, but spend far more hours in the classroom. The discrepancy is part of a pattern of relatively low public investment in education, according to a new report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Total government spending on education in the United States slipped to 4.8 percent of gross domestic product in 1998, falling under the international average of 5 percent for the first time even as politicians claim to be committed to improving schools.

The report comes as the United States faces a shortage of 2 million teachers over the next decade.

Washington TA strike ends

Teaching Assistants ended an unsuccessful two-week strike June 15, as the University of Washington academic quarter ended, but the Graduate Student Employee Action Coalition/United Auto Workers warns that the strike may resume in the fall if the University does not begin bargaining.

University administrators refuse to recognize the union even though more than three-fourths of graduate teaching staff have joined the union. In many departments, faculty refused to scab on the teaching assistants, resulting in thousands of papers and exams going ungraded.

Paramedics wildcat

Defying a "state of emergency" decree and a provincial order revoking their right to strike, 268 paramedics in the City of Edmonton, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3197, went on a wildcat strike June 1.

Members of the Edmonton IWW did information leafleting with the paramedics, and joined them on Sunday when they went to court over contempt charges they faced for walking off the job.

An eleventh hour deal was struck to return to work in exchange for the city resuming bargaining, thus avoiding heavy legal penalties for their wildcat (The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees got fined \$400,000 last year for a two-day wildcat that shut down hospitals across Alberta). A contract was signed three days later.

As a leaflet we distributed during the wildcat noted, "When the bosses' rules are the only rules, workers have no choice but to vote with their feet...."

"Without the right to strike workers cannot bargain. They are forced to accept binding arbitration. This process is a rigged carnival game where the workers never win.

"We support the Edmonton Paramedics in their struggle for a better ambulance service and just wages.

"In Alberta laws protect business while workers rights are trampled. Alberta's essential service laws are illegal... The real criminal is the government, not the workers.

"All workers must support this strike. It is a strike for our rights.

"The longer the picket line the shorter the strike!"

Piecards enjoy revolving door

New York City's Transit Authority has given management jobs to several union leaders recently ousted from their posts for being too friendly to management.

Until January, Dennis Calhoun was secretary-treasurer of Transport Workers Union Local 100, playing a key role in negotiating a December 1999 contract that averted a New Year's Day strike. Now he is a director of safety audits in the subway division, where he works under Joseph Hoffman. Hoffman is the executive with whom Calhoun negotiated over a controversial "broadbanding" provision that allows managers to assign maintenance workers to a variety of jobs.

Then there's Thomas Cassano. He served for years as a special assistant to Local 100's president, and is the only union representative appointed by Gov. Pataki to the board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. But Cassano has switched tracks, taking a job as a manager in the subway division.

Defeated presidential candidate Eddie Melendez, who used to represent bus drivers, won't be hauling passengers anytime soon. The TA gave him a job supervising employee health exams and the licensing of bus drivers.

Many of the ousted union leaders are also eligible for generous union pensions they negotiated for themselves. Because the former officials did not fully fund the pension plan, it has millions of dollars in liabilities which could bankrupt the union if they exercise their right to lump-sum payments.

Most agreed to monthly payments, but Cassano sued the union to get his pension — more than \$420,000 — in a single payment.

Scandalous though it is, relatively few business union officials return to the workplace after leaving office. After years of pulling down six-figure salaries for light work, the notion of returning to wage slavery holds little appeal. Those who don't die in office or end up in jail for embezzlement often end up either in management, or working for the bosses as consultants. It's just one of many reasons the IWW refuses to allow a permanent class of officers to develop in our union.

Union Bashing, Supreme Court Style

BY BILL MEYERS

In a 5 to 4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled May 29 that registered nurses working in a Kentucky mental health facility were supervisors and unable to belong to a NLRB-recognized union. The nurses were not hired or paid as supervisors, but sometimes gave instructions to nurse's aides. The decision has far-reaching implications.

The NLRB defines supervisors as employees who "act in the interest of the employer" using "independent judgment," and not judgment "of a merely routine or clerical nature." The Court said that the act of judgment; or making a decision, is never "of a merely routine or clerical nature." Thus anyone who has to make a decision as part of their job is now deemed a supervisor.

Millions of workers could be forced out of unions by this decision, if it is applied to those who are already unionized. Most skilled crafts require decision making, and many union members give direction to helpers or apprentices. Most clerical workers and

government workers who are in unions also have to make decisions.

The NLRB provides only the most minimal protections, including the right to organize within NLRB-recognized unions, to U.S. workers. The Supreme Court's ruling in NLRB vs. Kentucky River Community Care clarifies that the Court, indeed the entire system of American law, is an instrument of class warfare, not of justice.

Racing to the bottom

Business Week reports that U.S. poverty is now among the highest of industrialized countries, with only Australia and Britain having higher poverty levels. The working poor actually lost ground in the 1990s, as earnings fell over the ten-year period.

The U.S. spends only half as much on social programs as do other countries. 12 million children regularly go hungry according to the U.S. Agriculture Department, because their parents work in low-wage jobs that don't pay enough to feed their families.

NLRB restricts right to speak with workers at the job site

The National Labor Relations Board has dismissed a union complaint that would have ensured access by union organizers to workers inside Wal-Mart stores. The UFCW had brought unfair labor practice charges after Wal-Mart went to court to secure a temporary restraining order barring organizers from its stores. That order was later overturned.

The union had argued that charitable groups are allowed to solicit inside Wal-Mart stores and that union organizers should have equal access. U.S. labor law generally requires that unions have the same right to communicate to workers as do other organizations. The NLRB apparently concluded that the union could not prove that Wal-Mart allowed groups such as the Salvation Army and the Girl Scouts inside its stores.

However, Wal-Mart is seeking to amend labor law to permit it to discriminate against union organizers, persuading Sen. Tim Hutchinson to push a bill to amend the National Labor Relations Act.

Chicken catchers win overtime back pay

Poultry giant Perdue Farms Inc. has settled a class action lawsuit by agreeing to pay \$1.7 million in back overtime wages to 100 Maryland workers who the company maintained were "independent contractors" in a bid to evade U.S. labor laws.

Workers had the difficult, gritty job of gathering birds from crowded, poorly ventilated chicken houses for transport to slaughter plants. They were paid less than \$2 per 1,000 birds caught, forcing many to put in 12 hours or more a day to make ends meet.

The workers are now on payroll, with health and retirement benefits.

Grand jury targets sweatshop activists

Last year there were hundreds of leafleting actions at Kohl's department stores in support of Nicaraguan sweatshop workers. In December, the Denver Justice and Peace Committee organized an action at a local Kohl's outlet. During the action, four people dressed as Santa Claus entered the store and spray painted some merchandise. Despite their eye-catching costumes, the Santas were not apprehended by security guards or police.

On Dec. 15 police entered the DJPC office with a search warrant, seizing computer disks and donor and membership records. In their attempt to find the four Santas by disrupting Denver's activist community, investigators interviewed at least 50 DJPC supporters. Now, in what may be part of a national strategy to target anti-corporate globalization activists, a grand jury has been convened to determine criminal charges in this case. One activist, Doug Bohm, was jailed May 17 for refusing to testify in this case. Former DJPC Executive Director David Martin also expects that he will be imprisoned for non-cooperation.

Donations for legal defense can be made to: Building Bridges, 3533 Tejon, Denver CO 80211. Please contact the District Attorney to demand that he dissolve the grand jury and stop using it to undermine free speech rights. Contact: David J. Thomas, District Attorney, 500 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden CO 80401, fax. 303-271-6900.

Contact Luis Espinosa-Organista at 303-864-9303 or lespinos@ouray.cudenver.edu for further information on the case and on ways to support these labor rights activists.

Labor for Mumia

Union activists have created a web site with an organizing guide and other resources aimed at helping educating your fellow workers and building support for the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. The site is at: www.aspenlinx.com/labor/

Appalachian coal miners occupy W Virginia highway

BY JASON ADAMS

On May 23, 16 rank-and-file United Mine Workers union members, joined by UMW president Cecil Roberts, occupied a highway near A.T. Massey Coal Co. headquarters in West Virginia. Their goal was to pressure stockholders to make the company change the way it operates in the mountains, especially in regards to safety and environmental damage. The workers were charged with misdemeanor obstruction, and face the possibility of up to one year in jail.

A.T. Massey has exploited Appalachian workers and the environment for a long time. Operating in both West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, between the 1970s and the late 1990s, researchers have accused the company of avoiding over \$48 million in worker's compensation benefits.

In 1991 the company used scabs to bust the UMW at Blair Mountain, which was the site of the Matewan Massacre in 1921. The core of those who helped to organize the Matewan miners are rumored to have been IWW dual-carders.

In October 2000, a mine owned by the company spilled 250 million gallons of coal sludge into the Ohio River. A state of emergency was declared, and federal officials declared it one of the worst environmental disasters in Appalachian history.

Unfair to capital

United Parcel Service has charged Canada with violating the North American Free Trade Agreement by operating a postal service. Although Canada Post does not receive direct government subsidies (unlike the U.S. postal system) and even pays income tax, UPS complains that the public corporation has combined letter, parcel and overnight services, sharing mail boxes, sorting facilities, post offices, and vehicles.

Every postal system in the world does the same, of course, and UPS similarly combines its parcel and overnight services (it is barred under U.S. and Canadian law from carrying letter mail). If UPS wins its case, it would open almost all public services to similar corporate challenge.

Strike at State Bank of India

A group of mostly Indian immigrants picketed the State Bank of India's midtown Manhattan branch May 29, as part of a one-day strike demanding better wages and benefits. While management tried to maintain a pretense of business as usual, bank customers joined the picket line outside.

State Bank of India employs nearly 200 workers in three New York City locations. The bank takes advantage of new arrivals by starting them at minimum wage, or \$205 weekly. Prakash Adhvaru, who has worked in the Flushing branch for three years, wore a sign that said, "Healthy discontent is the prelude to progress." He earns \$250 per week and lives in a studio apartment with his wife and 13-year-old son.

Asked how much he thinks he should earn, Adhvaru, 64, shrugged. "I should at least live in a one-bedroom," he said.

State Bank of India workers voted last year to join United Auto Workers Local 2110, which also represents graduate employees at New York and Columbia universities and workers at the Museum of Modern Art.

Boss to union: sell or else

The *Seattle Times* has sued the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, charging the union with failing to promote subscriptions to the paper. As part of the settlement of a seven-week strike, the Guild agreed to boost the paper once it replaced all scabs with union workers. The Guild says it's waiting for management to fulfill its side of the deal.



The League of Illinois Bicyclists and the Chicago Bicycle Federation are trying to change state law, to give bicyclists protections commensurate with protection for motorists. Bicyclists have been without liability protection since 1998, when the Illinois supreme court rules against a bicyclist who was severely injured when his wheel was stuck in the planks of a bridge that was being repaired in Du Page County. As a result, unlike a motorist suffering injury from the same type of hazard, a bicyclist can no longer sue the municipality or county that is responsible.

It is quite obvious that our "duly elected" representatives would rather see people riding around in automobiles than on non-polluting bicycles. Since they have as yet been unable to tax the physical expenditure of muscle power, there is the greater tax revenue coming from gasoline sales, not to mention the profits from their pals who profit from the automotive industry, who are their true constituents.

Fellow Worker Soulmate, when seeing a bicyclist, always makes a point of applauding him or her. Bicycles are far more environmentally sound than the carbon monoxide-spewing vehicles that congest our streets and roadways, as about the worst pollution one can get from a bicyclist is an occasional phlatu. Here in Big Windy, white lines have been painted between the parking areas and the stream of traffic, delineating where the bicyclist can ride. However, most motorists ignore these lines, and the hapless bicycle riders are still placing themselves at risk when riding down principal streets. At least in northern European cities, half of the pedestrian sidewalks are marked off for bicycle traffic.

However, the global profit system with which we are all afflicted makes it their goal to see all of humanity burdened with gas guzzlers. If you think traffic is horrendous on Freedomland streets, go to some of the southern Mediterranean countries, where the buying power of workers' wages is far less than in Freedomland or northern Europe, to see real automotive congestion. One of the worst examples is the city of Athens, whose streets are congested with cars and buses moving at snail's pace through canyons of high-rises choked with carbon monoxide fumes. Only the few foolhardy bicyclists are able to weave in and out of the congested traffic, as those who are held hostage within their carbon monoxide-belching prisons become more frustrated than ever.

The modern malady that is known as road rage increases every day without let-up. In California, a driver who did not choose to run an overly long red light in spite of the fact that there was no oncoming traffic was shot dead by the impatient driver behind him. The media is rife with overt examples of road rage killings, as the automotive and gas and oil industries reap increasing profits.

We have yet to hear of road rage on the part of bicycle riders, other than being victims of the road rage of some motorist. Because the automotive profiteers wish to fatten their coffers no matter how many lives are being disrupted. With those who dominate our lives, the first and foremost concern is the immediate profit, no matter what the present and future consequences may be. Despite the fact that there is enough rock for making blocks and enough sand and clay for making bricks and concrete, our forests are being denuded every day. The application of modern technology could desalinate sea water for industrial purposes instead of depleting our fresh water supply, not to mention the precious fresh water resources being expended on industrial production, but because such environmental precautions would bite into the profiteers' coffers our environment suffers.

That's why we of the IWW want to bring about a society where the workers have control over their job sites. The so-called primitive societies who had no rulers or bosses lived close to nature and knew well the fragility of the environment, and so were careful to make sure that the same environment would be there for succeeding generations to enjoy. Those who accept a society with its atom bombs and napalm and electric chairs have the chutzpah to call those who used bows and arrows "primitive."

Let's take a lesson from our distant forebearers and get back to that part of the road where the wrong path was taken. Initiative, like wealth, benefits those who have it.

— C.C. Redcloud

No poor wanted...

continued from page 1

Now what if LaBlatt had asked, "Are African-Americans the type of customer that Walmart really wants?" Or "Are gays the type of customer Walmart really wants?" People would take notice. But because class is mentioned instead, and because many of us have internalized the belief that poor people should necessarily be talked about in such ways (since they must be poor solely by their own doing) it merits little outrage. And it means we are silently complicit in a society that devalues people based on their wealth and class position, and excludes them from enjoying services and goods others have "earned."

This simply underscores the point that "preaching class war" is okay and acceptable in the media when the class war being preached is waged against the poor. Poor people, working people, activists and the like who talk to reporters about "the lower economic

"Preserving democratic capitalism"

In 1999, President Bill Clinton proposed investing Social Security dollars into the stock market to garner larger rewards for future retirees. While most corporations drool at the prospect of being able to get government money, the Clinton idea had a fatal flaw: it might encourage workers and the rest of the public to use their investment as an excuse to get the government to influence corporate behavior. The Business Roundtable, one of the largest coalitions of corporate CEOs in the world, drafted a letter to Clinton warning against his plan:

"We understand that you are considering a proposal under which the federal government would directly invest Social Security trust fund dollars in the stock market. Such direct investment runs contrary to the

fundamental principles of democratic capitalism, and would result in undue concentration of assets in certain market segments, share price distortion, and market inefficiencies. Government ownership of private companies raises significant corporate governance concerns and creates the potential for political investing."

These CEOs unashamedly state what they support: the preservation of "democratic" capitalism. In fact, they are saying a proposed law should be shot down simply because it violates capitalist principles. If a poor person were to ever claim a law was being decided upon based on whether or not it supported capitalism (and thus the ruling class), however, they might sneeringly be called a "Marxist" or worse.

The "principles of democratic capitalism" dictate, in the CEOs' view, that the public not be able to democratically influence capitalism or its corporations. Rather, corporations should be autocratically controlled by the wealthy men inside them. That is why corporations support Social Security reform that lets individuals invest as *individuals* and not as a huge bloc that might be able to shape policy.

Of course, it's doubtful that the same president who repealed Glass-Steagall would have wanted to nationalize industry. And undoubtedly the CEOs knew this. But even the merest spectre of public control over their corporations alarmed this powerful special interest group to the extent that they lobbied against it. And Clinton's proposal was indeed never realized.

Again, it's interesting to wonder how a grass roots activist, a labor rights advocate, or anyone else, would be regarded by elites if they spoke in such vulgar Marxist language as to mention "the principles of Western capitalism" or any other such fine-sounding ideological term to make their point.

Feds fear "militant labor"

On August 19, 1997, Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee minutes recorded that "members commented that the outcome of the recent labor negotiations involving a very large package delivery firm might well be a harbinger of more militant labor nego-

"Preaching class war" is okay and acceptable when the class war being preached is waged against the poor...

Under Our Law

One good thing, under our law, man is not compelled to be a capitalist. If he is a capitalist he is one because of his own volition and it is his own fault.

There is an opportunity, under our law, for every capitalist to become a working man and earn his own living.

If he fails to take advantage and make the best of his opportunities, he has nobody to blame except himself – he has no rights, under our law, to blame anybody, least of all the IWW, for his condition.

(Note: The Wobblies have been trying for years to put him in overalls.)

But he will be contrary – he will persist in collecting profits from other people's toil.

To Bend His Back

There is an opportunity for every capitalist, under our law, to mend his ways – there are missions he can go to.

There are gospel missions in most of our cities where he can hear the message of hope "work hard and save your pennies. Obey your masters. Tough 'er out in this world and get a 14 k. crown in the next one. A pair of wings with a spread of 18 feet 6 inches..."

As I said before, there is no excuse for any man to continue robbing the people, under our law, as has been done in several cases I have in mind – highway robbery is not in point, insofar as it is less legal than is the indirect method used by our social pillars to separate a wage slave from the souvenir of his toil.

Many of our leading capitalists complain most bitterly that they are interfered with in their lawful pursuit of profits and, for this reason, profits are enabled to slip through their fingers.

Ignoring Facts

They seem to ignore the fact that they have a remedy in the ballot – they have the "privilege" to walk to polls and, with their vote, compel themselves to go to work – in fact they can pass a law making it highly desirable to work or starve.

Any time the capitalist find their profits insufficient for their upkeep, they have a perfect right, under our law, to find a job; if they find the wages too low (on any job they may find), they have a perfect right, under our law, to join the IWW and raise the wages as high as they desire, including the full product of their toil.

The capitalist has these unalienable rights, under our law, and if he fails to take advantage (in full) of his liberties, he has no whine coming.

T-Bone Slim
Industrial Solidarity, January 20, 1923

tiating attitudes." The "very large package delivery firm" was UPS, and the minutes refer to the national 1997 UPS strike that got much attention at the time. The Open Market Committee is the policy-setting board of the Federal Reserve Bank.

Why would the government care about "militant labor ... attitudes"? The Oct. 7, 1997, Associated Press article quoting these statements reports that elites were worried the "strike might signal a more militant work force." Pat Cleary, head of human resource policy with the National Association of Manufacturers – a big business lobbying group like the Business Roundtable – said, "There's no question that, from the employers' side, the recent signs of increased [worker] stridency are worrisome. The message is clearly increasingly confrontational."

Increased militancy by the peons means trouble for elites; it means control might be wrested from managers and redistributed in a more egalitarian fashion. This, too, runs counter to "the principles of democratic capitalism" that the Business Roundtable and others wish to see upheld.

The fact that the committee in the government that sets monetary policy might be worried about "militant labor" reveals their own class bias. Do they ever remark about "militant CEOs" or "militant corporations" who are "increasingly confrontational"? Of course not – the idea is laughable because we all know, and subtly accept, that such government committees work not in the interests of the working class, but of wealth. There is no such thing as a "militant corporation" in their logic.

So, while it is okay for elites to discuss class rule, express fear of uppity workers who want a bigger share of the pie, and the like, it is not okay for workers to be similarly class conscious, to speak in terms of class, or to

discuss class rule. Class consciousness must only exist for the wealthy, the powerful, the privileged, who must use their class consciousness – their awareness of the truth – to engineer society in such a way that works to benefit themselves. The majority of people must simply accept this and not think anything remarkable of it. Their continual stupor only ensures they accept whatever lot in life they are dealt.

Someone who does think that class domination is remarkable – or is unacceptable – can expect swift marginalization and exclusion from mainstream discourse. Red-baiting and other intellectually shallow means of discrediting are sure to follow. But wealthy social managers, who think in class-based terms and who are conscious of their own interests and how they clash with yours, will not be called fringe thinkers, radicals, or any of these things. They are simply pragmatic realists, doing what they must do to keep their businesses – and the "democratic capitalist system" – alive.

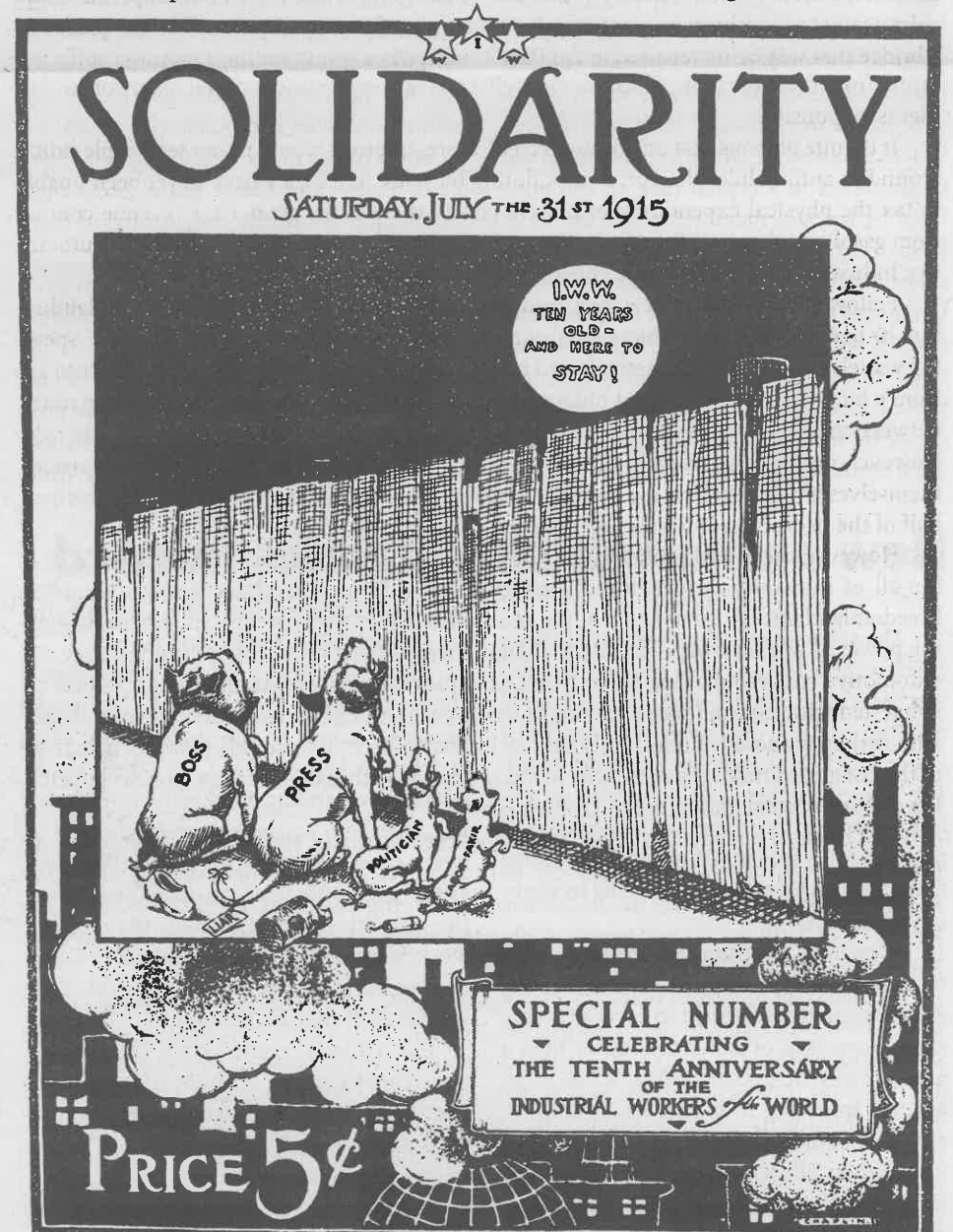
Solidarity, not competition

A recent University of Maryland survey found that more than 80 percent of Americans want the government to provide food and other humanitarian aid programs, and three-fourths said they would be willing to pay more taxes to achieve this. In contrast, only one in four favored military "aid".

We who want a world based on solidarity, not competition, should never forget that we are the vast majority.

Unions against a future

The Teamsters have joined business interests in the Energy Stewardship Alliance, formed to lobby for oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.



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Piecards abuse IWW legacy...

Wobblies Return to Botto House

BY DAVID TEMPLE

The IWW returned to Haledon, New Jersey, Sunday June 3, revisiting the grounds of Pietro and Maria Botto's house, the scene of the Paterson silk workers' strike rallies of 1913. That strike ended in a crushing defeat, after which 25,000 workers returned to even worse conditions, as the number of looms each operated was increased. Activists were hounded or run out of town, but Mr. Botto, a socialist, stayed there to raise his family. His granddaughter, Bunny Botto Kuiken, grew up in the house and still lives nearby.

For a long time Bunny was left in the dark about her home's heritage. Her family wasn't ashamed; they simply didn't want to get their kids embroiled in the kind of struggle that they had been through. Since the 1970s, when she learned of its heritage, she has cherished the memory and spirit of the Wobbly speakers who stood on her second-floor veranda, agitating and entertaining the strikers. She and her friends worked on the house, recreated the home with turn-of-the-century furniture, got a few grants, and eventually turned the Botto House into a labor museum with national landmark status.

I found out about Botto House after I joined the IWW's New York City General Membership Branch. From October 1999 through June 2000, I traveled the 25 miles to the modest wood-framed colonial house half a dozen times. Each time, I lugged a "Museum in a Suitcase" back to FDR High School in Brooklyn, where its contents would be displayed in a crystal case on the main floor by student members of the Bread & Roses Club. Each time I went, I asked another Wobbly to join me. After a while, Bunny and the Botto tour crew became pretty friendly with the NYC GMB. They spoke lovingly to us about the Wobblies that had passed through their lives. One could feel the pride when Bunny opened the veranda door and urged us to imagine Big Bill

Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, John Reed, Carlo Tresca, and Upton Sinclair addressing the striking workers. In July 2000, Bunny agreed to be a part of the NYC GMB-sponsored IWW Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Regional Gathering. Her slide show of the IWW history at Botto House was a highlight of our opening session at Charas/El Bohio.

Soon, though, we became aware of some problems at Botto House. There was a new director, Angelica Santomauro, and although previous decisions about events and exhibits at the museum were made collectively,

They spoke lovingly about the Wobblies who had passed through their lives. One could feel the pride when Bunny opened the veranda door and urged us to imagine Big Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, John Reed, Carlo Tresca and Upton Sinclair addressing the striking workers...

Santomauro was now making those decisions unilaterally, mistreating the staff with impunity. For the first time, the paid staff and the five volunteers felt like employees. It was time for them to unionize. They contacted the Communication Workers of America and filed for recognition.

For a year, the Botto House staff tried to reach a union contract with management. Being mostly senior citizens, they were especially concerned about medical coverage. They preferred a plan that would include the cost of prescriptions. The management, however, was unwilling to negotiate, and the CWA rep seemed to be more on the side of management. Out of frustration, and tired of dealing with their autocratic director, most of the workers quit en masse a few months ago. Only Bunny and one other long-time worker remained. Santomauro tried to hound these two workers into quitting, too, but they refused to give in. Bunny pointed out what bad publicity it would be for Botto House to fire her, the granddaughter of Pietro and Maria Botto. Still, they needed help, so finally, they turned to their friends at the IWW NYC GMB.

Apparently there was going to be an election for American Labor Museum president. You wouldn't know it, though, from reading the newsletters and communications issued by Ms. Santomauro. As members of the museum, the NYC GMB received an invitation to attend the museum's annual Silk Walk

Unveiling and General Membership Meeting. One notice said the event was to be held on June 3, another said June 4. Bunny called in May to alert us about the election, asking us to please come and cast our two votes for candidates they felt would bring dignity and respect back to the Botto workers. We contacted Santomauro by e-mail to find out the correct date and to press her on exactly what to expect at the meeting. She merely said they'd be discussing the year's accomplishments, again neglecting to mention that there would be an election.

Bunny had a plan. She contacted every museum member she knew, hoping they would be able to unseat Michael Goodwin (OPEIU), the current president who had installed Ms. Santomauro, his sister, as director. She explained to me that the election required a quorum of only 5 percent of the 1,000 museum members — in other words, 50 votes. She was hoping for the usual small turnout and for her contacts to turn the trick on this tricky secret election. The NYC GMB was ready to go vote and show its support for the disgruntled workers. We put the word out about our First Annual Wobbly Picnic, to be held at Botto House. We would eat in Bunny's backyard, then walk the half-block to the museum to cast our votes and have a tour of the house.

When our rented van with eight Wobblies in it drove up Norwood Street, we noticed the two charter buses parked near the museum. Out of these buses came 125 members from Michael Goodwin's OPEIU, all wearing large buttons listing the seven candidates for whom they were to cast their votes. Apparently, someone had tipped off Mr. Goodwin and Ms. Santomauro to Bunny's plan and they scrambled to bring in their voters, too. The crowd swelled to over 200.

After we ate lunch, we walked to the very spot where 25,000 justice-starved strikers had stood 88 years before. This time Santomauro took the podium on the front steps and welcomed us to the Annual Silk Walk Unveiling. (The Silk Walk consists of bricks in the sidewalk outside the museum, each with a paid dedication.) It was then that the impending election was revealed. The election observer explained that under rules decided one hour before, seven candidates should be picked, and the new board would then elect its president. Ironically, reminder buttons had been made in advance based on a rule that was decided upon just one hour before. Moreover, this rule was illegal, as it defied a constitutional requirement of at least 14 days' prior notice for any changes made in the rules.

After the election official read the seven-candidate list, he asked the audience for additional write-in candidates. Ray Stever, a trainer and recruitment specialist from the New Jersey State Industrial Union Council, and executive vice president of the Passaic



County Central Labor Council was nominated along with four other write-in candidates. He immediately protested the election because of illegal rule changes, but it proceeded anyway. 280 people, half of them sporting reminder buttons, lined up on Norwood Street to cast their vote in the garden behind Botto House. Meanwhile, in the House, a few Wobblies saw first hand Santomauro berating Bunny over some missing refreshments.

There were angry discussions between the supporters of the write-in candidates, Wobbly visitors, and Goodwin's friends. It was obvious what was happening. The election was a set-up and half the votes had been bought! There was concern that the busload of dupes weren't even qualified, as all their memberships were paid for with a single check. Ray Stever and his supporters asked to see the individual membership applications, pointing out that the busloads otherwise should be entitled to only a single, organization vote. Election officials refused to recognize this request. The election went on despite constant arguing. Pietro Botto must have been turning over in his grave. A few Wobblies were even warned to cease their disputing or else they'd be asked to leave.

There was an uproar when a rumor spread that votes were not to be counted for three or four days, and we made sure the ballot box didn't leave our sight. The rumor was dispelled — there would be an immediate vote count in the garden. By then the two busloads of Goodwin supporters had left for a short trip to a local diner. Three Wobblies were among the 10 unaffiliated volunteers asked to count the vote. The results were clear: only 70 of the 285 votes went to write-in candidates. Ray Stever had 65 votes.

This was an injury to the memory of Botto House and an injury to the Industrial Workers of the World. Wobblies everywhere, we urge you to contact management and tell them how disgusted you are about the corruption there. Demand that the current board be impeached for violating its own rules. Demand that Angelica Santomauro resign immediately.

Send protests to: The American Labor Museum, Botto House National Landmark, 83 Norwood St., Haledon NJ 07508, (973) 595-7953, (973) 595-7291 (FAX), <http://community.nj.com/cc/labormuseum>.

New anti-sweatshop tactics needed

BY MIKE HARGIS

The anti-sweatshop movement has been going on now for a number of years, and has succeeded in raising consciousness among working people concerning the conditions under which the apparel we buy is produced. The movement has even succeeded in getting a number of colleges and universities to pledge to only buy goods produced in shops that meet certain criteria pertaining to working conditions.

These are significant achievements, but we think more is needed. In order for the anti-sweatshop movement to become a truly class movement of solidarity, rather than a more-or-less 'do-gooder' effort, it has to go beyond appealing to people as consumers, albeit consumers with a conscience. It needs to make an effort to bring into the movement those workers who handle sweatshop goods, such as stevedores, truck drivers, warehouse workers, stock clerks and sales clerks. These are the workers who bring the sweatshop goods to market.

If longshore workers refuse to load or unload sweatshop goods, if truck drivers and warehouse workers refuse to transport sweatshop goods, if stock clerks refuse to put sweatshop goods on the shelves, and if sales clerks refuse to sell sweatshop goods or inform consumers about the conditions under which these goods were produced, sweat-

shop manufacturers like Nike, Gap and others couldn't make their blood money.

Here in Chicago we don't have much chance to talk to dock workers, but we do have easy access to the stockers and sales people at Niketown, The Gap, Target, etc. In addition to standing outside the stores making appeals to consumers and managers to have a conscience, why not go into the stores and engage store workers in dialogue about the conditions under which their fellow workers in Guatemala or Indonesia or China or even the southside of Chicago work making the stuff they are selling?

Such a tactic could help to develop the class consciousness of those who work for low wages in the retail sector here, and perhaps ally them with their low-wage fellow workers in the manufacturing sector.

We have to get over the idea that those who work in sweatshops, whether in the Third World or in our own back yards are hapless victims who need the helping hand of America's middle class. Instead, we should recognize them as fellow workers struggling for a better life, and recognize that their fight is our own. Those fellow workers who are in a position to put a ban on sweatshop goods should do so.

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!
from *Rebel Worker*,
newsletter of the Chicago GMB

IWW GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 2001 IWW General Assembly will meet in Boston August 4th and 5th, with registration, Industrial Union meetings and workshops Friday afternoon. There will be a musical program Saturday evening. All members whose dues are paid up are eligible to participate.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged; all members registering by July 15 will be mailed a packet including the text of all resolutions to be voted upon by the body, reports of officers, information on getting around Boston, etc.



Boston Area General Membership Branch
PO Box 391724, Cambridge MA 02139
bostgmb@parsons.iww.org

books for Rebel Workers

New This Month



The Big Strike:

The Story of the Great San Francisco General Strike of 1934 by Mike Quin

"This book is about a general strike that demonstrated the might of the rank and file. Economists, lawyers, financial advisors, and even the officers they elected to lead them, while valuable and truly important skilled tools, ran second to the united strength of the workers. Rank and file strength is shown for what it is – indispensable. This principle remains eternally sound. Such was the message Mike passed on to all those who would aspire to working class leadership." – Harry Bridges

259 pp. **\$7.50**

Solidarity & Survival: An Oral History of Iowa Labor in the Twentieth Century

by Shelton Stromquist

Three generations of Iowa workers tell of their unrelenting efforts to create a labor movement in the coal mines and on the rails, in packinghouses and farm equipment plants, on construction sites and in hospital wards. This book includes a brief collection of thoughts on the IWW by Iowans who encountered the union while on the bum. Also includes a discussion of the IWW's influence of the Minnesota-based Independent Union of All Workers, which drew on the "one big union" idea of the Wobblies and exercised an enormous influence over packinghouse organizing in Iowa.

LIMITED QUANTITIES AVAILABLE: 341 pp. **\$11.50**

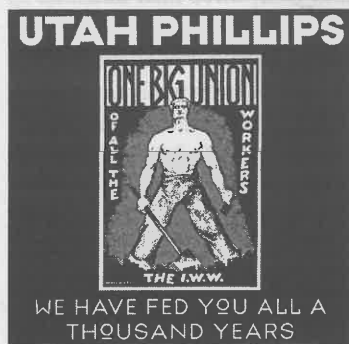
Organized Labor in the Asia-Pacific Region

edited by Stephen Frenkel

Are unions in the Asia-Pacific region suffering a fate similar to their counterparts in the United States, the United Kingdom and France? Or are vigorous labor movements emerging in the world's powerhouse of economic growth? Contributors to this book examine the challenges of organized labor in the developing countries of China, Malaysia, and Thailand; the newly industrialized societies of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore; and the advanced peripheral countries of Australia and New Zealand. Key concerns include the impact of different levels of industrialization and the changing role of the state on trade unionism. Although a bit academic at times, this book provides valuable insight into the organizations of working people in a region where Western unionists have too few connections.

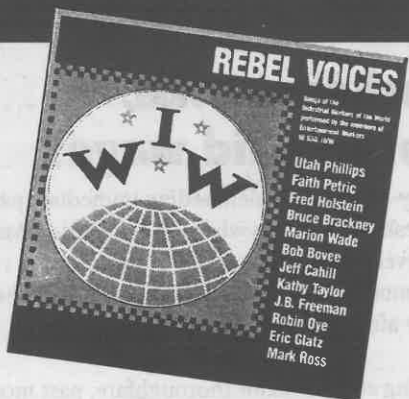
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Wobbly Music



Utah Phillips:

We Have Fed You All for a Thousand Years
Eighteen IWW songs with a small booklet of lyrics and stories by Fred Thompson & Utah Phillips **\$15.00**



Rebel Voices

Twenty IWW songs sung by Wobbly entertainers. **\$15.00**

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**

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 Fragile Bridge: Paterson Silk Strike, 1913

by Steve Golin A discussion of the challenges faced in the relationship between workers and the radical bohemians of Greenwich Village. A good discussion of the "self-activity" of the workers involved in the strike. **\$17.00**

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**

Juice Is Stranger Than Friction: Selected Writings of T-Bone Slim.

T-Bone Slim was one of the IWW's best-loved columnists. Working-stiff, hobo, and revolutionist, T-Bone created a language all his own to lambast the plutocrats, scissorbills and faddists of his day. This collection includes columns, aphorisms & excerpts from organizing pamphlets. Funny, dazzling, biting and lyrical, T-Bone Slim is as readable today as ever. **\$12.00**

Class-Conscious Environmentalism

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**

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**

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

Making Speech Free
A live concert by Utah Phillips. **\$15**

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

Don't Mourn – Organize!

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**

IWW Buttons: \$1 Each

Stop Exploiting Student Workers If Provoked, We Will Strike Fighting Union; Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed; 4-Hour Day
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Workers resist bosses the whole world 'round

Bolivia: miners occupy La Paz

BY JUVENTUDES LIBERTARIAS

TRANSLATED BY ROBBY BARNES AND SYLVIE KASHDAN

12,000 miners converged on the Bolivian capital of La Paz June 7, occupying the city center and announcing their determination to stay until the government approves a fund for reviving their industry.

The miners come from the cooperative mining camps in the Altiplano region. They began their march to the capital from the city of Oruro on June 5 and moved quickly to avoid police repression.

Fifteen years ago the miners played a major role in the siege of Calamarca. Then they were on the verge of overthrowing the government. Once again they have become the leaders of a huge march.

Every hundred meters the miners stopped and set off small sticks of dynamite. "We have come back to La Paz, just as we said we would in 1985. Now we intend to stay until they listen to us," said Crescencio Huanca, a union leader.

One of the miners' demands is for \$100 million to finance the revival of 514 mining cooperatives nationwide. These include 50,000 members and provide a livelihood for 300,000 people. They produce tin, silver, wolfram and gold, accounting for 35 percent of the country's mineral exports.

In addition, they are asking for new rights to mine on government land, and government concessions similar to those given to the multinationals. They want a single tax and access to the stores and reserves of Comibol, the state mining concern, electrification of their facilities, equipment and machinery from the former Mining Bank (Banco Minero), and a nationwide law covering mining contracts. The miners are also calling for improvements in the highway system, housing, short- and long-term social insurance, debt forgiveness and elimination of the Mining Ministry. They are demanding participation in the management of Comibol.

All along the march the miners called on local residents to unite in the struggle "against this corrupt and exploitative government." On the Avenida 16 de Julio one woman pedestrian expressed her support for the workers, saying, "Long live the miners, down with this government that is starving people," as she embraced a female miner. "I voted for Banzer but I am disillusioned," said a man walking by.

On the morning of June 8 the miners again came out to protest in the center of La Paz, but this time they took over the supreme court building and dynamited it. Another group of miners attempted to enter the five-star Hotel Presidente in order to settle accounts with high officials. The main part of the march tried to reach the legislature building but was repulsed by police.

Orange workers seize Haitian plantation

Haitian orange workers have occupied a St. Raphael plantation in response to management retaliation against union activists. Workers struck last year after the French owner, Cointreau, refused to respond to workers' grievances. The strike was unsuccessful, and Cointreau discriminated against union activists when the off-season came.

Because it is impossible to live on the low wages, the plantation owners allow workers to grow millet and corn during the off season, giving half of the harvest back to the owners. When unionists were excluded from this sharecropping opportunity they responded by occupying the plantation in an effort to force managers to negotiate a settlement with the orange workers' union.

Information on solidarity actions can be found at <http://www.gn.apc.org/haitisupport>



CLIFF HARPER

Russian workers fight new labor law

BY MARK HARRIS

An article published May 30 on the Radio Free Europe website discusses the extent to which Russia's trade unions are "ready to adjust to capitalist conditions."

The transformation of the unions from organizations of struggle for the working class to tame agents of state policy during the early Bolshevik period has been well documented, for instance by Maurice Brinton in *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*. The RFE article reports that "unions have failed to address the conditions of the new labor market, despite gross violations of worker's rights like unpaid salaries and illegal firings." Recent reports from the Russian press relate that some workers receive a significant part of their salary in products such as manure.

Yegenia Gvozdeva, head of the only Russian NGO monitoring strikes and direct actions, has concluded that "labor-related actions, when they do occur, have improved in effectiveness - demonstrating that activists are learning to adapt to Russia's new economic conditions."

Central among the issues facing the unions is one that will impact all Russian workers - the revision of the Labor Code. The present Labor Code was written in 1971, well before the 'fall of communism,' to use the parlance favored by the Western press (I would date the 'fall of communism' to 1918, when the factory committees were suppressed). The IMF and World Bank have applied relentless pressure on Russia to downgrade the protections given to unionized workers under current law.

There were originally three versions of the revision of the fundamental law on labor: the government's version which shows complete servility to international financial bodies; the 'draft of the eight,' supported by the main-line unions and some others; and a version introduced by Oleg Shein of "Defense of Labor," a radical union alliance.

The main-line unions, despite expressions of resistance on May Day, are cooperating with the government in developing a labor code that will "modernize Russian labor conditions," which means increasing the work week to 56 hours without overtime, firing at will, etc.

Shein and Defense of Labor called activists out in support of their version of the Labor Code on June 19th. His proposal would transform the social role of the unions.

The recently enacted Law on Political Parties eliminates all but a few parties - the party of Putin sycophants, the Communists, and a few others. Reducing 188 parties to 3 or 4 will render the political arena meaningless. It will be interesting to see how Russian workers decide to express their resistance to the new "reality of labor."

Dubai construction workers strike, marching on capital for unpaid wages

Hundreds of construction workers struck May 27 in Dubai, demanding immediate payment of nearly four months' unpaid wages. Protests are rare anywhere in the United Arab Emirates, where workers are often deported for even small offenses.

The laborers, carpenters and metalworkers, mostly from India and Pakistan, marched from their road construction site to embassy row after the company refused to respond to their grievances.

The sight of several hundred workers marching along a major thoroughfare, past modern high-rise office buildings and luxury hotels, quickly forced the company to provide buses to the Labor Ministry and to embassies. Two journalists on the scene had their cameras seized by police.

The strikers are employed by the Bartawi Group, a large Emirates contractor.

Colombians protest IMF policies

BY CHRIS STROHM, IMC

Workers and students joined forces in Colombia in early June to protest structure adjustment programs being imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

Teachers, state workers and students organized marches across the country against budget "reforms" being enacted as a result of agreements between the IMF and the Colombian government.

During one protest in Medellin, the country's second largest city, students marched through the streets carrying a large banner that read: "Yankees get out of Colombia and the rest of the world."

Nearly 300,000 teachers and 125,000 public health workers have been on strike or participating in work slowdowns to protest the measure, being enacted as part a structural adjustment program agreed to in return for IMF loans.

Workers besiege Nigerian bank

Members of the Nigeria Labour Congress barricaded the headquarters of the country's largest bank May 21 after the bank ordered staff to either quit the union or lose their jobs.

Business was brought to a standstill at First Bank of Nigeria's headquarters in Lagos as 2,000 protesters sealed off entrances. Workers ignored a court injunction against the protest, which also blocked traffic in the major streets of the city's financial district.

"We are here to send a signal to First Bank management of our intention to close the bank down unless they are willing to allow the workers' right to trade unionism," NLC head Adams Oshiomhole told the crowd.

A week later an editorial in Nigeria's Guardian newspaper lamented "the kind of anarcho-syndicalist ways that the current NLC leadership appears so inexplicably bent on veering into."

While claiming to support unionism, the newspaper protested the union federation's "strike-prone trend" and its practice of mobilizing "proletarian armada[s] of thousands of protesters" to back its demands.

The editorialist was particularly disturbed by "the shutting down of premises and businesses of employers, a tactic for which labour has developed an unusual fascination lately," recalling a recent incident where the NLC had successfully used similar tactics to force the newspaper to settle its workers' grievances. And so the paper calls for action to stop "this pill of working class fury and intolerance, ... this strange and absurd way of conducting industrial relations."

World Bank cancels meeting

Citing fears that protesters would disrupt its meetings, the World Bank has cancelled its annual conference on development economics, scheduled in Barcelona for June 25-27. Bank spokeswoman Caroline Antsey said that by cancelling the meeting the bank was "tak[ing] a stand against this kind of threat to free discussion."

The Bank has tried to portray this meeting as an academic conference on ways to reduce poverty, and said it would replace it with a forum on the World Wide Web.

Many activists have noted the irony that the World Bank is accusing them of being a "threat to free discussion" when organizations such as the World Bank and IMF have historically held secret meetings behind closed doors.

Meanwhile, the World Bank issued a May 21 report on Mexico calling for the elimination of current labor laws mandating severance pay, collective bargaining, minimum benefits, and company-paid social security and housing plans, and restricting temporary employment contracts.

The Bank said investors attracted by Mexico's low wages are put off by domestic labor regulations. The government welcomed the recommendations, which were condemned by unions and even some business organizations which fear they could spark intense social conflict.

"We are in the process of modernizing our [labor] law" to limit workers' rights, said Managerial Coordinating Council (CCE) president Claudio X. González, "but some of these proposals of the World Bank are not made even to the most developed nations. Why are they then being recommended for the emerging countries?"

39 miners die

Thirty-nine miners - all prisoners from a "reform through labor" prison camp - died after being trapped in a coal mine where water pipes burst May 18.

China Daily said the men, trapped in the Qinglongzhui mine in southwestern Sichuan province, were "presumed dead" from drowning in the flooding after efforts to rescue them failed.

The government ordered all small coal mines in Sichuan to cease operating and undergo safety inspections after three accidents in three days left 51 people dead, including the 39 at Qinglongzhui.

Last year nearly 5,000 miners died underground, according to official figures, although independent analysts estimate more than 10,000 Chinese miners die each year.

Labor organizer indicted

Chinese authorities have charged a veteran labor organizer with subversion one year after he was released from 11 years in prison. In May police took Li Wangyang from a hospital where he was being treated for heart and lung problems caused by beatings and physical neglect in prison, according to the Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy.

In another case, three men detained in late May on suspicion of organizing a protest by steel workers in southwestern Sichuan province have also been formally arrested on subversion charges, the center said.

Li formed an independent trade union and advocated a strike during pro-democracy protests across China in 1989 that the government crushed. He was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment on charges of "counterrevolutionary activity" and released in June 2000.

His health ruined by his treatment in prison, Li went on a 22-day hunger strike in February to demand that the prison pay his medical bills.