

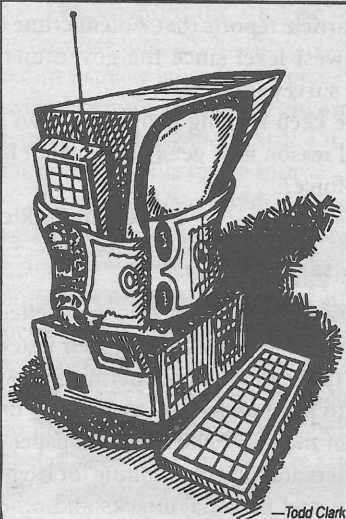
# Industrial Worker

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—Todd Clark

## e-sweatshops and digital exploitation

The following is excerpted from the Computer Workers Industrial Union web site maintained by the British Isles IWW at [www.org.uk](http://www.org.uk):

Buried amongst all the usual jokes and silly websites on the Net recently was an interview with Peter Molineaux. For those who don't know, he's the man behind such well-known computer games as 'Populus' and 'Black & White.' When talking about how to go about starting a new company he remarked, "I'll tell you what I'd do if I was starting out now. I wouldn't even attempt to become a developer, not in the sense you recognise.

"I'd hire one or two concept artists over here, get them to do the concept art, and then send all the middle stuff over to Hungary, and then I'd concentrate completely and solely on the actual gameplay without any of the technical stuff."

The interviewer responded, "So what you're saying, fundamentally, is that the solution to the industry's problems is ... third-world sweatshop labour?" And Peter, being very candid, replied, "Well, it is, actually; that's exactly it."

And there you have it. The corporate-led race to the bottom, where workers across the world are invited to compete for the lowest possible pay, working conditions, and health and safety, has reached the Information Technology market. Many thought it never would, that problems that afflicted call centres and manufacturing plants would never appear in such a highly-skilled area as IT.

Indeed, IT with its Silicon Valleys, Fens and Glens and its high-tech afterglow was supposed to replace the "old-fashioned" jobs which have evaporated in the 'globalised' economy. More and more IT work is being exported to code shops in India and beyond. More and more IT work is being passed to contract workers, hired in developing nations on a fraction of the westernised wage and on temporary visas to shore up the gaps left by redundancies in the west. And when workers in India demand better pay, the jobs will be exported to another code-shop in a cheaper country faster than you can say 'fatal exception error.'

### Safeguarding Our Own Futures

It's time for those of us in IT to realise that our future comes from supporting one another; from making sure that we can't be pitted against each other simply to increase profit margins. Even without this struggle ahead there are still going to be battles of discrimination, repetitive stress injury and institutionally enforced overtime to be fought.

Don't fight them alone. Fight them together. Unionise. The IWW ... is exactly the kind of organisation those of us in IT need. Let's get together and show them where WE want to go today. Contact [Computerworkers@iww.org.uk](mailto:Computerworkers@iww.org.uk) Also see article page 11

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## Immigrant Workers Union fights for recognition in anti-immigrant climate

# Pickets hit Assi Market, Rhee union-busting

BY VY NGUYEN, KIWA

While exploitative employers have always used the threat of firings or deportation to stop undocumented workers from organizing, in the aftermath of 9/11 workers face even greater risks of losing their jobs for standing up for their rights.

In perhaps the least noticed anti-immigrant attack since September 11, an estimated 100,000 low-wage workers have lost their jobs in a flurry of identity verification activities that stem from letters sent out by the Social Security Administration.

In the last year, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has sent out nearly a million letters – more than ten times the number sent in the previous year – informing employers of social security numbers that don't match a name provided by an employee. While these letters explicitly prohibit employers from taking action against their workers, in many cases, employers are using the letters as a tool to intimidate or fire employees who have participated in union or other workplace organizing activities.

In August 2002, Los Angeles' Assi Market placed 56 of its immigrant workers on an "indefinite leave of absence" under the

pretext of social security 'no match' letters. Most had been working with the Korean Immigrant Workers Association to gain recognition from the market for the independent Immigrant Workers Union. The workers had been organizing against mistreatment under the hands of management. The Korean and Latino workers were making minimum wages and faced daily abuse on the job.

In response, workers and community members have called for a consumer boycott of Assi market, picketing in front of the market for over 100 consecutive days. They demand reinstatement and union recognition. Allied groups nationwide have announced that they are prepared to boycott Assi products nationally. Assi Market's superior parent company affiliate, Rhee Bros., is based in Columbia, Maryland, and distributes imported products across the country. Rhee Bros. brands include Assi (the company's flagship label), Emperor (Chinese sauces and other products), Hana (specializing in Japanese products), Issine (Korean foods), and Kabuto (Japanese products).

The Immigrant Workers Union is a multi-ethnic immigrant worker-led union in

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## IWW bike messengers in 8-day Transerv strike

BY ERIK DIFFENDAFFER,  
IU540 MTWU-PORTLAND, OREGON

After eight days of a well-supported strike it became evident that Transerv management was more willing to drive their business into the ground than deal with its workers on civil terms. After agreeing their point had been made, the messengers offered an unconditional return to work on October 25. Management said they would "assess their needs" and get back to them.

Transerv swallowed its pride and on Sunday hand-delivered letters informing two workers that they could return to work. Three more were permanently replaced and put on a preferred hiring list. The three temps who were brought on in order to break the union (but who joined the strike) were told they were fired on Monday.

Throughout the strike public support and solidarity from the messenger community was amazing. At times 30-50 messengers, many of whom got their start at Transerv, joined the picket line. The picket was largely respectful and only one of five walking scabs returned for a second day to continue crossing the line after we explained to them what was happening.

The company had clearly demonstrated its willingness to go to any length, even destroying its income and client base, to smash the union. In the past six months, management had already alienated many clients with the byproducts of their attacks on their workforce. The strike was a desperate final attempt by union members to compel the company to act rationally and fairly.

Workers are far from broken, and in fact stronger as a result of standing together instead of allowing themselves to be fired one by one. The messengers are actually relieved to be out of a such an unhealthy working environment, watching maniacal bosses



drive a sinking ship. The company lost up to 40% of their business in the week of the strike and continues to lose clients while trying to run a messenger company with inexperienced walkers, and the lack of the best dispatcher in town (whose firing prompted the strike.) The company is also still facing outstanding discrimination, harassment and wrongful firing charges.

The strength demonstrated during the strike was ground-breaking. Across the industry workers and clients are pulling together, providing those who stuck their necks out with work at other companies. Messengers are now talking about worker control and beginning to assert themselves elsewhere in the industry. More workers have the inspiration to approach their bosses, not to mention the confidence of knowing a whole industry is backing them up. Workers from as far away as Montreal, where a car recently killed a messenger, have sent their support and regards.

Best of all the obstinacy of the bottom-feeding monster Transerv has stood as a concrete demonstration to the other bosses in

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**IWW not syndicalist**

The November issue published a lengthy letter from Jurgen P. Kuhl on, among other things, the urgency for all revolutionaries to learn Esperanto, a man-made "universal" language. At the end of the letter he referred to the IWW as a "revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist workers union."

Although the IWW is compatible with some schools of anarchist, syndicalist and socialist thought, we are explicitly not allied with any of them. The IWW is open to workers who agree with our general principles. Claiming that the IWW belongs one of these ideologies gives the false impression that one must be an "anarchist," "syndicalist" or "socialist" to join, when nothing is further from the truth. The vast majority of workers do not use these terms to describe themselves and if we want them to be part of our union, we will stop using these terms when describing the IWW.

Solidarity, Joshua Freeze, GEB chair  
PS. The funny thing about languages is that they all change with time and with culture. Even Esperanto now has different dialects. If you think language change can be stopped or even controlled, just compare the French mandated by the government with that spoken in the streets of France, or better yet with that of Quebec or Haiti. Finally, if it were possible to design a "universal" language, it would make sense to make one that, unlike Esperanto, drew on non-Indo-European sources.

**Fundamental Regeneration**

Staughton Lynd in the October IW opens the door, but I fear he does not go far enough.

Please look at [www.gci.org.uk/contconv/cc.html](http://www.gci.org.uk/contconv/cc.html) – Contraction and Convergence indicates the reduction in living standards in the West that must be achieved to ensure the survival of life on earth in a sustainable real economy – and [www.dieoff.com](http://www.dieoff.com), which

shows what a fools' oil paradise we now live in. It may have been written to reach right-wing people. Do not let that put you off, look things up for yourself.

Consider how the people who wrote our Preamble in 1905 would respond to the horribly real problems now confronting everyone. The Wobbly

who talked to me in 1943 had certainly talked with fellow Wobs about such things in California around the time the Magon brothers were publishing *Regeneracion*.

Politicians, capitalists, dogmatic Marxists, and orthodox trade unionists are all denying those problems. The IWW must not, we must find answers to those problems and show what can be done.

Abolishing the wage system might also mean abolishing money, modern technology, and the limitations described in those two web sites, calling for very radical changes in the way people live.

Most people in the West are now employed making the money system work. (Real work is exported to low-wage countries whenever possible) If money were abolished so much 'work' would disappear that people would be prepared (if money still existed) to pay for the privilege of going to do some useful work. Don't bother to tell me how daft that is. It is there to help you understand the revolutionary potential of post-industrial society. It may not be the revolution most people are talking about. With luck it will be a boring revolution with no heads chopped off, no barricades, no class struggle, no dictatorship.

Some ten years ago students were flocking into things like Earth First! But the Wobblies were there first; long ago one replied to Gompers (he died in 1924) who had said "Do not kill the capitalist goose that lays the golden eggs" with "But that goose devours the world to lay those eggs." Maybe that Wobbly was one of those who wrote our preamble. Wobbly Sam Mainwaring had in 1943 as sharp a realization of the ecological danger in capitalism as any modern eco-warrior.

If we are to desert that field of action to concentrate entirely on building a fighting industrial union we make a mistake. The

directors of Enron have done so much to destroy capitalism, and there are so many more such capitalist disasters developing that we have to offer a viable alternative for everyone to adopt when capitalism collapses. We must build the decentralist One Big Union, we must also tackle the problem of sustainability with hospitality and cooperation as a basis for a living, free open society, instead of greed and grab leading to barbarism and early extinction.

Viva Judi Bari!  
Ilyan Thomas

**On Israel**

I would like to comment on some points raised in Jurgen Kuhl's letter in the November issue – especially his extrapolation from Dr. Zamenhof's views regarding the need for a safe haven for the Jews and his withdrawal from the Zionist movement.

I believe the socialist revolutionary solution would have been the most helpful thing for the Jews in pre-World War II Europe. Let me expand upon a quote that I cited in my article "George Orwell: The Revolutionary" (*Free Voices*, October 2001):

"Tens of thousands of individuals came to fight, but tens of millions remained behind... The way in which the working class in the democratic countries could have helped their Spanish comrades was by industrial action – strikes and boycotts. No such thing ever began to happen. The Labour and Communist leaders declared that it was unthinkable; and no doubt they were right, so long as they were shouting at the top of their voices that 'red' Spain was not 'red.' ... If, with the huge prestige of Soviet Russia behind them, they had appealed to the workers of the world in the name not of 'democratic Spain' but of 'revolutionary Spain,' it is hard to believe that would not have gotten a response." (*Homage to Catalonia*)

As I noted, such a response could have included strikes in Germany and Italy, saving millions of lives – including the lives of over 20 million Russians and 6 million Jews.

This revolutionary answer would have been much better than the Zionist answer. And if the above had happened, and if the Loyalists had declared Morocco free and independent, socialist revolutionary move-

ments might have spread in the world and we might have had a world free of fascism, war, nuclear weapons, and exploitation.

But we must consider the butts. Up until Oct. 31, 1941, any Jews with a visa could have left the Greater Reich and German-occupied countries. But very few visas were issued. So if an independent Israel had existed in 1938, most of the 6 million Jews could have been saved. ... [The letter goes on to argue that Israel originally operated along syndicalist lines.] I hope and, with your permission, pray for peace based upon the ideas and ideals of Yitzhak Rabin and Trude Wiess-Rosmarin.

I admire Jurgen Kuhl's activities in promoting Esperanto and hope that this could be a contribution to peace and mutual understanding. If I may conclude on a humorous note, I hope that if Israelis decide to learn Esperanto, that they will have less trouble with it than they have with English.

In solidarity, and Sholom,  
Raymond Solomon

**Crime and labor**

Fellow Workers,

The Sept. 10 *Investor's Business Daily* headline says, "Violent Crimes Fell by 9% in '01." The article reports that violent crime is at "the lowest level since the government began the survey in 1973."

Yet we keep locking people up. Can it be the real reason is to get a large prison labor work force?

Robert G. Rice

**Letters Welcome**

The *Industrial Worker* welcomes letters from readers. Please try to keep your letters short and to the point. Space permitting, we endeavor to print all letters pertinent to the concerns of the IWW and this newspaper.

All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and personal attacks and other inappropriate material will be excluded. In general, we will not publish letters from the same author in successive issues.

Letters of course represent the opinions of their authors, which may well (and often do) differ from those of the IWW. On some questions, such as Esperanto, the IWW has no position and is unlikely to adopt one.

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- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
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## Chicago hosts organizer training

BY MATT KELLARD

Thirty Wobblies from Chicago, Madison and Milwaukee gathered at the UE Hall in Chicago Oct. 27 for an organizer training session presented by IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss and Portland Industrial District Council delegate Morgan Miller.

FW Miller spoke on the successes they have had in Portland in building strong local branches, and what steps they took to get to where they are today. He focused on reorienting the general membership branch activity toward "Wobbly work" – that is, organizing the working class along industrial lines – encouraging GMBs to start forming industrial organizing committees in order to build industrial union branches and organize workers into the IWW. He also stressed the importance of educating newer members on the goals, structure and practice of the IWW in order to stem the turnover rate and promote internal democracy.

FW Buss went through a thorough explanation of how to build a union campaign in a workplace, talking about the unique organizing tactics used by the IWW, as well as how to build an organizing committee and the advantages and disadvantages of labor law. Through role-plays, participatory discussion and workshops, newer Wobblies learned the basics of an organizing campaign and more experienced members were able to re-examine the process.

After a fairly extensive discussion, we sang "Solidarity Forever," as goes the tradition, and adjourned for dinner.

The day was undeniably a success. Most members enjoyed themselves, and the training may serve to focus branch activity in Chicago and elsewhere. Currently we are in the early stages of forming an organizing committee for IU 620 education workers. Let's get back to building the One Big Union!

## Transerv strike...

continued from page 1

the industry. One shop has informed messengers that they are reconsidering their policy of misclassifying bikers as independent contractors, and may take them back on as employees (with all the legal protections and benefits this brings).

Bikes at Transerv have been replaced with walkers (apparently the problem isn't the treatment of workers, it's the bicycle sending impulses of independent thought through our seats), so there is no way they could ever maintain the same level of service. Considering this, as well as the fact that the company sacrificed a huge portion of their business by not responding rationally when the public was made aware of its despicable labor practices, the strike's impact will continue to be felt for quite some time.

Many of the fired workers are also setting up the framework for a collectively run messenger company.

The strike has opened doors that messengers were not even aware of three weeks ago. Rather than be picked off one by one, workers took a stand together. Even as a minority in the workplace, the messengers disabled the company. When the company did not respond, the union alerted the public to the appalling conditions of messenger work in Portland, and sent a message to bosses across the industry.

This strike shows that even a small group of committed workers have strength. Workers successfully fought back, without official recognition, and the union has gained a foothold across the industry because of it. The Transerv strike is an example of the power of workers' solidarity and should stand as a springboard for the struggle of messengers and all wage-slaves everywhere. Our position in this industry is stronger than ever.

For more information on organizing efforts, see the [PortlandMessenger.Org](#) website.

# Twin Pines closed after IWW vote

BY TOM KAPPAS

A three-month IWW campaign at Twin Pines Natural Foods in Cincinnati, Ohio, came to an end Sept. 17 when Northeast Co-ops of Brattleboro, Vermont, closed the store. The campaign drew attention to the ever-growing corporate takeover of co-ops around the country and the lack of employee rights in the natural food industry. Twin Pines employees voted for the IWW in an NLRB election after countless lies and half-truths from Northeast management and its inability to run the store efficiently.

Twin Pines employees were engaged in a "work to rule" after staff was cut to just four workers and one manager. Employees forced to work seven-day weeks and do the work done by 12 people the year before were hoping the tactic would pressure the new manager into hiring new staff and give existing workers overdue raises.

But two days after the previous store manager's last day, Northeast Board of Directors closed the store with no notice to the

union. One employee found out about the store closing from an email from a committee of co-op members who wanted to regain local control of the store, the morning of the announcement. When the employee went to work that day and notified the new store manager she knew nothing of it. Two hours later, Mark Slagh, director of operations at the Northeast Warehouse in Columbus, came down to make the announcement.

One employee was laid off that day, the so-called instigator of the organizing. The other three were told to work until the end of the week selling off the merchandise and constantly being harassed by Slagh. Although two weeks' severance pay was offered to laid-off workers, Northeast has refused to bargain severance terms with the union.

While Northeast has given two weeks' severance pay, the IWW is pressing for more considering that three employees worked at the store over three years, there was virtually no notice of the closing, and no real negotiating had taken place. The union was in

the process of writing up a working agreement to bargain with Northeast at the time of the closure.

In October Northeast announced plans to merge with a corporate distributor, United Natural Food Inc., if the co-op membership votes in favor of it. This may explain Northeast's decision to phase out its retail division and close Twin Pines Natural Foods without much effort to sell or hand over the store to a local group. But the question remains of whether the store was closed prematurely because of the union campaign. There was still two months to go on the lease and little evidence of a serious effort to find a buyer for the store.

IWW members and supporters have been attending Northeast meetings on the merger to protest management's refusal to bargain with the Twin Pines Employees General Distribution Workers Industrial Union 660 (IWW). An unfair labor practice charge will be filed if Northeast continues its refusal to negotiate.

## Australian Big Issue street vendors turning to IWW

The *Big Issue Australia* was launched in 1996 as a sister paper to the UK *Big Issue*, one of England's biggest-selling magazines. The Australian edition is owned and operated by the cosmetics giant The Body Shop, which uses the magazine to hawk its wares.

The magazine contracts homeless, disabled and unemployed people to sell *Big Issue* on a commission-only basis (earning AUS \$1.50 an issue). It is effectively piecework, with the vendors having to pay half the cover price up front, as well as paying for their uniforms. Sales are low, but few of the vendors have other employment options. These conditions, and management's abusive attitude, have led some vendors to nickname the magazine "Hell-hole for the dole."

Big Issue vendors approached the IWW for help in the late 1990s, and have been cam-

paigned ever since for union rights, clean toilets and other facilities, and better compensation.

"We haven't had a proper place we can sit down, nowhere to wash our hands. We are out in all sorts of weather," says vendor Peter During. "In June and July it gets cold, the seats are covered in water. It's a fine way of catching the 'flu.'"

Staff and volunteers have access to a kitchen and other facilities, but these are kept off-limits to the vendors. The IWW campaign has won a washroom for vendors, but it is often closed and there is no one to clean it. Instead, when the facilities get too obnoxious vendors are offered a free magazine or two to clean it, or vague promises of preferential treatment in the future.

The Body Shop runs *The Big Issue* at a

loss, relying on the magazine to burnish its image as a socially responsible firm. Recently the magazine has hired a canvasser to solicit contributions, none of which will go to the vendors.

Melbourne Wobblies continue to spread the word about the *Big Issue*, and to work with the vendors to win better conditions.

## IWW ballots in field

Ballots for the Fall 2002 IWW elections for all General Administration officers (as well as the site for the 2003 General Assembly) are in the field, and should have been received by all members. Members not receiving ballots should verify that their dues have been received and that headquarters has their current address.

### 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 capitalists, 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership includes a subscription to the *Industrial Worker*.





# Praise Boss

by F.N. Brill

Recently the daily paper here wrote a rather nice two-page feature article on the Portland IWW. What is curious is the obsession that winning an election is the equivalent to success. Repeatedly IWWs told the reporter of the many successes we have had simply winning specific wage, hour and health and safety grievances without the need for a government-sanctioned union. But this did not get into the article. Instead there were quotes from union-busting lawyers saying what a failure we are because we lost a couple of NLRB elections (we actually have a rather high rate of success. But that doesn't look good for the lawyers, now does it?)

★ ★ ★

The IWW practices self-reliance, just like the Republican Party advocates. Where does this lead? To a joke of course. This one is purportedly from Jay Leno, but my suspicion is that someone else wrote it for Jay. But it is accurate when it comes to Labor Board... "Elections are like a horse race. At the end you're in the same place. Only there is tons of manure scattered all around."

★ ★ ★

At the Winona Ryder trial the prosecutor is quoted as saying, "The law doesn't say that only the poor steal." When I read such drivel I want to say, yeah, but only a poor man would be given life in prison for stealing a piece of pizza (true! in California) but decided to bite my lip. Instead I'll quote Anatole France, "The Law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich, as well as the poor, to sleep under the bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."

★ ★ ★

Oh money, money, money, I'm not necessarily one of those who think thee holy, But I often stop to wonder how thou canst go out so fast when thou comest so slowly.

★ ★ ★

And of course, we have our great leaders who do all and will be forever remembered. Which reminds me of the following poem by my favorite Stalinist...

## Questions From A Worker Who Reads by Bertolt Brecht

Who built Thebes of the 7 gates?

In the books you will read the names of kings.

Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?

And Babylon, many times demolished, Who raised it up so many times?

In what houses of gold glittering Lima did its builders live?

Where, the evening that the Great Wall of China was finished, did the masons go?

Great Rome is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them?

Over whom did the Caesars triumph?

Had Byzantium, much praised in song, only palaces for its inhabitants?

Even in fabled Atlantis, the night that the ocean engulfed it,

The drowning still cried out for their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India. Was he alone?

Caesar defeated the Gauls. Did he not even have a cook with him?

Philip of Spain wept when his armada went down. Was he the only one to weep?

Frederick the 2nd won the 7 Years War. Who else won it?

Every page a victory. Who cooked the feast for the victors?

Every 10 years a great man. Who paid the bill?

So many reports. So many questions.

★ ★ ★

Money can't buy poverty. But it can cause it.

★ ★ ★

## The King is Dead, Long Live El Rey!

Utah Phillips has a story about a Wobbly being asked why all our songs are sung to hymns. The Wob's reply is "Because the tunes are pretty and everybody knows them. Only we change the words so they make more sense."

Well, someone has taken this fundamental IWW principle and applied it to the "king," Elvis Presley. Recently I was blessed with the gift of a CD by "El Vez," the latino Elvis. I'm one of those who think the real Elvis has the last name Costello, so I had avoided El Vez for a while. But only fools run in, no?

El Vez is what Elvis would be if Elvis had been a gay Chicano leftist. In true Wobbly songster fashion, El Vez takes the King's songs and gives them sense. "Kentucky Rain" becomes a song about Frida Kahlo's "Life of Pain." Another Elvis tune becomes "The Arm of Obregon," an ode to the near assassination of the Generalissimo of Mexico during the revolution. How about "In El Barrio"? "Viva Las Vegas" becomes "Viva La Raza."

His non-Elvis covers are equally brilliant, "Say it now, I'm Brown and I'm Proud." Bachman Turner Overdrive's "Taking Care of Business" becomes an anthem to Mexican migrant labor in the U.S. A medley of "CC Rider" and "Jesus Christ Superstar" becomes "JC Si Lowrider Superstar."

Speaking of covers, the jackets of El Vez's CDs are all perfect twistings of classic Elvis covers. "G.I. Blues" becomes "G.I. Ay! Ay! Blues." Too often political music is humorless. El Vez is a great counterpoint to that earnestness.

FN. Brill doesn't have the stomach to be the new Elvis, but could he be the new Arthur Brisbane? You can help by sending clippings, jokes, and an explanation of just what the Democrats have done for (not to) the labor movement to: FN. Brill, c/o IWW, 616 E. Burnside, Portland OR 97214, USofA.

## Business for Social Responsibility

The annual BSR Conference (Nov. 5-8, Miami), sponsored by McDonald's, also featured presentations from such "socially responsible" corporations as Citigroup, Coca-Cola, Nike, as well as outfits such as the World Bank and a Chinese government-sponsored institute. In between sharing tips on cheaper sweatshops and death squad etiquette, CEOs were invited to workshops on the opportunities for investing in China, the World Bank's "sustainable development" initiatives, and the dangers of law suits challenging their depredations.

# Teamster truckers on road to nowhere

BY TEAMSTER X

On Labor Day, Consolidated Freightways shut its doors nationwide, putting 15,500 Teamsters out of work along with some 14,000 more non-unionized and other employees. That was the CEO's (Chief Embezzlement Officer?) gift to labor.

CF, an LTL (Less Than Truckload) carrier, had been in operation for 73 years. Of the 35 major U.S. unionized carriers at the start of deregulation in 1980, that leaves only three standing.

Before this, it was APA, a regional Northeast carrier that shut down in March, throwing 1,200 Teamsters out of work. Preston had closed three years ago, shutting down thousands of Teamster jobs. On and on it has gone. I do not exaggerate when I say that the vast majority of my fellow workers at one of the big three left standing have shut down at least one or two jobs, and many are on our fourth or fifth job in the freight industry.

Each time another unionized carrier closes, we see the end coming closer. When CF closed, we all felt it personally. We were saying, "We are dinosaurs." Our hearts went out to the CF drivers, as they had to the APA drivers. Those able to get on another Teamster job have to start all over yet again, at 75 percent pay for two years, no vacation, no seniority, having to go through 100 working days' probation where they have no union protection. Then if they do get on the seniority list, they have to take the worst bids (starting times) that nobody wants. These are not young workers starting out — these are drivers and dockworkers with 15, 20, 25 years experience in the industry. Thanks to the lousy aspects of the contract, they face these conditions all over again.

And we all know that tomorrow, any one of us may be facing the same situation. You cannot be secure on a job any more, you cannot be sure you will retire from this job.

When you are young you do not think of a pension. But when you have been a wage slave for 20 or 25 years you start to think of retirement. You want to get out. It's like a prison, everybody counts the years left: "Only four more years and I'm out of here." That's how we talk. We do have a pension with the union, which follows us from job to job.

These unionized freight jobs are one of the few jobs left in this country where you can still half-way live on the wages (most guys have to bust their ass on overtime to make it at that) and get a half-way decent pension, and medical and dental for the family. These are necessities, not luxuries, but the vast majority of working people do not have these. This is thanks to our union, that those before us fought for. You can bet you get none of this on the non-union trucking jobs. You have no rights whatsoever without a union.

How long will our bosses pay these benefits when we are surrounded by a growing sea of non-union trucking? No island stands alone, and we are a shrinking island. That was the story of Preston, APA and CF, to name only the latest.

CF has kept its Canadian and Mexican and air operations going, and there is some shady business with the non-union subsidiary they had created — Conway — and supposedly sold, but we hear CF was still paying the fuel bills for Conway, running the union company into the ground while shifting resources to the non-union Conway.

APA was profitable, but the owner decided he didn't want it anymore — screw the workers who created all his wealth.

Preston was shut down by Yellow Freight who secretly owned it behind the scenes, and pulled the plug on it to make way for the new non-union carrier Yellow bought, Jevic, that ran the same area Preston did. Again, screw the workers.

If this is not the best argument for workers to organize ourselves to not only fight for better wages but to prepare to take over and run the industries ourselves, I don't know what is. We watch management run these companies into the ground with lousy decisions or just pull the plug on companies, and all we do is bitch and moan but we act like there is nothing we can do. We can take over the damn industries and run them ourselves, if we organize.

It is also obvious that even a business union like the Teamsters has to at the very least organize the non-union carriers if we are not to disappear. By now, even the Teamsters bureaucracy knows that. But they long ago forgot how to fight.

## Begging the bosses

The Teamsters have just ended the three year strike against Overnite, the biggest non-union LTL carrier in the nation. They were never able to stop the Overnite trucks rolling. Teamsters president Hoffa Junior is shown in an HBO movie on the strike, "American Standoff," thinking the strike would last only three weeks. Shows what he knows about how hard it is to unionize in the U.S. today, how hard these huge corporations will fight, losing billions if they have to just to crush the workers' organization (Overnite is owned by Union Pacific).

The Overnite workers put up a strong fight, but the Teamsters bureaucracy, their thinking, tactics and philosophy, were just not up to this fight. They were not able to pull together the kind of support the brave Overnite workers needed.

In New York City, the scab Overnite freight was being picked up and delivered by Truck Rite, Overnite's cartage agent. And we were told by the union there was nothing they could do about it — there were some legalities that prevented us from picketing. So Overnite freight was being delivered all over the city, which we were told we couldn't interfere with; instead, we were to go to the suburbs, follow the Overnite trucks and beg the BOSSES at the companies that use them to please support the workers on strike! And in the city, we had to watch those trucks pick up and deliver the scab Overnite freight and do nothing about it. It was demoralizing.

I have also heard the union refer to workers at non-union carriers as "scabs." If that is our attitude, how can we hope to organize them? This creates a dangerous confusion in the minds of the workers that could play right into our bosses' plans. The company tries to brainwash us with meetings where they say it is "us" — unionized carriers and their workers — against "them" — non-union carriers and their workers. They even ran a Teamsters flag up the pole under the company flag!

Does the Teamster union believe that we have interests in common with the employer? That is what it seems, when they tell us we have to help the company compete against the non-union companies. This plays into the company's plans to brainwash us into identifying with the company instead of with our fellow workers, union and yet-to-be union.

This narrow, short-term interest of getting the competitor's freight on "our" trucks may save a few jobs in the short term, but it is the road to the end of the union, because if we say, as I've heard it said, "Don't worry about the non-union drivers, believe me they don't give a sh— about you," we are doomed to remain a shrinking island of relatively better paid labor in a growing sea of non-union exploitation.

It's time to see the big picture. It's time to organize ourselves on the basis of our class interests and be clear about where we are going. We can already see the other road leads to a dead end.



# Boston janitors settle 24-day strike

With picket lines weakening, SEIU officials settled the Boston janitors strike Oct. 23, on the eve of a "day of chaos" aimed at shutting Boston's business district down. While the union proclaimed victory, many workers felt betrayed and only 789 of the 10,700 janitors covered by the new five-year contract participated in a ratification vote held at 70 work sites and union offices across the Boston area.

The new contract with the Maintenance Contractors of New England will raise janitors' pay by about \$3 an hour over five years and extend individual health care benefits to 1,000 part-time janitors in the contract's third year. (Janitors in suburban areas will see smaller raises.) Workers will also be eligible for two sick days per year.

Under the contract full-time workers may purchase health coverage for their families; employers did not agree to extend family coverage to part-time janitors. All but 1,900 janitors are assigned to part-time shifts averaging about 20 hours weekly. (Most work two or three jobs as a result.) Janitors who put in 29 or more hours a week are considered full-time, receiving benefits and slightly higher pay. The contractors rejected a union proposal that shifts be consolidated to enable janitors to move into full-time positions that would pay a living wage.

Some 1,800 workers participated in the strike, which ran for more than three weeks, gradually spreading to nearly 100 of the city's largest building complexes.

"We've shown that our community expects big corporations to provide health benefits – and that workers can take a stand on this issue and win," said Rocio Saenz, SEIU Local 254 Deputy trustee.

Saenz was brought in from Los Angeles as part of a team installed last year by SEIU international officials last year, after the local was trustees. The local had been notorious in Boston labor circles for its sweetheart deals and undemocratic practices.

But many janitors saw the situation differently. "The majority of janitors don't agree



Several striking janitors filled the stage Oct. 19 during a strike solidarity rally that later saw more than 200 janitors and their supporters march into and through the struck Prudential Center (an office and shopping complex) before police blocked the entrance.

with the settlement," said Carlos Melera, a Salvadoran immigrant who cleans buildings at Northeastern University. "All my colleagues are saying this isn't fair."

At least 103 janitors voted to reject the contract. "There just aren't enough benefits after striking for so long," said Manuel Hernandez, who cleans buildings in the city's financial district.

Dissatisfaction had been building throughout the strike, with many workers abandoning a strike they saw as ineffectual, even as city and business leaders were pressuring both sides to reach a settlement.

An article published in *The Boston Globe* hours before the agreement was reached quoted several workers who had abandoned the strike, convinced that SEIU leaders had no strategy for shutting down the struck buildings. Contractors were able to maintain janitorial services with a combination of longer shifts, scabs (most recruited in the weeks of mediation that followed the union's announcement that it would strike), and a growing number of returning strikers. And since picketing was generally restricted to symbolic actions, deliveries to struck buildings were largely unaffected. The most vis-

ible sign of the strike was the nightly marches of hundreds of chanting janitors, whose frustration mounted night after night as they marched past scab-infested buildings.

"It's like we were sent to war without guns," said one full-time janitor, who returned to work after two weeks on strike. "How can you fight that way?"

While two-thirds of his building's janitors abandoned the strike in its second week, all had voted to strike and supported the union's demands. But they grew frustrated when SEIU officials directed them not to picket the building's main entrances and as scabs settled into their jobs. When janitors questioned the strike strategy, one said, they were accused of being traitors. "Everything seemed so poorly organized," said another. "It got very ugly."

Several cleaning companies had also grown frustrated with the strike, reaching interim agreements with the union that increased pressure on the largest contractors to settle. The contractors were also under pressure from building owners, some of whom threatened to transfer cleaning contracts to firms with interim agreements unless the strike was settled.

# Solidarity wins reinstatement for mall cleaning staff

BY BRADEN CANNON

Twelve cleaners at Ottawa's Carlingwood Mall won their jobs back Nov. 12, after union picketing and the threat of a boycott.

The 12-member cleaning staff, organized as Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4266, was abruptly fired Oct. 21, and the workers replaced by a separate cleaning contractor which pays its workers CAN \$7.50 an hour, as opposed to the \$11.50 the unionized workers were making.

CUPE 4266's contract had expired in August, and the local was working to negotiate a new contract when they lost their jobs just before the holiday season. Some of the cleaners had been working at Carlingwood Mall for over 20 years.

The call was spread throughout the Ottawa region to descend upon Carlingwood Mall Nov. 7 for a mass picket. Joining the line were 150 members of the Canadian Auto Workers, various CUPE locals, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Office & Professional Employees International Union, the Ottawa Coalition Against the Tories, Anti-capitalist Community Action, and, of course, the Ottawa-Outaouais GMB.

The action started in the parking lot of the mall under the watchful gaze of mall security. CUPE National President Judy Darcy addressed the crowd as John Hollingsworth, of the Ottawa-Outaouais GMB, and members of OCAT went into the mall to speak with mall manager Denis Pelletier.

"[We] went to pay the mall manager a call... before the line outside started heating up," said Hollingsworth. "We warned him that... in firing these workers, they were taking on all of us. We also told him that Carlingwood had better do the right thing and reinstate them as quickly as possible or there would be ongoing trouble. Little did we know at that point that trouble would be there en masse about 30-40 minutes later."

Outside, the protesters proceeded to block the entrance ways into the parking lot, turning away many cars after explaining the purpose of the action and handing out leaflets to the drivers. One driver, however, refused to support the Carlingwood cleaners and literally drove through the picket line with three protesters on the hood of his car.

At this point, protesters decided to take the struggle into the mall. The group marched through the mall chanting, speaking with customers, and handing out leaflets before forcing their way into the administrative offices to seek a meeting with the manager.

However, the group was informed by a note in the manager's office that he was not in, despite the fact that he had been seen only moments before. CUPE President Judy Darcy eventually reached the Mall's operations manager by cellphone and informed him that he could expect this sort of action every day until the cleaners were reinstated.

Under the settlement, workers will also get a new contract including wage increases of 2% this year and 2% in July 2003.

wages from being cut that deeply.

Safeway bought Dominick's for \$1.85 billion in 1998, and has been driving customers away ever since through mismanagement. Now the company is demanding that workers pay the costs of its mistakes.

A recent Safeway contract that workers in Hawaii signed this fall cut overtime differentials to 50 cents an hour (from the legally required time and a half), and stretched out the time workers must work to step up to higher pay scales.

# General Strike movement sweeping BC

BY JOHN AMES

On October 15, contrary to the recommendation of the Executive, delegates at the Vancouver and District Labour Council sent to the British Columbia Federation of Labour convention the Prepare General Strike Committee's suggested motion supporting a General Strike in British Columbia, which calls for developing an escalating strategy of resistance toward the Liberal government and preparing an unlimited general strike against this government's brutal rampage of cuts, privatization, poor-bashing and union-busting.

At least four labour councils (Kitimat, North Okanagan, Vancouver and Victoria) have sent the resolution to the B.C. Federation, as have several locals of the BC Gov-

ernment and Service Employees, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Hospital Employees Union, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union.

## Resolution on support for a general strike:

Whereas other proposed fightback strategies – recall, municipal election victories, awaiting the next provincial election – cannot stop current and planned Liberal/corporate attacks in time,

Be It Resolved that Federation and affiliates' officers meet immediately with non-affiliates and community organizations to plan and implement an escalating strategy of resistance leading to an effective general

strike against the Liberal attacks, and

Be It Resolved that this strategy include consumer boycotts, civil disobedience, economic disruption, and rotating regional strikes as dress rehearsals for a province-wide general strike that will end only when an agreed-upon list of demands has been reached, and

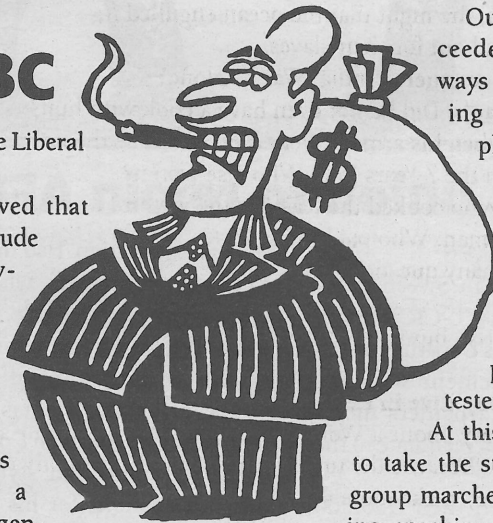
Be It Resolved that the federation ensure this coalition immediately establishes processes to guarantee genuine democratic participation by all coalition members, launches a massive education campaign on the need for such a strike, and sets a timely date for a general strike.

For information on general strike plans and a schedule of activities, visit: <http://www.generalstrikenews.ca>

## Safeway stores blackmails Chicago grocery workers

Safeway has told Dominick's Supermarkets workers that unless they accept lower wages, the 115 stores the chain runs in Chicago will be shut down.

The workers, represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers, are in negotiations for a new contract. Under their recently expired contract, wages start at \$7 an hour and top out at \$14. Safeway is demanding cuts of \$2 an hour – though minimum wage laws would prevent starting



# Teamsters abandon Overnight strike

The Teamsters have pulled out of a long strike against Overnight Transportation Co., exactly three years after picket lines first went up. Teamsters leaders had initially boasted that they would win the strike – the subject of a recent HBO film – within three weeks.

The Teamsters blame their loss on weak labor laws and the Bush administration, which failed to enforce those laws. However, the strike began while the Democrats were in the White House and the National Labor Relations Board was dominated by Clinton appointees.

After years of organizing workers city by city had won union representation elections in 26 terminals despite Overnight's union-busting campaign replete with illegal firings and intimidation, Overnight refused to recognize the union or to engage in meaningful

negotiations. And the Teamsters' reliance on labor law left them defenseless.

"We have a labor board that's a cardboard cutout of a policeman," Teamsters spokesman David Cameron told the Associated Press.

Teamsters president James Hoffa inherited the Overnight campaign from his predecessor, Ron Carey, but Hoffa was the one to authorize the strike.

Only about 500 workers (of 2,000 who struck) were still out when Teamsters leaders abandoned the strike without a membership vote. The Teamsters say they will continue efforts to organize Overnight.

In order to fight unionization, Overnight raised average hourly wages by more than \$5 an hour, improved its benefit plans, and now pays overtime.



## Steelworkers face \$4.3 million AK verdict for refusing overtime, picketing

The Steelworkers union has been ordered to pay \$4.3 million to AK Steel to compensate for losses stemming from an alleged slowdown at its Mansfield, Ohio, plant. The USWA said it will appeal the verdict.

Armco Steel and later AK accused the union and its members of staging work slowdowns, refusing to work overtime and sabotaging equipment during the summer of 1999 as a contract deadline approached. Mandatory forced overtime was a hotly disputed contract issue at the time.

The jury also found that a union solidarity rally held after the company locked out about 500 members of USWA Local 169 disrupted production. AK security guards and scabs clashed with union supporters at the Sept. 10, 1999, solidarity rally.

The lockout at the Mansfield plant, now one of the U.S.'s longest-running labor disputes, continues even though the union capitulated Sept. 24, accepting AK's final contract proposal. But the union insisted on the

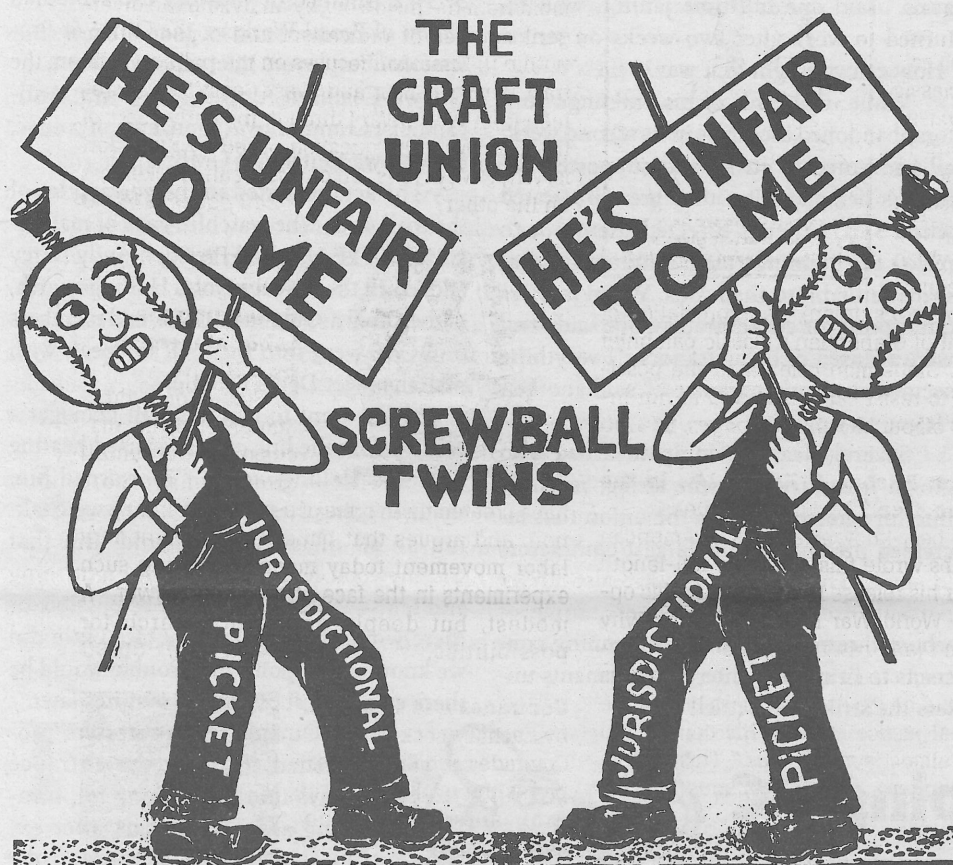
right to grieve discharges of workers AK accused of picket line misconduct.

AK refused to end the lock-out unless the union agreed to the discharges, and unfair labor practice charges are pending with the National Labor Relations Board.

### Court upholds right not to be in boss's antilabor movies

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit has upheld an NLRB decision in Allegheny Ludlum Corp. versus the National Labor Relations Board, which concluded that Allegheny Ludlum illegally leaned on workers to appear in a video shown to workers as part of its antiunion campaign. The union was narrowly defeated.

The ruling holds that the workers included in the company's video did not have a meaningful opportunity to refuse due to the power relationship between employer and employees.



## Carpenters union to rejoin AFL-CIO

BY JON BEKKEN

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney announced Nov. 14 that the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department had reached a tentative agreement with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters under which the Carpenters would reaffiliate to the AFL-CIO December 1st.

The Carpenters pulled their 520,000 members out of the AFL-CIO in April 2001 citing disagreements about organizing priorities, jurisdiction and overdue per-capita payments. It appears an agreement has been reached to forgive the unpaid per-capita.

Negotiations over jurisdictional disputes had not yet been resolved at press time, and could delay the Carpenters' reaffiliation for weeks. As traditional construction methods have been transformed, building trades unions have frequently clashed over how to divide up the work.

The Carpenters have taken an expansive view of their craft jurisdiction, leading to conflicts with other building trades unions over which union's members should get the work. In some cases, the Carpenters have struck "wall to wall" agreements under which nearly all work on a construction project is performed by members of their union. At least one Laborer's local has been making similar agreements in residential construction.

As these disputes heated up, other AFL-CIO building trades affiliates turned to the AFL-CIO's internal disputes mechanism with complaints that the Carpenters were invad-

ing their jurisdiction. Had the AFL-CIO ruled against the Carpenters, which most observers believed was inevitable, it could have levied a wide range of sanctions.

The move toward reaffiliation comes as the Carpenters' president is battling disaffiliation moves from British Columbia locals angered by his autocratic style and facing federal investigations for his role in profiting from the Ullico scandal.

### Carpenters head to return profits from stock scheme

Douglas McCarron, president of the International Brotherhood of Carpenters, will return profits of \$276,000 or more he made on an insider trading scheme at union-owned insurance company Ullico.

In December 1999, members of the Ullico board were given special opportunities to buy Ullico stock at \$54 a share when board members knew that the price would soon sharply increase. Less than a month later, the stock was revalued at \$146, for a profit of \$92 a share.

A year later, when board members knew that the stock was soon to be revalued downward to \$74 a share, members of the board approved a special arrangement allowing themselves to sell back their shares to the company at the \$146 price.

The Ullico stock transactions are under investigation by a federal grand jury, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Department of Labor.

## THE Minority Report

Being union on our own authority

BY ALEXIS BUSS

Most union campaigns get off the ground by finding out what problems exist in a workplace or industry. Workers form union committees, a campaign is launched, and workplace issues are articulated to attract more and more support for the union's cause. Most often, this organizing is done with the goal of the union being formally recognized by the boss, either by a card-check agreement or an election of some sort, so that a contract can be bargained.

But what usually happens when it is time to sit down and bargain the contract? It isn't true to say that at negotiation time the boss and union come to the table as equals and work out the best possible deal for both parties. The union most usually comes to the table from a very weak position, because it has been built not to fight for and enforce its demands, but rather to ask the boss to give it legitimacy.

This method came about when NLRA was enacted in 1935.

"Labor peace" was a desirable concept for the bosses, the government and entrenched union bureaucracies. The

bosses were tired of dealing with rising labor militancy — factory takeovers, strikes, walk-outs, sit-ins, etc. Government officials had to deal with helping their pals in big business recover from the effects of this kind of organizing. And the labor bureaucrats were worried by workers who were getting too uppity and demanding the same kind of respect from them that they were demanding from the bosses. So a system was created for bosses to be given a legal mandate to bargain with the unions, and a set of laws and rules were created so that bargaining became a gentleman's game.

The expected way that unions and bosses dealt with each other was that the contract was improved upon with each new set of negotiations, so long as the company was in good health. This has changed. It is now routine for companies, ones with and without unions, to shut down plants and offices, downsize jobs, reduce pay and benefits, and generally show no consideration to workers, even during profitable times.

But here's something that has been true ever since our present set of laws was enacted: it is usual and expected for contracts to contain completely useless (worse than useless, positively harmful) language for workers — the management prerogatives clause, and no-strike clause.

## Third of teen workers in pain

The October issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* reports that teens employed in so-called white collar jobs such as office work and sales are more than three times as likely to suffer musculoskeletal problems as those who do not work. More than one-third of students in seventh, eighth and ninth grades reported suffering neck, back, shoulder, arm, hip, knee or leg pains at least once a week over a six-month period. Unemployed teens were the least likely to report such problems, "white-collar" teens the most.

Dr. Debbie Feldman of the University of Montreal, the lead author of the new study, says musculoskeletal problems that arise at such an early age often resurface later in life. "As more and more adolescents are working at part-time jobs, while in school, occupational health issues must be addressed in this population."

Teens doing more physical labor such as construction or maintenance were almost twice as likely as jobless teens to suffer muscle pains.

Because most unions accept that workers are on earth to be managed, and bosses should run the world as they see fit, it isn't a surprise that most union contracts allow management to have total control over a workplace. During the term of a contract, when the union is entitled to collect dues from workers through dues check-off, limiting the ability of workers to strike is also desirable for many unions to make sure that their main revenue streams are not cut off. Let alone the added benefit of avoiding the hassle of "managing" uppity workers.

When we think of how we can turn around the labor movement, we must keep these things in mind. We can't just accept "more organizing." Because even if we had more organizing of the kind we have now, we would still have to address the issue of unions not helping workers to pursue job control. We would still have to deal with concessionary bargaining.

How are we going to get off of this road? We must stop making gaining legal recognition and a contract the point of our organizing. Our unions and networks of solidarity

must be able to deal with the issues that inspire most campaigns — wages, benefits, working conditions. But just as necessary is to have a way for us to organize to address the respect (or lack of respect) workers feel on the job, our ability to control how we work, how our workplace is going to interact with our community and our world.

We have to bring about a situation where the bosses, not the union, want the contract. We need to create situations where bosses will offer us concessions to get our cooperation. Make them beg for it.

This is one of the potentials of minority unionism (by the way, this is the last column that I'll be using this term — in the next month, I'd like your help in figuring out a new name to describe the kind of unionism we've been talking about in the pages of the *Industrial Worker*).

The point of unionism as the IWW sees it is to organize workers in ways that our power cannot be ignored or co-opted. Minority unionism is one way to do this, because we can organize around demands without worrying about if we have a contract or legal standing. As much as possible, we should seek to avoid situations where our power is replaced by laws and contracts.

If contracts and agreements help us hold bosses to their promises, that's great. But if bargaining becomes an exercise in what rights we will give up, and deciding that bosses should in fact have total managerial control over our working lives, we're going about it the wrong way.

## UAW local 2322 staff go IWW

IWW members in the Amherst, Mass., area have gained union recognition from UAW Local 2322, and are now in the process of organizing an industrial union branch and electing local delegates and a bargaining committee. The 21 UAW staffers unanimously decided to organize with the IWW in October and sought voluntary recognition from the local executive board.

The new branch includes all full-time, part-time and temporary employees who perform work for UAW Local 2322, including employees of the Graduate Employee Organization (a semi-autonomous unit within the local which represents teaching and residence assistants at UMass-Amherst). The staff are funded by a variety of entities, including a health and welfare trust fund and release time granted to three GEO representatives under their contract with the university.

*We have to bring about a situation where the bosses, not the union, want the contract. ... Make them beg for it.*



# West Coast ports nearing technology deal?

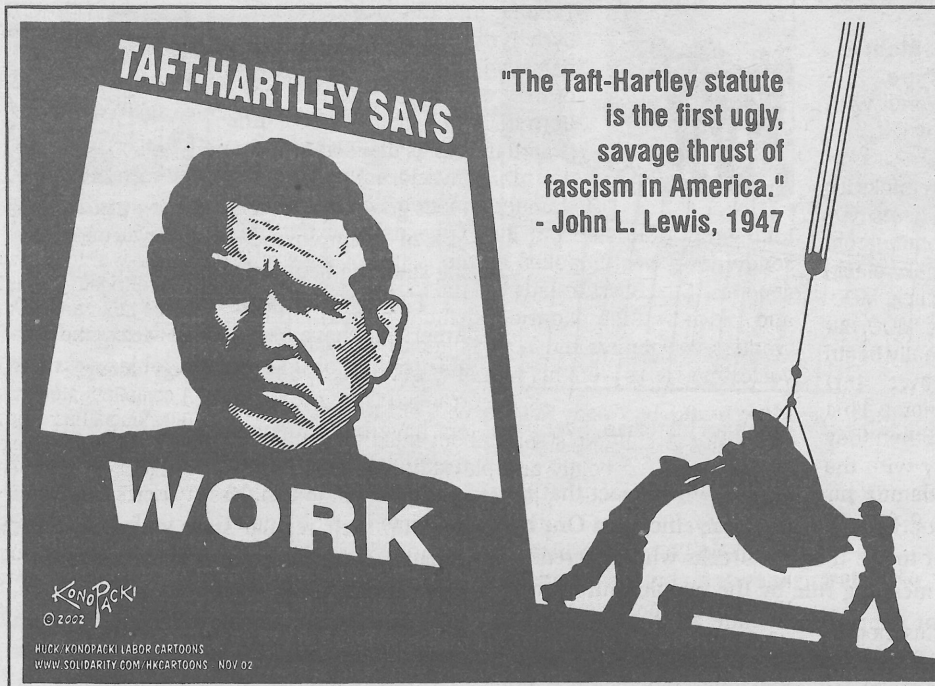
West Coast longshoremen and the Pacific Maritime Association reached a tentative agreement Nov. 1 on the use of computer technology – the major sticking point in the bitter dispute that led the bosses to lock workers out two months ago. Since Oct. 8, International Longshore and Warehouse Union members have been working under a Taft-Hartley injunction that provides for fines and possible jail time should union members enforce safety standards or take other industrial action that disrupts the flow of cargo. (see article last issue)

The tentative deal resolves the terms under which new computerized technologies tracking the movement of shipping containers will be introduced on the docks. As shippers have moved from pen and paper cargo tracking systems to bar codes and scanners, much of the work of planning and tracking shipments has been moved from ILWU members on the waterfront to offices far removed from other maritime workers. Now the need to rekey and reformat information would be eliminated, with data transferred directly from shippers' computer systems.

The ILWU agreed to computerizing this work early in the talks, but had insisted that any new jobs created by the introduction of new technology remain under union jurisdiction. Under the tentative agreement, some dockyard and rail planning work would come under ILWU jurisdiction, but work performed by vessel planners stationed at inland locations would not. There is of course no technological reason for this work to be performed far from the waterfront; rather, the bosses have been moving the work in order to escape union working conditions and weaken workers' power.

Under the deal, no presently employed worker would lose their job. But as workers retire, they would not be replaced – further eroding the union's jurisdiction and membership. As many as 600 union jobs could ultimately be lost.

The dockworkers' underfunded pension plan is now the major remaining issue in the talks. Mechanization has slashed the ranks



of working longshoremen from more than 100,000 50 years ago to about 11,000 today, while the volume of cargo moving through the ports has more than tripled. The number of retirees has been rising accordingly.

## A 4-tier work force

It appears that a union proposal to increase the numbers of enrolled dock workers – extending the union contract to the hundreds of “casual” workers who work alongside union longshoremen for lower wages and no benefits – has been dropped. The West Coast docks maintain a four-tier labor force, comprised of “steady,” “A” and “B” men, all represented by the union, and “casuals,” who are not.

Steady and A men have full union membership, but A men must report to the hiring hall and have weaker job guarantees. B men pay ILWU dues and receive union wages and benefits, but are not guaranteed work in slack times and can not vote in union elections. While many “casuals” work every day during the busy season, they have no union protection or recall rights.

Many dock workers have welcomed

mechanization's role in reducing injuries and the hard physical labor that once wrecked their health, but only a small portion of the enormous savings has gone their way in the form of higher wages. Enormous productivity gains that could have been used to slash working hours on the waterfront have instead gone into the pockets of the shipping and stevedoring firms.

In this dispute, the dockworkers have faced the combined power of the employers and the U.S. government. Had the ILWU not reached technology deal, it is likely that the Bush administration would have legislated the bosses' demands.

Nor could the dockworkers count on the solidarity of other maritime unions. The presidents of four other unions on the West Coast waterfront publicly announced that they would not support the ILWU in its fight.

The presidents of the Machinists, Iron Workers, Operating Engineers and Seafarers unions said the ILWU's proposal “attempts to usurp and thwart the legitimate jurisdiction” of the four unions. The International Assn. of Machinists threatened to cross ILWU picket lines, claiming they were losing re-

pair and maintenance jobs on the docks to ILWU members. A Labor Day march in Wilmington, Calif., was briefly interrupted by machinists who unfurled a banner demanding the union “stop raiding our jobs.” Days later, machinists in Oakland handed out fliers mocking the longshore union motto, “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

Maritime workers in the rest of the world pledged solidarity, but continued to work cargo shipping to and from the West Coast ports as usual. Since dockworkers in other countries are not bound by U.S. labor laws, international industrial action would have quickly rendered the Taft-Hartley injunction meaningless – leaving the Pacific Maritime Association no choice but to settle on workers' terms.

## One, Two, 15 Big (Business) Unions?

BY JON BEKKEN

An internal discussion paper by high-ranking SEIU staffer Stephen Lerner acknowledges that the AFL-CIO as currently constituted is incapable of rebuilding the labor movement. The reason, he says, is that most AFL affiliates “lack the resources, focus or size to grow,” and that the AFL-CIO has papered over these weaknesses rather than confronting them.

While nearly all unions agree on the importance of organizing, unions are actually organizing fewer workers per year than they were four decades ago. Lerner believes that most unions are too weak to organize successfully (although he offers no evidence that larger unions are any more successful).

Union density is declining in almost every sector of the economy, Lerner says. “Unless unions dramatically increase density in key sectors of the economy, there will be no significant economic advantage to being a union member or working under a union contract.” And given the AFL-CIO's lack of any broader working-class vision, Lerner can envision no reason other than immediate economic self-interest that would motivate a worker to join a union.

Union density has been dropping for years. The depth of the crisis has been masked by the dramatic growth of public sector unions, Lerner argues, but the collapse of private sector unionism will ultimately undermine unions' ability to defend public sector workers as well.

In order for unions to successfully organize the millions of workers necessary to turn the situation around, Lerner says, the AFL-CIO must first undergo a process of “consolidation, rationalization and reorganization.” Instead of 66 international unions with multiple overlapping jurisdictions, Lerner calls for “a small number of large sectoral unions with the resources, focus, capacity and self-interest to grow.”

Lerner's paper divides the U.S. economy into 15 sectors, in which union density ranges from a low of 2.7 percent (finance and insurance) to a high of 35.3 percent (education). (Other sectors identified are retail trade, services, health care, durable manufacturing, non-durable manufacturing, government, construction, wholesale trade, hotels and entertainment, transportation, communication and utilities, agriculture, and mining.) And since the economy is generally growing fastest in sectors where unions are the weakest, union density is likely to continue dropping absent a radical change of course. Indeed, according to AFL estimates, union density is declining in 13 sectors.

The AFL-CIO has been undergoing a steady process of mergers and consolidations in the last two decades, dropping from 108 affiliates in 1979 to 66 today. But its 15 largest affiliates account for 10 of its 13 million members, and these are all conglomerated general workers unions. The Laborers, for

continued on page 9

## “Good union members respect picket lines”

That's the message from Operating Engineers Local 649, in an ad in the September issue of the Livingston & McLean Counties (Illinois) *Union News*.

“When a picket line is established on a job where [a union] member is working: The member leaves...”

“A member has the right not to work behind any picket line. The member has the right to decide whether to walk off a job being picketed. The member understands that the member's trade might be the next attacked. A two-gate system means a picket line and the member has the right not to work, no matter how many gates the employer sets up.”

Contractors routinely set up separate entrances on construction sites for union and nonunion workers. Instead of picketing the gate set aside for union workers, which could actually shut down jobs, construction unions typically picket the nonunion gate. This may legally be the safest course of action, but it's also wholly ineffectual.

The two-gate system is spreading from the construction trades to other jobs. In the recent Boston janitors' strike, building owners established separate back door entrances for scab janitors and then asked that picket lines be restricted to those entrances so that deliveries and other business would not be interfered with. Sadly, they were.

Local 649 has been talking to its lawyers too. “Once a picket line is established,” the ad warns, “the business agent and other union officials are legally gagged and handcuffed from giving advice pertaining to that job.” But if more workers followed the general advice on offer, it wouldn't much matter

what laws the bosses saw fit to impose.

## Fake picket lines

A recent article by rank-and-file carpenter Gregory Butler discusses an “action” at Columbia University in New York City, when the Laborers union set up an “area standards picket” in front of the main gate with support from other building trades workers.

As required by the Taft-Hartley act, which prohibits long-term picketing, the pickets came down 30 days later, with the dispute still unresolved. It wasn't clear from the signs or the leaflets exactly which one of the dozens of contractors in the complex was being picketed, Butler notes, or the particulars of how workers were being abused, but presumably that unnamed nonunion contractor is still doing business at Columbia alongside the dozens of unionized tradespeople who work on the many renovation and service call jobs in progress at any given time in the vast complex.

Indeed, even when the picket lines were still up, union workers crossed them every day to continue work as usual. This is because, in strict accordance with U.S. labor law, the union leaflets clearly stated that they were not asking any workers to actually honor the picketline.

“In other words,” Butler notes, “it's not a real picketline. Jobs don't get stopped, labor doesn't cease, deliveries don't get delayed or cancelled and nobody loses any production because of them.”

This was no accident. Earlier, in April, the Laborers union helped pull off a rally at a 12-story nonunion office building job. Thousands of workers showed up, but in-

stead of shutting down the job, Laborers organizers cooperated with police to keep union workers confined to protest pens safely across the street.

Had they not acted, of course, things might have gotten “out of hand,” as they did on June 30, 1998, when 40,000 workers seized control of the streets of Midtown Manhattan for four hours on a busy workday during a protest against nonunion construction. The bosses don't much care for that sort of thing, and neither do the union bosses.

Greg Butler maintains *Gangbox*, an extensive web site on issues facing construction workers (including the article quoted here) at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gangbox/>

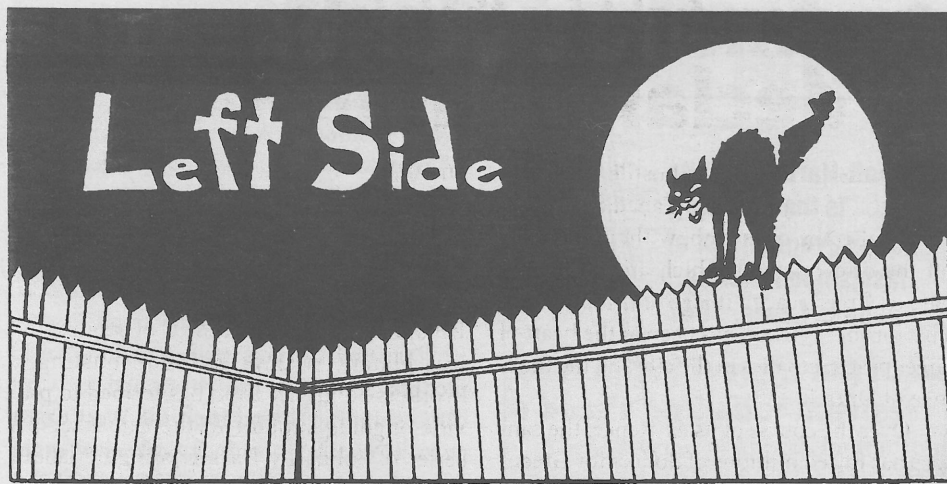
## Electricians delegates seek end to blacklist provision

Delegates to last year's convention of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers overturned a longstanding constitutional requirement that all local construction contracts give employers the unfettered right to refuse work to any IBEW member without cause.

The clause has been used to blacklist shop stewards and other members who sought to enforce health and safety and other contractual provisions, and also to punish union dissidents.

Instead, IBEW delegates voted to demand a hiring process that would require employers to offer good cause if they refuse to accept a worker dispatched from the union hiring hall. It remains to be seen whether the IBEW will use its industrial muscle to win this basic right as contracts come up for negotiation.





"In war, truth is the first casualty." So said Thucydides, the Athenian historian, over two thousand years ago.

Little has changed in the passage of two millennia since, aside from the fact that the master class has become further entrenched and operates with far more efficiency. One has only to view the human condition on our planet today. It is the Greeks who are credited with having conceived of the word democracy, meaning rule by the people. But even in ancient Greece, demes (meaning people) did not happen to include all those who were living in Greece, but only those who belonged to a certain privileged class. When Thomas Jefferson, the slave owner, wrote that "all men are created equal," he obviously was not referring to the kidnapped Africans who were bought, sold, fed and kept like livestock, or the aboriginal occupants of this land who were then being pushed further away from the European beach head. Also note that he said "all men," rather than all people or all humans.

Hypocrisy has been a long-standing characteristic of the ruling class, and shall continue to be as long as there is a ruling class.

Georgie the Tush seems to be drawing in his horns in his zeal to initiate another conflict in the Middle East, in view of massive protest demonstrations, worldwide and here in Freedomland as well. There is always a glimmer of hope for us two-leggeds.

But, of course, little information of the massive protests is being told us through the news channels here in Freedomland. There are lies, and there are lies of omission. Thucydides said it two thousand years ago, and it still rings true today.

The author F. Scott Fitzgerald said that "the poor are distinguished by their roaring resentment and the rich re distinguished by their remoteness." While Georgie the Tush is viewed as the war-mongering boogie man, he is only a well-paid front man for the remote ones. It doesn't matter if the current occupant of the not-so-white house were a democrat, a socialist, a commie or even a prohibitionist, they would still be taking orders from the powers behind the throne.

This, of course, goes for all heads of state around the earth. They, too, must do the bidding of the remote ones, regardless of whatever ideology they may profess.

This is a result of a system where the producers of our species have no control over our own lives but are under the thumbs of the minuscule minority who live off of the profits reaped from the labor of us producers. Somewhere in our remote past we have been hoodwinked into the notion that we need a ruling class. In the interests of our logical evolutionary development, it behooves us to realize that power belongs in the hands of those who do the producing.

This is the month when we are exhorted to indulge in the annual consumerist orgy, ostensibly to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace. If one carefully reads the new testicle, the time of his birth was not at the end of the year. The manipulators of that day conveniently placed his birth at that time of year as a substitute for the pagan celebration of the return of longer daylight.

There are those skeptics who doubt that there ever existed a man known as Jesus Christ, inasmuch as no historical accounts tell or make mention of him, which should be no surprise. In our Freedomland history books, how much mention is made of Tecumseh, Nat Turner, Gene Debs or Big Bill Haywood? Jesus Christ, or as some of the old Wobblies referred to as Jerusalem Slim, the first Wobbly, happened to be the personification of a massive resistance against Roman imperialism that a later Roman emperor decided to proclaim as a so of God. He realized that monotheism was a far more efficient means of people control than the old-fashioned paganism.

Had there been no such person as Jesus Christ, there would have been someone else who would have become personified with the resistance against Roman imperialism. Had Mahatmas Ghandi never existed, there would still have been resistance to British imperialism; and without Martin Luther King there would still have been a swelling resistance to racism here in Freedomland.

"Leaders" do not make movements. Movements made "leaders." Those leaders who become tyrannical demagogues become so only through the acquiescence of the majority of us. As Joe Hill wrote, "If we workers take a notion, we can stop all speeding trains; Every ship upon the ocean we can tie with mighty chains; Every wheel in the creation, every mine and every mill; Fleets and armies of all nations will at our command stand still!"

Draftees of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals!

— C.C. Redcloud

## Ann Arbor Borders workers organizing

Workers at Borders Books & Music's flagship store in Ann Arbor, Michigan, have petitioned for what would be the 11th union representation election since the IWW signed up a majority of workers at a Philadelphia Borders' outlet. That campaign, which sparked efforts to organize Borders outlets across the U.S., was ultimately defeated by Borders' union-busting efforts. The IWW picketed Borders outlets around the world to protest this union-busting, costing the company millions of dollars in sales.

Although workers at a number of Borders outlets eventually won union representation through the UFCW, no Borders out-

lets are presently under union contract. Workers at a Minneapolis Borders voted for union representation in October.

Ann Arbor Borders workers say their wages have not kept pace with other industries, and that staff cutbacks have made work more difficult. Workers say staffing at the store has been slashed over the last year from 106 to 72 workers.

Workers also object to tightening management control, including being ordered to promote particular books. A significant part of Borders' revenue comes from selling placement in its "bestseller," "discover new writers" and other promotional programs.

## 10 million U.S. jobless

The official U.S. unemployment rate has hit 5.7 percent (actual joblessness is at least twice that). Every day brings news of more lay-offs. Employers are once again demanding deep concessions, particularly in benefit packages. Many workers have seen their pensions go up in smoke. And millions face the loss of unemployment benefits with nothing standing between them and the streets.

For months now, roughly 10 million Americans have been out of work and unable to find jobs. Long-term joblessness has reached crisis proportions; 1.7 million workers have been unemployed for at least six months. Between March and September, almost 1.5 million jobless workers who had used up their regular state jobless benefits exhausted their temporary emergency federal benefits as well without finding jobs. That number is likely to exceed 2.2 million by year's end.

Median household income is falling once again, 33 million Americans now live in pov-

erty (again by official standards; which are set so low that in many places the poverty line is not sufficient to rent an apartment).

Economists claim the economy is growing, if slowly, but this will offer little comfort to the millions of workers falling into bankruptcy.

Meanwhile, state and federal governments are trying to pay for their massive tax cuts for the rich by slashing education and social services. Millions of federal jobs are being put on the auction block, with the Bush administration recently proposing to contract out some 850,000 jobs. The result would not only be to slash federal workers' wages and benefits, but also to decimate the social services they deliver.

"This is yet another indication of the administration's hostility toward labor, and an especially blatant one for government employees," said AFL-CIO political director Bill Samuel. Nearly 40 percent of civilian federal employees are unionized.



## Protests greet Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue in Chicago

FROM REBEL WORKER, CHICAGO

Some 2,500 people marched from Boeing headquarters to Tribune Plaza Nov. 7 to protest against war-profiteer Boeing and the annual meeting of the Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue being held in Chicago under its sponsorship.

The TABD is a transnational club of corporate CEOs and politicians from Western Europe and North America where the plutocrats make plans to further bilk the working class of the product of its labor. The fact that they had to meet behind an iron curtain of 1,200 armored police is testimony to the fear that working class protest inspires in these parasites.

In the weeks preceding this meeting, the plute press and television in Chicago was awash with hysterical stories raising alarm about thousands of anti-globalization protesters who were going to descend on Chicago and run riot among us. Usually these stories were accompanied by video of breaking glass and teargas from the Seattle protests in 1999. All this to justify turning Chicago into a police state, with the Loop all but cordoned off to its citizens.

Undoubtedly this show of force discouraged many who might otherwise have participated in the protest. Still, the 2,500 who did have the courage to show up brought their many grievances against the capitalist system with them and raised quite a din with drumming and chants against capitalism. A small contingent of Wobblies were there to add our voices to the throng.

While protest against meetings such as the TABD is important to counter plute propaganda that everybody supports the capitalist program, and may serve to bring about some modification in the masters' plans, pro-

test certainly will not deprive the masters of the ability to make those decisions nor empower the working class to do so. To accomplish that task we need to organize on the job where we are robbed, and where we have the power to do something about it. Economic direct action on the job would do more to disrupt the plans of the CEOs and empower the working class. It would also deprive the cops of the opportunity to break heads that street demonstrations provide.

## Victoria B.C. newspaper strikers win

BY GORDON FLETT

On Nov. 5, 275 workers at the *Victoria Times Colonist* in Victoria, British Columbia, who had been on strike since Sept. 3rd, overwhelmingly ratified a new collective agreement. The company was demanding major concessions, including a 50% cut in wages in one department through a two-tier wage system.

The *Times Colonist*, owned by CanWest Global Communications of Winnipeg, brought in strikebreaker goons and started producing a weekly scab paper, but major retailers refused to carry it and subscribers refused to accept it and cancelled their subscriptions.

The company had gotten an injunction to get the paper out, but ultimately the strikers' thrice-weekly *Picket Post* had more advertisers than the sorry scab *Times Colonist*.

Their scab product an abysmal failure, management was forced to drop their demands for concessions and grant health and welfare benefit gains to workers. Wage gains were 2.5% in each of three years, retroactive to Jan. 1.



## Boss jailed for killing worker

A San Mateo County (California) contractor was sentenced to a year in jail after pleading no contest to involuntary manslaughter for an August 2000 forklift accident that killed a worker. Frank Conway must also pay \$7,500 to the victim's family and a \$5,000 fine under the plea agreement.

Conway's small air conditioning and heating firm paid its casual workforce under the table. Nicholas Viles, 21, was hired to help move a piece of heavy equipment. Although Viles was legally disabled, with hand tremors that prevented him from getting a driver's license, Conway directed him to drive the forklift on city streets from a storage facility to the work site. The forklift then tipped over on a steep hill, crushing Viles to death.

## Supreme Court: Legal to use union dues for organizing

The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to take up a case challenging unions' right to require nonunion members they represent to pay for union organizing activities as part of mandatory representation fees.

Such workers cannot be forced to be full members, pay full dues or support a union's political activities, the court has ruled, but (except in the 22 "right-to-work" states) can be required to pay for unions' collective bargaining costs and other expenses that directly benefit workers. In the most recent case, involving grocery store employees, the NLRB determined that organizing competing firms benefits all employees. The anti-union workers argued they were being forced "to subsidize an ideological message (unionism) that they deplore."

## INS detainees held in roach-infested, overcrowded cells

Some 81 immigrant detainees at New Jersey's Passaic County Jail have signed a statement protesting the crowded, unsanitary conditions in which they are being held.

The Oct. 29 statement describes a roach-infested jail with pods in which more than 40 people were crammed. Detainees also complained about substandard food, poor health care, and inadequate heat. The heating system was subsequently repaired.

The jail holds the detainees under a contract with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Those held include people arrested as part of the post Sept. 11 hysteria and held on minor immigration violations and noncitizen prisoners who have completed their sentences and are awaiting deportation. U.S. policy calls for the expulsion of noncitizens convicted of criminal offenses, even if they have families in the United States or have lived here since they were small children, as is often the case.

The detainees note that they are denied access to judicial process and legal assistance, comparing their situation "to that of the Japanese Americans who were placed in detention in 1942. Our detention also evokes memories of the McCarthy era in the 1950s."

Immigrants' rights advocates have long complained about the indefinite detention of noncitizens, and about mistreatment of INS detainees. These complaints about INS detention have grown more urgent since Sept. 11, 2001, when thousands of noncitizens were arrested as part of the terrorism investigation, typically on charges such as overstaying visas.

## Trico to accept labor rights

Pressure from Norwegian unions has forced Trico USA to sign a consent decree obligating themselves to write its American employees assuring them that there will be no discrimination or harassment of pro-union workers. In exchange, unions have withdrawn threats of boycott action.

## Toronto canvassers fight for their jobs

# Greenpeace declares labor war

BY JEFF SHANTZ

Greenpeace Canada is at it again. Ten years after the environmental NGO fired several canvassers who were trying to organize a union, its current management has broken the contract with now-unionized canvassers, illegally locking them out. Canvassers at the Toronto office, members of OPIEU Local 343, found themselves out on the streets at 9 a.m. on a cold Monday, November 4.

Canvassers and GP had ratified a collective bargaining agreement in October 2001 that was set to expire December 31, 2003. In early July, however, GP management illegally tried to renegotiate the contract. Management said they would only keep the canvass running if workers accepted new terms which were quite unfavourable. Finally Greenpeace unilaterally closed the door canvass on October 15.

Greenpeace's breaking of the contract leaves 13 workers locked out illegally. In a job with traditionally high turnover rates these workers have shown their commitment to Greenpeace with up to eight years of service. One of the locked-out workers is still facing court charges after having been arrested for taking part in a Greenpeace action. Leaving this worker, who was only arrested trying to further Greenpeace's message, to the mercy of the courts suggests that solidarity is an idea long ago left behind as part of GP's rapid corporatization.

The door canvass is the grassroots face of Greenpeace and has been for 14 years. These are the people who carry the Green-

peace message to an often hostile public every night, year round. In Canada, canvassers are also the ones who, without pay, pull off the direct actions which are so much a part of Greenpeace's image and reputation. The Toronto canvass has been at the heart of Greenpeace activities in the city and the Province of Ontario.

Over the course of its existence, the canvass has raised millions of dollars for Greenpeace. The union estimates net earnings for the door canvass at \$900,000 per year. Despite this, most canvassers are poorly paid, making little more than minimum wage and putting in many unpaid hours. Many do the work because of a real concern for the environment and a commitment to social change.

Executive Director Peter Tabuns maintains that everyone was offered jobs in the phone canvass. This unacceptable response overlooks the fact that work in a call centre is hardly the same as outside canvass work and in no way resembles the work the door canvassers contracted to do. In addition Tabuns fails to mention that opportunities for commission earnings are less for the phone canvass than for the door canvass, meaning a real cut in earnings.

Carrying signs reading "Greenpeace clearcuts jobs" and "Protection for the environment and for workers," the locked-out canvassers have responded to this attack on workers' rights by picketing the Toronto offices for several hours each day. They are, however, a very tiny local and have needed support and solidarity. Among the groups

and unions who have stepped up to provide that support are Wobblies, members of the CUPE Local 3903 flying squad, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Anti-Racist Action and the Toronto Environmental Alliance. Recognizing the importance of fending off this blatant attempt at union busting, a Workers Solidarity Club has formed to provide ongoing support to the canvassers. A series of Solidarity Days is bringing labour and social justice groups to the picket lines to show Greenpeace that they cannot hide behind a veneer of activism while attacking vulnerable workers. Workers' rights are a central part of building a green society.

As the workers put it in a Nov. 4 statement: "Those who founded Greenpeace sought to address wrongs by drawing attention to them. Sadly, 30 years later, it is wrongs committed by Greenpeace that we must draw attention to. We hope that our actions will bring about much needed change at GP."

Phone calls and e-mails condemning these actions can be directed to Tabuns at 416-597-8408, ext. 3012 (peter.tabuns@yto.greenpeace.org) or Development Director Rebecca Moershel at ext. 3014 (rebecca.moershel@yto.greenpeace.org). In addition, people should contact local Greenpeace offices to let them know you will not donate to Greenpeace as a result of these actions.

(A decade ago, Greenpeace locked out phone canvassers in its Seattle operation after they organized with the IWW and demanded union recognition and a say in the organization of their work.)

## 15 Big (Business) Unions?

*continued from page 7*

example, represent everything from grocery store clerks to postal workers, with the odd construction worker on the side.

As a result, every sector has several competing unions – more than a dozen each in construction, government and transportation. (In part this reflects real duplication – there are three major unions representing flight attendants, for example; in part the legacy of craft unionism – flight attendants, air traffic controllers, mechanics, pilots and ground crew are each in separate unions; and in part Lerner's desire to consolidate air, bus, maritime, rail and truck unions.)

Lerner concludes that the labor movement faces a choice between continuing the present pattern of consolidation into 10 to 15 multi-jurisdictional union conglomerates, or reorganizing the affiliated unions into 10-15 unions, each focused on specific sectors, industries and labor markets.

Higher union density in particular industry or local labor markets could enable unions to raise standards, Lerner says, but only "if all unions and locals ... are working together and speaking with one voice."

Lerner's vision is deeply shaped by his time with the SEIU, a highly centralized, largely undemocratic behemoth. To successfully organize, he says, unions need hundreds of full-time organizers, tens of millions of dollars, and billions in union-controlled pensions which can be used as leverage against major corporations.

Lerner believes workers would enthusiastically sign on to such campaigns, because they would see a real prospect for winning.

I am not so sure. Many rank-and-file workers view the business unions as an external entity, unaccountable and unresponsive to their needs. Indeed, one reason for the duplication of representation is that dissatisfied workers have jumped ship, looking for a more democratic or more militant union. Forcing workers back into the unions they fled might make sense on the level of grand strategy, but unless these unions are transformed into truly democratic bodies it might drive hundreds of thousands of workers from the labor movement altogether.

This will be a difficult program to sell to union officials as well. Many would stand to lose their livelihood if merged into much larger sectoral unions and might have to return to jobs that, in many cases, they never actually held. (The SEIU, for example, is largely officered by union professionals who rose through the ranks of the paid staff, with no more than a few months if that working the low-wage jobs their members perform.)

Nonetheless, Lerner calls on the AFL to encourage its member unions to engage in strategic mergers, to trade locals and bargaining units in order to realign themselves along sectoral lines, to focus organizing resources on particular regions, and to build a national campaign for universal health care as an overarching moral theme that could unite union and nonunion workers.

It is, in essence, a call to bring the AFL-CIO into the 20th century – a call inspired in many ways by the SEIU's recent emphasis on strategic campaigns. But the SEIU model will not stand up to close analysis. Relatively little of the SEIU's growth has come from new organizing (it is instead the product of mergers); its trademark Justice For Janitors campaign has been unable to lift members out of poverty; and workers have not developed real power on the job or in their union. This is because the SEIU remains a business union, a staff-driven organization that offers a service to workers, rather than a movement mobilizing them to fight in their own behalf.

What is needed is not one, two, or even 15 big business unions, but rather an organization of the working class, organized to seize control of its own destiny.



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# Edmonton Wobs stir up labor, culture, bosses

October and November were busy months for Wobblies in Edmonton, Canada.

**PRESSURE TREATED** Tommie Gallie is a local artist who works in wood sculpture. She is also our picket captain on the Shaw picket line, and is chair of the Alberta Spanish Civil War Memorial Foundation.

Tommie spent the summer working on several new projects which were displayed at the Bear Claw Gallery. The show, entitled *Pressure Treated*, features shapes and forms suspended away from their base, expressing expansion into space and movement. The opening was well attended by local Wobs and the arts community.

**RED SQUARE DANCE CD** Guy Smith, a social worker and long-time labour/political activist has released his first CD. Guy is a regular entertainer at picket lines, May Day marches, and whenever you need an activist singer. His most popular song is *I'm a Red*.

Guy spent the summer working with FW Mike Tulley to produce his CD *Red Square Dance*, which is an eclectic combination of political, labour and love songs.

Guy describes the CD as "original songs of poignant observations of struggle, love and life, ranging from gritty political folk ballads to catchy pop songs."

His Riverdale Hall CD launch party was an overwhelming success with over 200 people. We were entertained with a full band backing up Guy, including a cellist(!) and his sister on vocals. We are used to Guy doing solo performances so this was a real treat. Local branch members helped out running the door, bar and clean-up afterwards.

Guy told the *Industrial Worker* that "it is not an out and out political album, it is quite eclectic subject-wise. Having said that, I would be delighted to have it mentioned in my favourite newspaper!"

To order copies contact Guy Smith, 1956 Tomlinson Green, Edmonton, Alta. Canada T6R 2R6 email: guysmithsongs@yahoo.ca Cost: \$15 (Cdn) plus \$5 (Cdn) shipping.

**STUDENT WORKER ACTION GROUP** The University of Alberta SWAG, which was formed by IWW members and is coordinated by FW Eddie Martinez, is quite active. After having campaigned last spring to elect an activist member as president of the University Students Union, SWAG is now focusing on organizing student workers on campus and building a Living Wage campaign, as well as mobilizing students to join Shaw workers on the picket line.

SWAG organized a common front meeting of activist groups on campus in October which agreed to engage in two common struggles, one around student labour organizing and the other protesting against the United States war against Iraq.

SWAG is looking at organizing Grad Students as well as organizing a Living Wage campaign for student workers on campus. Contact: swag-uofa@yahoo.com

**ANTI-WAR ACTION** The IWW branch joined the local anti-war demonstration Oct. 26. Over 300 activists marched down Whyte Avenue protesting American plans to invade Iraq. Eugene Plawiuk addressed the crowd, pointing out that in 1991 Kurdish workers in Iraq formed workers councils and revolted but were wiped out by the Iraqi regime while the United States, which had encouraged the revolt, stood by doing nothing.

FW Plawiuk noted that it was the oil workers in Iran who brought down the Shah's regime when they called a general strike in support of mass women's protests in Tehran. The media and other agents of the capitalist state have attempted to make the peoples of the Middle East appear less developed than the rest of the industrialized world. This is far from the truth since these countries are oil-producing nations, reliant on an industrial working class. These workers, many guest workers imported to work in the oil fields by the national ruling classes, need to organize a general strike for a workers revolution in the Middle East, he told the crowd.

**SWEATSHOP PROTEST** On the same day activists organized by the Alberta Federation of Labour leafleted the Hudson's Bay company denouncing its use of sweatshop labour; IWW members helped leaflet consumers at the local mall.

**SHAW STRIKE** Now in their seventh month, workers at the Shaw Convention Centre continue to walk the line. The Center is a city-owned building run by the local business ruling class, who are determined to bust the union. Demos at city hall and pressure on the city council has forced them to intervene, half-heartedly, in this dispute. The bosses at Shaw have refused to accept binding arbitration, and have attempted to decertify the union, which was rejected by the Labour Relations board.

The Grey Cup, the Canadian version of the Superbowl, will be held in Edmonton and a mass picket action will take place at the Shaw Convention Centre during the festivi-

ties. The Canadian Football League is holding its awards night at the Shaw during the Grey Cup festivities. The CFL Players Association has not said whether it will tell its members not to cross the picket line.

Support messages can be sent to the Shaw workers at: ufcw@ufcw401.ab.ca Protest letters can be sent to the city council at councillors@edmonton.ca and to Mayor Bill Smith at: bill.smith@edmonton.ca

**LABOUR HISTORY CALENDAR** Ever wonder when the Battle of 66 Street took place – or maybe the first teachers strike? You can find out by going through the Alberta Labour History Institute's 2003 Calendar. This calendar is a visual celebration of the working people, and their organisations, that built this province.

As well as historical photographs from the 1930s and 1940s, there are photos of recent struggles such as the G8 demonstrations in Calgary, Alberta teachers' rally, and the UFCW struggle at the Shaw Centre.

FW Cassel (IU 560) designed this year's

calendar, and it is a tribute to the Wobs that we modeled it on the ever-successful IWW Calendar. Several branch members and local labour activists created the Alberta Labour History Institute in 1999.

The calendar is \$10, contact ALHI for bulk orders at donalda@connect.ab.ca

**CULTURE AND THE STATE** The Edmonton IWW is cosponsoring a conference on this theme May 2-5, in conjunction with Edmonton's annual May Week labour festival. The IWW is also cosponsoring a display of materials from the Emma Goldman (who spoke to large audiences in Edmonton in March of 1927) archives.

The conference's labour section is being organized by Fellow Worker John Ames. Wobblies interested in presenting should contact John (Dept of English, 3-5 Humanities Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton Canada T6G 2E5, ames@ualberta.ca) as soon as possible. The call for papers and other details can be found online at [www.arts.ualberta.ca/cms/cfp.htm](http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/cms/cfp.htm)

## Farewell, Fellow Workers

### Harry Hay

Gay rights and labor activist Harry Hay died Oct. 17 at age 90. Hay joined the IWW's Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union in the late 1920s, and accepted honorary membership in the 1990s. Hay is best known for his pioneering efforts in the gay rights movement including cofounding the Mattachine Society in 1950.

After leaving the Pacific Coast freighters, Hay worked as an organizer for the Department Store Workers Union. "If it had been known I was gay," Hay later recalled, "they would have [expelled me]. Macy's would have fired me in a moment if they knew" and the union would have backed them up.

However, he said Wobbly seamen had not been much more accepting. "The IWW was 'All for one and one for All' – except for queers," Hay said.

Hay and the other founders of the Mattachine Society later drew on their experience of union organizing to organize for gay rights at a time when homosexuality acts were illegal. "If we hadn't had the discipline of being underground union members we wouldn't have known how to do it," he recalled.

### Beth O'Brien

IWW member Beth O'Brien died this past April. She slipped and fell from an old growth sequoia in Eagle Creek, Oregon, while participating in a tree sit. Beth died April 12, two days after the U.S. Forest Service cancelled the sale of the Eagle Creek timber rights to a lumber company. Beth and the other tree sitters at Eagle Creek were waiting for the paperwork to be signed.

At 22, Beth was a veteran activist. She founded the Santa Rosa chapter of Food Not Bombs and was involved with EarthFirst! At the time of her death Beth had been a Wobbly for only a short time. She joined the IWW on May Day of 2001.

Since early high school Beth had been a Unitarian Universalist and she grounded her social justice work in her religious convictions. She brought her ideals into the religious community and tried to make the UU movement more democratic.

Beth loved to hop trains, write poetry and play the banjo. She was a wonderful vegan cook and could be found in the kitchen at many activist gatherings and UU conferences. Beth was a good friend and comrade. She will be missed. —Colin Bossen

## Assi Market union-busting... continued from page 1

the Korean-American ethnic enclave. Its long-term goal is to organize workers from all of Koreatown's seven major Korean-owned stores, where sales are comparable to mainstream Ralph's or Von's supermarkets, but conditions and pay do not approach that of those unionized stores which have largely abandoned urban areas. Minimum wages, racial discrimination and exploitation are the norm in the ethnic markets that remain.

Since the start of the campaign to unionize Assi, the market has been charged by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with discrimination against its Latino workers as a class. The market is also being prosecuted by the National Labor Relations Board for unfair labor practices committed by Assi during a March 2002 union election that ended with an official "no result." The NLRB complaint details 50 separate incidents by Assi management including firing two workers because they were union supporters, suspending another for union activity, interrogating workers about their union support, attempting to prevent union supporters from voting in the NLRB election, and systematic campaign of threats and intimidation. Assi is also being investigated by the California Division of Labor Standard Enforcement for violations of state laws providing for 10-minute breaks.

The suspended Assi workers and their

community supporters say they are fighting not only for their own livelihoods, but for the empowerment of all immigrant workers in similar circumstances in Los Angeles and across the nation.

Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates can be contacted at: 3465 W. 8th St., Los Angeles CA 90005; 213-738-9050, 213-738-9919 (fax), [kiwa@kiwa.org](mailto:kiwa@kiwa.org), [www.kiwa.org](http://www.kiwa.org)

## Memorial for Bread & Roses strike victim

Ninety years after the great Lawrence, Mass., textile strike, a new memorial was unveiled commemorating Jonas Smolskas, a Lithuanian spinner and IWW member who was killed Oct. 22, 1912, in the aftermath of the successful strike, by three street thugs who objected to his wearing an IWW pin.

Over 2,000 workers attended his funeral, marching to the cemetery under heavy police surveillance. Big Bill Haywood spoke at his graveside, eulogizing Smolskas as the third victim of the strike.

A new memorial stone was dedicated Oct. 6, at a ceremony featuring local historian Jonas Stundza, labor historian Dexter Arnold, and Smolskas' granddaughter, Sandi Smolskas-Olson. An extended story ran in English and Spanish in the Oct. 15 issue of a community newspaper, *Rumbo*.

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I certify that all information on this form is true and complete.

Jon Bekken, editor; Nov. 8, 2002



## Korean strike over shorter hours law

The Korea Confederation of Trade Unions halted a general strike Nov. 5, hours after it began, after lawmakers decided to delay consideration of legislation shortening the working week from 44 to 40 hours.

While the KCTU and other unions have long demanded shorter hours, the confederation opposes the proposed legislation because it would eliminate up to a week of annual paid leave, reduce overtime pay, and not compensate workers for the lost wages. Union contracts providing more favorable terms would be superseded by the weaker legislative standards. Unions also object to excluding part-time contract workers and smaller firms from shorter hours coverage.

Some 124,000 workers had struck earlier that day at Hyundai Motor, the country's largest automaker, and 165 other workplaces to protest the proposed law. Before the strike began, Hyundai workers had implemented a ban on overtime, which the company said had cost it US\$123 million in production.

"We wrap up the struggle of a general strike after forestalling the government's attempt to make labor laws worse," the KCTU said, warning that it would immediately launch another general strike if parliament takes up the bills in the future.

In the aftermath of the strike, police arrested 10 union leaders who organized the country's first ever nationwide government employees' strike. More than 30,000 members of the outlawed Korea Government Employees Union had staged a two-day walk-out, taking their annual leave Nov. 4 and 5 to protest government labor policies. More than 600 union activists were arrested at actions during the strike.

Despite the arrests, union representatives said they achieved what they were aiming for with the two-day strike. "We let the government know that we do not approve of their bill on a civil servants' association," a KGEU official said. "If we were afraid of being reprovved, we wouldn't have started the strike to begin with."

### Six-hour day strike

Buenos Aires subway workers struck Oct. 24 after a 6-hour day demonstration was attacked by police, seriously injuring one worker. The one-day strike quickly spread

to all lines of the Metrovias subway system, with members of unemployed workers' organizations joining the picket lines.

### Toyota appeals Ontario forced overtime ban

Toyota is appealing an Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling that it cannot force overtime on workers. The company has been requiring workers to put in 48 hours a week over five days in its Hamilton-area plant.

While Ontario law now sets 48 hours as the legal work week, it limits the regular

**FIGHT for SHORTER HOURS**



work day to eight hours without workers' consent. Toyota claims that workers automatically agree to work unlimited overtime when they apply to work for the company.

The Labour Ministry ruled that employees have to be "willing" to accept the overtime and the company has to "request" it.

### Forced overtime at NUMMI

UAW officials at the NUMMI auto plant in Fremont, Calif., have agreed to allow the company to force workers to put in three Saturdays in a row of overtime work, contrary to the contract.

A flyer distributed by dissident Executive Board member Caroline Lund to workers at the plant challenges management's claim that the forced overtime is necessary to enable the plant to recover from the recent lock-out of dockworkers, which disrupted the flow of parts from Japan.

Lund notes, "The Executive Board just turned the other cheek and meekly agreed to work us three Saturdays, without even bargaining for something in return. Very few of those Exec. Bd. Members voting YES work out on the plant floor. They were thinking of their own personal agendas, not about the tremendous wear-and-tear on the lives of thousands of line workers that working three 9-hour Saturdays in a row is going to mean."

We are often told that workers eagerly seek out overtime, so it's important to note that management believed workers would put in the overtime only if forced to do so.

## Why new economy workers need unions

BY MIKE MARTIN

It took the seismic shakedown of the high technology sector in the late 1990s and the early part of this century to make many people realize that workers in the so-called "new economy" need unions just as much as the rest of the workforce.

First of all a definition: Statistics Canada defines workers in the new economy as being employed in knowledge-based industries that spend a relatively large amount of resources on research and development, employ large numbers of professionals and scientists, and produce products or services in telecommunications, data processing, computer systems design, or pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturing.

In all of these industries the level of unionization is very low as compared to other sectors, only about 20 percent versus a Canadian average of 33 percent. The media keeps telling us that these workers do not want or need a union because they are too busy enjoying their cappuccino machines, their fitness club memberships and their superior wages and benefits.

Like most of the things the media tell us, we need to dig a little deeper to find the truth. Let's deal with money first. It is true that workers in the new economy make more money, at first glimpse a lot more money. But when Statistics Canada looked at all of the

factors for the wage gap, they determined that the actual difference was much smaller, from 32 percent to 8 percent. The same study determined that workers in the new economy worked at least two hours more per week than other sectors, and also worked double the hours of unpaid overtime.

What about benefits? It is true that workers in the new economy have greater access to benefits such as fitness services and employee assistance programs. That's because they have more stress because of the longer hours they work. They are also more likely to be covered by life and disability plans, supplemental medical and dental plans. But fewer workers in the new economy have access to a registered pension plan, the one benefit that most workers consider to be the most important. To compensate for that many of these workers, 31 percent of them, receive stock options. To their dismay many high tech workers now have nearly worthless shares in nearly bankrupt companies as their retirement plan.

Only 20 percent of workers in the new economy have a collective agreement, only 18 percent of workers reported having access to a formal grievance process, a labour management committee, or outside arbitrator. In addition to not having any rights, process or representation in the workplace, these employees were twice as likely to have their

## Less time for work, more time for life!

BY MATHIEU BRÛLÉ,  
OTTAWA-OUTAOUAIS GMB

Remember when everyone believed new technologies would shorten our work week and give us more time for life and less for work? Well, unfortunately, they have had the opposite effect. Nowadays, Canadian workers are working longer hours and accepting unpaid overtime more frequently than ever. Instead of enjoying our lives with our friends and families, we're spending more time at work.

According to the 2001 National Work-Life Conflict Study, Canadian workers are putting in more unpaid hours than ten years ago. In 1991, 10% of Canadian workers were working 50 hours or more per week. In 2001, that number more than doubled to 25%. During this same 10-year period, the percentage of workers in all sectors working 35 to 39 hours a week dropped from 48% to 27%.

This indicates that it has become harder for workers to reach their work expectations within work hours leading to overtime and sometimes even bringing work home. Despite the fact that our level of productivity has risen and we are working longer and harder, Canadians aren't getting any richer.

Where has all of our extra productivity gone? Today, half of all workers work unpaid overtime while many feel they can not refuse overtime. This trend is caused by years of companies "downsizing" their workforce, which leaves less workers to do the same amount or more work, and a corporate culture that associates long work hours with advancement and success ("if you work hard, you'll go far").

The same study indicates that despite the increasing demands of family life, our bosses' concerns for our work-family and personal issues are seriously behind. One-third of workers are working different shifts than their partners simply so they can share the care of their children. What is this doing to our relationships? Our bosses expect us to work longer hours (often without pay) without considering the effect our absence may have on our families, not to mention the effect longer hours at work have on our mental and physical health.

Longer work hours can have nothing but negative effects in the long run. The Ontario

government has even given our bosses laws allowing them to make us work 60 hours a week without paying us a single extra penny by counting overtime over three weeks instead of one. By counting overtime over three weeks, our bosses can have us work 30 hours one week, 40 the second and 60 the third, without having to give any overtime pay. Some workers work overtime because they can not afford to live on a regular day's pay and now have to work longer hours, but never get a penny in overtime. A shorter work week with a living wage would give us our time back to enjoy life for a change.

While Canadian workers work longer hours away from their families or even work more than one job to make ends meet, workers in countries such as France, Germany, South Korea and around the world have been fighting for – and winning – short work weeks and longer vacations. Rather than work ourselves to death, it's time for us to link up with our fellow and sister workers around the world to reduce working hours and increase employment.

We, as workers, must refuse to work overtime, especially without pay. Fighting longer hours can also lead to reducing unemployment: while large numbers of workers are unemployed, we work longer hours that could be given to them.

A shorter work week and no cut in pay (and no speed-up) would force the bosses to hire more workers, reducing unemployment and reversing the downward pressure on our wages. It would help workers avoid working many low-paid, no benefit part-time jobs in order to survive. It would enable the poor and jobless to escape poverty and give youth a future to look forward to – not to dread.

Every hour we spend on the job doing the bosses' bidding is an hour we can not spend doing the things that make life worth living – raising our children, hanging out with our friends, gardening, bowling, reading, relaxing...

But if we wait for the bosses or the politicians to deliver a shorter work week, we'll soon find ourselves putting in 12- and 14-hour days. The only way to reclaim our lives is to organize – to build unions controlled by the members and determined to fight the bosses to win better lives for all.

### Right to picket won in B.C.

Picket lines have returned to the Prince Rupert, B.C., grain elevator, after the B.C. Court of Appeal overturned an injunction barring 650 locked-out grain workers from picketing the facility. Workers are honoring the picket lines, halting grain shipments.

The B.C. Terminal Elevator Operators Association locked-out Vancouver members of Grain Workers Union Local 333 August 25, and shifted the work to the Prince Rupert facility, which had been closed. These are the only two facilities on Canada's West Coast capable of handling large grain shipments.

### WashTech opposes war

The Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (CWA) passed a resolution in August against possible war and homeland security measures, cuts in social services and attacks on civil liberties. The resolution, modeled on one passed earlier this summer by the Washington State Labor Council, was put forward by Wobs active in the union.

The resolution notes that "the national AFL-CIO's uncritical support for this profit-driven war has derailed labor opposition to increased military expenditures, corporate subsidies and government spying and provided political cover for Democrats to jump on the antiterrorism bandwagon" and calls on the union to take actions in defense of civil liberties, for the release of immigrants in detention facilities, and to join demonstrations and other activities against the war.

**Is the IW available in your area?  
Why not take a bundle?**



## Worker control sweeps Argentina

Amid the ruins of Argentina's economy, growing numbers of workers are seizing bankrupt plants and operating them themselves.

The 54 members of the Union and Force Cooperative, who occupied their metallurgical plant for six months before securing legal control, are earning more than twice as much as they did as employees and are set to take on 20 new members. With demand high for their copper and brass pipes and taps, they are expanding the plant and have plans to export their products.

"The fellows still think this is all a dream," said the cooperative's president, Roberto Salcedo. "Nowadays if you lose your job you know that you aren't going to find work again, and much less at our age." If capitalists with an open credit line ran the company into bankruptcy, how can worker-controlled cooperatives with no capital and no business experience be thriving during the worst economic slump in Argentina's history? Most important, the workers say, are the funds freed by eliminating the owners' hefty take and the higher salaries paid to managerial staff.

As in most of the occupied factories, the Union and Force Cooperative has an egalitarian pay scale. Decisions are made by direct vote in regular assemblies and each worker earns the same, based on the previous week's profits.

Workers have taken over 100 factories and other businesses nationwide. While most takeovers have been at factories, they have also included a supermarket, a medical clinic, a Patagonian mine and a shipyard.

Some expropriations have been officially authorized, but the government is unable to remove workers by force. In March, 200 people from neighborhood assemblies converged on the worker-controlled Brukman textile factory, forcing the retreat of 70 riot police acting on a judge's order to reclaim the property.

"The idea that a capitalist is needed to organize production is being demystified," said Christian Castillo, a sociology professor at the University of Buenos Aires. "If things improve economically, this movement perhaps may fade away. But the idea of worker control is out there."

## Ford Argentina hosted secret prison for workers

Argentine authorities have launched an investigation into allegations that executives of a Ford Motor Co. subsidiary were involved in the illegal detention and disappearance of workers during the military regime.

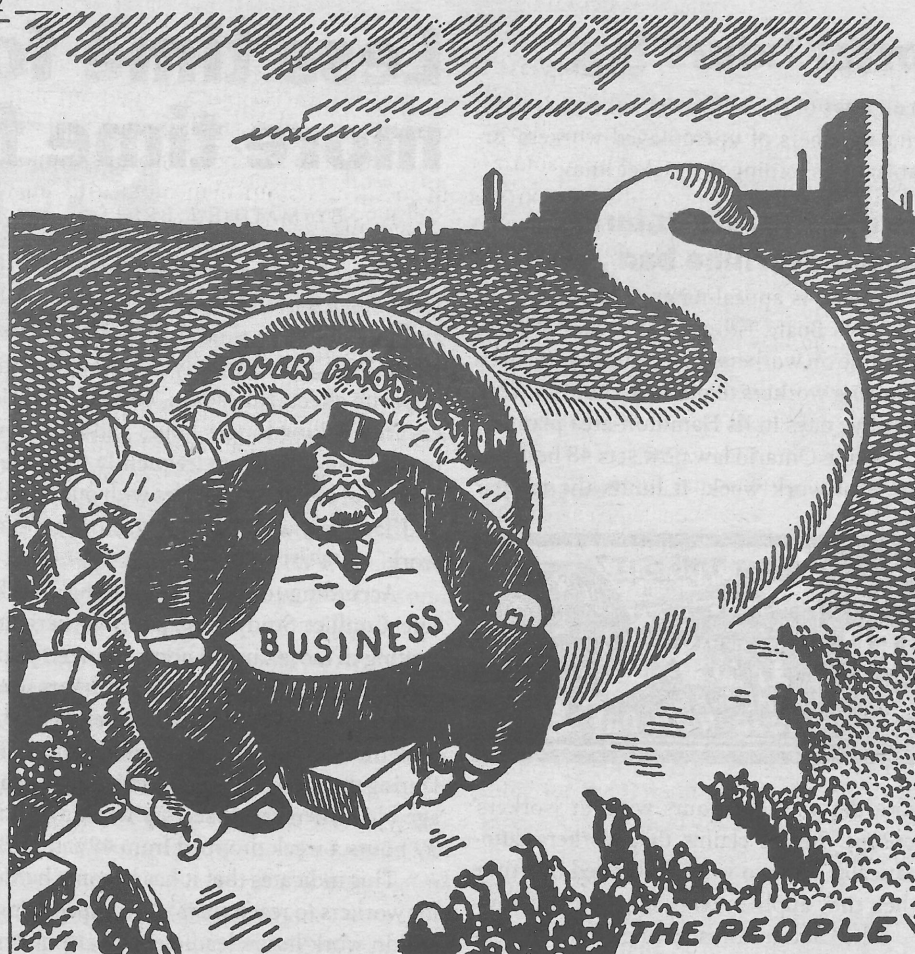
A former Ford Argentina employee has testified that a secret military detention centre was set up inside a Ford factory on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. The union leader was held hostage there for 50 days before being sent to prison.

In October, DaimlerChrysler announced an investigation into claims that it handed 14 union activists over to Argentina's military in the 1970s. This follows a report by Amnesty International about the disappearance of the Mercedes-Benz workers.

## Welsh workers seize sewing plant

Thirty-five workers seized the Finline Cymru sewing factory in Rhyl, Wales, for six days to protest unpaid wages. They ended the sit-in Nov. 5 after the plant was placed in receivership, enabling workers to file claims against the plant's assets.

Workers were owed three weeks' wages or more when management announced it was closing the plant Oct. 31 and would not pay severance. Workers were outraged, and refused to leave. They were supported by community members, who brought food parcels to sustain the occupation.



## Alcoa workers demand justice

BY CAMPAIGN FOR LABOR RIGHTS

Workers at Plant #1 of the Alcoa Fujikura, Ltd. factories in Piedras Negras, Mexico, elected a new democratic union leadership slate called For Unity Oct. 18. This victory happened despite the firing of 20 union supporters, including all five For Unity leaders and four out of five sectional committee members in plant #2 on Oct. 4.

Alcoa is the world's largest producer of aluminum, with 129,000 employees in 38 countries. Former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo was recently named to Alcoa's board of directors, while Paul O'Neill, Alcoa's CEO from 1987 to 2000, left the company to become secretary of the treasury under George W. Bush.

Alcoa's Fujikura Ltd. division is one of the five largest suppliers of automotive electrical distribution systems in the world. In Mexico, it manufactures wire harnesses for Ford, Volkswagen, Subaru, Harley-Davidson, and other firms. Alcoa operations in Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña employ more than 17,000 production workers.

While these elections were for office in the current entrenched union, the CTM, Alcoa workers from both plants have voted to create a union independent of the CTM. A membership meeting of plant #2 voted on April 30 to file for recognition of a new union after the CTM negotiated concessions which workers were not allowed to vote on. Recognition of the new union has been fiercely opposed by Alcoa, the CTM and local labor authorities. CTM thugs have assaulted several workers, and colluded with management to fire supporters of the independent union.

Letters protesting Alcoa's labor rights abuses can be sent to Alain Belda, CEO, Alcoa Inc., 201 Isabella Street, Pittsburgh PA 15212. Fax: 412-553-4498, alain.belda@alcoa.com.

## Bangladeshi garment workers demand Eid bonus

On Nov. 15, Bangladeshi garment workers organized a Garment Workers Human Chain in the capital city Dhaka, with hundreds of workers participating.

The chain was part of national actions demanding that garment factories pay an annual Eid "festival bonus" of one month's salary that is traditional in Bangladesh, but which is not paid to the garment workers who earn more than three-fourths of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

The employers association had agreed that the bonus would be paid to settle an earlier national strike, but employers have either ignored this obligation or offered token sums far less than the usual amount.

## 200,000 Salvadorans march against privatization

Some 200,000 Salvadorans shut down the capital city of San Salvador Oct. 23, filling the streets for a solidarity march with health care strikers fighting the government's privatization scheme. The government is proposing a voucher system that would drain funds from public hospitals. Doctors and other health care workers have been striking on the job for more than a month, providing only urgent care.

Marchers also protested planned privatization of electricity. On Oct. 22, the government illegally fired Alirio Romero, the secretary-general of the electricity workers' union, STSEL, and four other union activists. The union is demanding that the government halt the firings, rehire all illegally terminated workers, end plans to privatize electricity and sign the law banning privatization of health care.

If the government refuses to meet these demands, union leaders vow to join striking health care workers with a national electricity workers' strike that would "shut off the lights in all of El Salvador."

## China: a paradise for bosses

After eight months of pleading with their former boss to pay their pensions and health insurance, desperate factory workers who had been forced into early retirement grabbed the manager July 23 and tried to jump off the top of the Yanwu Electric Appliance Co.'s nine-story building.

While they were stopped by other protesters, the Nov. 2 *Boston Globe* reports that angry workers at several other failing state-owned factories have killed their bosses in the last year. A popular song lamenting the end of the government's promised "iron rice bowl" notes, "They dedicated their youth to the party, but no one takes care of them when they are old. They try to depend on their children, but their children are jobless." Unemployment in China's industrial zones is estimated at 10 percent.

At its recent 16th congress, the Communist Party of China rewrote its constitution to declare that it represents "advanced forces" — a phrase explicitly meant to include capitalists. In the new China, Party chief Jiang Zemin said, "the fundamental interests of the people of the whole country are identical."

China is proving quite attractive to capitalists, who can hire workers for less than \$100 a month for 12-hour days. The government does not allow independent unions. Corporate tax rates are low. The gap between rich and poor has grown almost as fast as overall income, meaning that inequality is increasing nearly in lock step with the country's development.

## Portugal: Sick leave under attack

Portugal's government is considering sending company doctors to check in on workers who call in sick in an attempt to drive down the country's absenteeism rate. The government is also considering monitoring doctors who issue too many sick notes.

The average Portuguese worker takes about 18 days of sickness leave a year, the highest level in the European Union. Younger workers account for the majority of those days, in part because of inadequate child and health care facilities that force workers to take time off when their children are sick.

The new conservative government proposes to replace Portugal's entire body of labor legislation with a single code the *Financial Times* says is "designed to adapt the labour market to the era of globalisation."

The new labor code would also reduce labor protections. Companies have been threatening to relocate manufacturing facilities to Eastern Europe if they are not granted the right to unilaterally fire workers, among other "reforms" to make labor laws "more flexible."

Manual Carvalho da Silva, head of the CGTP union federation, says unions will fight the changes. "There is no country where collective dismissals are easier," he said. "You couldn't ask for a more flexible workforce."

## 120,000 jobs lost to World Bank scheme in Mozambique

The structural adjustment program under way in Mozambique since 1987, in which some 1,500 state-run companies have been privatized, has cost 120,000 workers their jobs, according to the country's largest union federation, the OTM.

A third of the 1,470 privatized firms are now paralysed or semi-paralysed, and owe back wages to their workers.

The worst single debacle was in the cashew processing industry. The World Bank demanded that the industry be stripped of protection, perhaps to assist Indian cashew processing interests: the end result was that Mozambican cashews were exported raw to India, while one by one the local processing plants, starved of raw material, closed down.

The OTM is demanding "reindustrialization" of the cashew sector, but there is no sign that the government is listening.

The OTM is also demanding a decent minimum wage. Currently the minimum industrial wage is 812,163 meticals (about US\$34) a month, and no family can possibly survive on such an amount. The OTM wants the minimum wage to be fixed in accordance with the prices of a basket of basic goods.

## Police attack Wroclaw nurses

Over 100 people, mostly nurses and other hospital workers at a hospital in Wroclaw, were brutally attacked by police after blocking a street. They have been protesting unpaid salaries since Nov. 12. Eleven people were hospitalized as a result of the police attack, two of whom face prosecution on charges of throwing potatoes at police.

Public sector workers across the country are increasingly restive because of mass lay-offs and unpaid wages resulting from the government's fiscal crisis.

But the Polish government is getting ready to spend a few billion on war planes as part of its preparations to join NATO.

## Wildcat forces subway to reinstate fired drivers

Glasgow's subways began running again Nov. 9 after a three-day wildcat strike forced management to reinstate 35 drivers sacked in a dispute over workers' refusal to train security personnel to substitute as drivers. Management had originally insisted there was "no way back" for the drivers.