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Overtime robs workers around world, but many are fighting back

Under a new plan announced June 12, U.S. medical residents will no longer be subjected to the 36-hour shifts and 100- to 120-hour weeks that were common in many American hospitals, instead working an 80-hour week. Hospitals will be allowed to work residents an extra eight hours weekly if they deem it "essential," and can average the new limits over a four-week period, meaning that residents – who provide much of the medical care in most teaching hospitals – could still be required to work some 120-hour weeks if given additional days off.

Although the 40-hour work week has long been the legal standard in the U.S., medical residents and other "professional" employees are exempt (as are farm workers, "independent" contractors, and many other workers). Even workers covered by the law can generally be forced to work extra hours as long as the employer pays an overtime differential, unless they are represented by a union that has negotiated limits on hours.

CANADA: More than half of Canadian workers live in provinces where 44- or 48-hour weeks are the legal standard. However, Julie White of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union reports (in the online journal *Just Labour*), that 12 percent of Canadian workers put in 50 hours or more each week as their regular work week. Another two million Canadian workers are putting in an average of nine overtime hours each week – the equivalent of 500,000 full-time jobs.

While it is often claimed that workers seek out overtime in order to bolster their pay checks, the CEP found that only about 10 percent of workers are overtime hogs, with three-fourths preferring to reduce overtime in order to create more jobs.

In most provinces Canadian law requires workers to put in as much overtime as the boss demands, unless a union contract explicitly gives them the right to refuse. It's also illegal for unions to encourage workers to refuse overtime, although some unions have successfully fought to reduce overtime work. U.S. workers can also be required to work overtime, although some states protect workers' rights to an occasional day off or impose other limits. (Safety regulations also limit hours for many transport workers.)

Where CEP members have won shorter hours, the response has been enthusiastic. In Southern Ontario, petrochemical workers celebrate "Happy Fridays" every third week. At SaskTel, workers get every second Friday off. "We'd probably be out there [on strike] until hell freezes over if they tried to take that away," one worker said.

FRANCE: 35-hour week legislation is now being extended to small firms, leading to a spate of articles like one in the June 15 *International Herald Tribune*: "France's shorter work week turns out to be mixed blessing." And indeed it does. The article quotes a worker relishing the extra free time, and some bosses facing staffing difficulties because they refuse to hire new workers to pick up the slack.

At Toyota, productivity is up since they moved to the 35-hour week, 2,200 more workers have jobs, and unemployment rates are down. Since France began trimming hours, its economic growth has led the Euro zone and unemployment has fallen from 12 to 9.1 percent. But many of the new jobs were bought with

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IWW/environmental organizers were victims of bombing, frame-up FBI & cops must pay Bari, Cherney \$4.4 mill.

A federal jury in Oakland, California, has awarded \$4.4 million in damages to two IWW organizers injured in a 1990 attempted assassination, ruling that FBI agents and Oakland police violated their rights by arresting them, searching their homes, and falsely branding them as terrorists.

The jury awarded \$2.9 million to the estate of the late Judi Bari and \$1.5 million to Darryl Cherney June 11, finding federal agents and police officers liable for violating their First and Fourth amendment rights.

Cherney and Bari were injured in May 1990 when a bomb exploded under the driver's seat of Bari's station wagon. Bari suffered a crushed pelvis from the blast. The two were arrested within hours of the bombing, with Bari awaking from surgery to find officers looming over her hospital bed. While Bari eventually regained the use of her legs, she lived the remainder of her life in debilitating pain and died of cancer in 1997.

After the IWW helped organize an international defense campaign, the two were freed for lack of evidence. However, the FBI and police never retracted their claims that Bari and Cherney bombed themselves and

never conducted a serious investigation to find the real bombers.

Bari and Cherney were spearheading a campaign to save the northern California redwood forests from clear cutting, through the IWW and the direct action environmentalist group Earth First!

As part of their work, they fought to bridge the divide between environmentalists and timber workers, which had led to intense hostility and some violent incidents. The two persuaded Earth First! to renounce its advocacy of tree spiking, arguing that the practice posed unacceptable risks to timber and saw mill workers, and mobilized environmentalists to join timber worker rallies against forestry companies that were attacking their workers as vigorously as they leveled the forests.

Simultaneously, they reached out to timber workers, arguing that in the long run the industry's practices were destroying their jobs and their communities, and that workers and environmentalists had a common interest in sustainable forestry. Bari also helped sawmill workers fighting unsafe conditions who had

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Jobs or the environment? A false choice

BY CHARLES WALKER,
LABOR TUESDAY WEBSITE

Remember the hopes for a labor and environmentalist alliance that mushroomed in the wake of the November 1999 Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations? Remember the sprightly energy generated by photos of jaunty Teamsters and "Turtles" taking to the streets together with tens of thousands of unionists, environmentalists and social justice activists? At least for a year or so, some demonstrators thought that a grand alliance was in the cards. They envisioned a "national blue-green alliance" under the joint leadership of the AFL-CIO, headed by president John J. Sweeney and his New Voices team, and the leaders of virtually every key environmental organization

But, sadly, during the few years since Seattle, we have witnessed more steps away from a national blue-green alliance than toward it. Still, while hopes for a great coalition at the top of organized labor and of environmentalists have shriveled much like dreams deferred, there is fresh hope by some that important joint efforts by unions and environmentalists on a smaller scale, and mostly at a local level, might be accomplished

Labor writer David Moberg (*In These Times*, May 7) recently voiced some optimistic sentiments, as well as his disappointments. "Despite the failure thus far to cement a national blue-green alliance, significant progress has been made in building relationships and developing local initiatives that could form the basis for continuing work. More progress is likely to come mainly from grassroots and local initiatives as well as the actions of individual pro-environment unions and their leaders, not the AFL-CIO."

Moberg doesn't say when he concluded that workers and environmentalists could no longer count on Sweeney and the AFL-CIO to co-lead a major effort to defend the envi-

ronment from corporate devastation. Perhaps his present view dates from August of last year when Sweeney lined up behind President Bush's threatened despoliation of a major Alaskan coastal plain wildlife refuge (ANWAR). "This endorsement [by Sweeney] just underscores what we have been saying all along: This [Bush] energy bill is good for American workers, it's good for American jobs, it's good for America's economy," boasted James Hansen, Republican chairman of the House Resources Committee.

However, Moberg cites a recent poll to indicate that Sweeney is out of step with a majority of union members. "By nearly 2-1, union members oppose drilling in ANWAR, according to a poll conducted late last year by the Wilderness Society. Over the past decade, workers and union members consistently have expressed strong support for environmental protection in opinion polls, ... even when it poses risks to jobs."

Whatever the union ranks think about the environment's health, Sweeney's view does have support at the pinnacle of the hierarchy that "leads" organized labor. "The Teamsters, United Mine Workers, and several building trades have openly endorsed Bush's energy policy and ANWAR drilling," notes Moberg. He cites another poll to show that the Autoworkers Union, by backing the auto moguls' fight against improved auto efficiency, is ignoring the vast majority of organized auto workers. "In a January poll, 84 percent of UAW members in Michigan favored requiring all cars and light trucks to get 40 miles per gallon within 10 years."

Moberg favorably reports that in February the Steelworkers, UNITE (clothing and textile union), and the Service Employees unions joined with several major environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, to back a plan by two economists. The plan calls

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Trumbo no pacifist

Dear Soapbox:

Reviewer Rachel Rosen makes a compelling case for why nobody should read the *Rockbuster*, but she does incorporate at least one serious literary inaccuracy. She claims that Dalton Trumbo was an "extreme pacifist" whose *Johnny Got His Gun* "argues that there is absolutely no ideal worth dying for."

Consider the following, taken from the last page of *Johnny*, which is worth skipping to if you don't have time to read the rest of the book: "We are men of peace we are men who work and we want no quarrel. But if you destroy our peace if you take away our work if you try to range us one against the other we will know what to do. If you tell us to make the world safe for democracy we will take you seriously and by god and by Christ we will make it so. We will use the guns you force upon us we will use them to defend our very lives and the menace to our lives does not lie on the other side of a nomansland that was set apart without our consent it lies within our own boundaries here and now..."

"Put the guns into our hands and we will use them. Give us the slogans and we will turn them into realities... Not one not ten not ten thousand not a million not ten millions not a hundred millions but a billion two billion of us all the people of the world we will have the guns and we will use them and we will live... We will walk and talk and sing and laugh and feel and love and bear our children in tranquility in security in decency in peace. You plan the wars you masters of men plan the wars and point the way and we will point the gun."

Worthwhile sentiments, yes. Unorthodox punctuation, yes. Pacifism, no.

Dave Linn

Readers' Soapbox

Misrepresenting the IWW

Fellow Workers:

I object in the strongest terms to the *Industrial Worker's* having republished, in the June 2002 edition, a full-page article by Andrew Casey, equating murder and mob violence with "the old Wobbly movement." The *IW* is this union's official organ, and what appears in its pages will be perceived by the world as union policy.

The editor's mealy-mouthed disclaimer at the beginning of the article does nothing to diminish the article's clear declaration that the IWW's characteristic methods are brutality, murder and lynching. If the *IW* didn't intend to make that declaration, why would it have reprinted the story at all? Why not publish its own article on the Chinese workers' militancy, without the outrageous assertion that beatings, forced starvation and murder are Wobbly tactics?

Violence and lynch law have always been the tactics of our enemies, and are part and parcel of the bloody capitalist system we are seeking to overthrow. If the new society we seek to build is to be brought in through murder, coercion and lynch mobs, then it will be no better than what we have now, and I want no part of it.

Our fellow workers in China have been pushed too far by the rising capitalist frenzy, and their violent reaction is understandable; but it is no way to build a just and humane society. Our response should be to encourage their militancy, and to help them find constructive ways to direct their anger.

The *IW* does not speak for me when it calls murderers "Chinese Wobblies." The *IW* should, if anything, have condemned *Workers Online* for publishing such a libelous misrepresentation of the IWW, not duplicated the offense! When the government begins prosecuting us as terrorists again, this article from our official organ is sure to be offered

as evidence against us.

Yours for the One Big Union,
Jim Crutchfield X351222, NYC GMB
Editor's Note: I regret that FW Crutchfield reads my disclaimer as "mealy-mouthed." While finding the article interesting, I agree that it mischaracterized our organization, which is why I included the disclaimer. The "Chinese Wobblies" tag came from *Workers Online*, by the way, not from me. The next *WO* included a letter from Australian Wobs objecting to the way the article represented the IWW and particularly to *WO's* use of the IWW emblem to illustrate it.

Notices

The IWW office has relocated to a storefront location with better visibility and accessibility. The mailing address will remain the same, but the telephone number has been changed to 215-222-1905.

After a period of intermittent service, the iww.org computer networks are back on line. The union email address is working again, and a newly designed IWW home page (www.iww.org) should make the main site easier to navigate.

The 2002 IWW General Assembly will be held in Ottawa, Canada, August 30 - Sept. 2. The first day will feature an organizer training session; the main business sessions will be Aug. 31 and Sept. 1. A variety of workshops and cultural activities are also being planned. All nominations for IWW General Secretary-Treasurer, General Executive Board, International Solidarity Commission, *Industrial Worker* editor and other union-wide offices must be made either on the floor of the Assembly, or in writing by August 20 to IWW General Headquarters.

Pacific Northwest IWW Organizer Training: August 3 and 4, Portland, Oregon. This is the third in a series of workshops being presented by the IWW's organizer training program. Contact the Portland IDC or General Headquarters for details.

Phoenix Wobs picket sweat ball

BY MIKE BENNETT

On May 6th, members of the Phoenix GMB turned out to support our Fellow and Sister Workers in Pittsburgh in demanding that Major League Baseball end its support of sweatshops as the Pirates came to play the Diamondbacks at taxpayer-funded Bank One Ballpark in downtown Phoenix. The newly forming Pittsburgh GMB has been waging a campaign against the Pirates (since before the GMB existed, even) with their slogan, "No Sweat, Bucco!"

We arrived at the ballpark at 5:30 pm and flyered for an hour and a half before being ordered to leave by a sheriff's deputy and a mounted Phoenix cop, who informed us that there was "no public space" on that side of the street. We continued flyering once we had left the lovely sidewalk we'd paid for and gone across the street.

More than a thousand flyers were handed out to Diamondback and Pirate fans alike. Let's hope the Pirates' front office learns of the support across the country for No Sweat, Bucco! and the Pittsburgh IWW.

Boston Wobs hit the bricks

Boston Wobs have joined protests against University of Massachusetts union-busting, welfare "reform," a speech by the World Bank president, and the military crackdown on Palestinians in the last month, as well as leafleting a local Footlocker in solidarity with Salvadoran workers laid-off when they filed for union recognition and joining a boisterous march and rally June 13 in solidarity with Boston janitors on the eve of new contract negotiations. The janitors earn from \$7.50 to \$10 an hour (far less than in comparable cities) and are generally given only part-time work so that contractors can avoid paying benefits. They are demanding full-time work, health insurance, and pay raises.

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- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ EMANCIPATION

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One Big Union solidarity needed...

Milwaukee IWW joins dockers' picket line

BY SKIP PORTER, MILWAUKEE GMB

Milwaukee Wobs supported International Longshoremen's Association local 815 in early May as they continued their struggle to hold on to the remaining union dock jobs at the Port of Milwaukee. The issue this time was the same old song and dance, an imported cargo of clinker for cement unloaded by out-of-town scabs. Last October, one of the first actions by the new Milwaukee GMB was picket line support for these longshoremen, the workers who do the actual work of unloading ships. This time Operating Engineers Local 139 joined the longshoremen in

their complaints. They lost jobs driving the loaded trucks to the storage facility.

The Greek-flagged Chios Sailor, with her load of clinker from Cyprus, slipped into Milwaukee during the early hours of 10 May. Mechanical difficulties, part of the ethos of the lower levels of Greek shipping, had delayed the vessel's passage through the St. Lawrence Seaway for over a week. The uncertain arrival played havoc with workers' plans for picketing.

Nevertheless, the evening of 9 May saw about 35 workers from various organizations rally near the bulk storage facilities of Badger Cement Products, LLC. At the rally, supporters from IWW; United Electrical; Communications Workers; Steelworkers; AFSCME; Masters, Mates & Pilots; Plumbers and others looked on as dignitaries from the Milwaukee labor council decried the loss of union jobs in general, and the decline of ILA representation in the Port of Milwaukee.

Doug Kubic, business agent for Local 815, said union positions at the port numbered nearly 240 in 1992. Now, barely 40 longshoremen work regularly. The sad fact, yet at the same time a gratifying fact, was that the six Wobs present were the largest union contingent. The business union dignitaries offered no solutions, offered little encouragement, and went home early.

Near dawn on the 10th, the Chios Sailor, under control of a District 3 Great Lakes pilot and assisted by two tugs, shot through the main entry into Milwaukee Harbor. The longshoremen had managed, against a strong west wind and cold temperatures, to launch a small floating picket line made up of a sailboat and some runabouts crewed by various union members including IWWs. At that hour of the day and under the prevailing conditions, the picket line drew little attention and had no effect on the vessel's docking.

Here another sad fact presented itself: the tug captains and the pilots belong to the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots; itself part of the ILA. These fellow workers plainly did not view an injury to one as an injury to all. The pilot let an opportunity to anchor outside the harbor for a short while slip away. Time at anchor would have been a strong point in favor of further talks aimed at getting the unloading work for the dockers and would have emphasized local workers' displeasure and solidarity. When the Chios Sailor was secured at the dock, the pilot left by the back way – aboard one of the tugs

From that time on, except for rainy periods when no cargo was worked, pickets patrolled the access road near the Badger Cement Products terminal from six in the morning to nine at night. Longshoremen and operating engineers maintained the line, assisted by Wobs and others.

At times the line was a lone longshoreman; at others, it was predominately Wobblies. The whole exercise was a labor of love; in an out-of-the-way corner of an area away from the active parts of the city, informational picketing had little value. The audience was already in the know about the issues and few passions played. In fact, ILA members from another local passed through the pickets on their way to load a cargo of grain at a grain elevator.

International Materials Inc., of Bryn Mawr PA, a company that seems to specialize in handling bulk cargos all over the globe, did the actual cargo work. They supplied specialized unloading equipment to speed the job, and, of course, paid substandard wages. Their workers resided in a motel for the duration and their wages left town with them. The clinker was unloaded and the Chios Sailor left to load grain in Thunder

Bay in the wee hours of the 15th.

This season in Milwaukee, the Badger Cement Products' clinker was an especially important loss to longshoremen and operating engineers. One of the main international trade patterns in the Great Lakes is steel inbound for such ports as Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and Milwaukee. Vessels then routinely proceed to an upper lakes port such as Duluth, Minnesota, or Thunder Bay, Ontario, to load grain for export. Occasionally a ship loads grain in Milwaukee. The steel tariffs decreed by Baby Bush have wrecked the traditional trade patterns and thrown a lot of freight to the railroads. Also, with few ships arriving in the Great Lakes, a large portion of export grain will be shipped through non-union shippers and carriers on the Mississippi River system. Great Lakes longshoremen and others dependent upon shipping are hurting in a big way.

The dislocations brought about by these local assaults on workers can be disorienting and disheartening. The effects of globalization were played on a neighborhood scale here. The elements were all there: the "foreign" corporation setting up shop, the loss of local economic effects, the further erosion of communities, the classic "race to the bottom" in terms of pay and conditions, and the concentration of economic power and wealth into fewer hands. These problems are larger than a few dozen dockers in Milwaukee and must be addressed with the big picture in mind. For example, the cargo was loaded in Cyprus. Would Cypriot dockers refuse to load a ship if they knew how their efforts would harm other workers where the ship is unloaded?

Garrison Keillor talks about people who think money is worth more than anything you can buy with it. These are the ones we have to fight against and win.

Rebuilding the OBU in Los Angeles

BY X351213

The Los Angeles General Membership Branch has kicked off a series of activities aimed at building the One Big Union in our community. Los Angeles is the most important conduit for Asian goods arriving in the U.S. and has lots of textile manufacturing and food packaging. High poverty, increasing unemployment, terrible housing conditions and pressure on "illegal" immigrants shows that the struggle between the employing class and the working class is intense in LA.

These are the conditions under which the IWW has traditionally organized, and the LA branch is dedicated to building the One Big Union. We are currently a small group, but we believe that workers will see that the IWW has something that the traditional trade unions do not: a vision of a new society free from wage slavery, and a strategy for reaching that society.

Since April, we have held a monthly film night at the Flor y Canto Centro Comunitario. So far we have shown "Salt of the Earth" and a two-part documentary on California labor history, "Golden Lands, Working Hands." This event has been well received and gained our branch a few new members.

We have tried to create a visible presence in our community. We joined our fellow Wobblies for a large, spirited march for economic justice in Santa Barbara on April 27. We also participated in the large immigrant rights march on May Day. A crowd of 10,000 workers marched through downtown Los Angeles. We carried signs calling for the 4 hour day and the 4 day week, and showing our solidarity with the Equality Trade Union, Migrant Branch, a union of immigrant workers in Korea. Korean immigrants are facing the same pressures and super-exploitation as their counterparts in the U.S.; workers struggles have no borders.

We are preparing for labor troubles at the harbor. Workers at the Long Beach and Los Angeles harbors are currently negotiating a new contract with the shipping companies. The main point of contention is the bosses' desire to further automate the unloading of ships. The current contract runs out June 30. If the docks are closed, the U.S. economy will lose \$1.7 billion per day

These dock workers have the unique opportunity to strike at a essential link in the global capitalist economy. Shipping on the west coast will only become more important to the capitalists as trade with Asia doubles in the next ten years. Despite the deserved radical reputation of the rank-and-file dock workers, their union, the ILWU, and management have typically worked together. It's been about 30 years since the dock workers have gone out on strike.

LA Wobs will stand in solidarity with our fellow workers against the profit-hungry capitalists. A strike at the docks would make it clear that the workers themselves have the power to bring down the capitalist system and replace it with a society where economic activity is for the needs of all.

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.



When workbells chime for bits of overtime whose wars we love to fight for leech and parasite

Draize Bosses

by F.N. Brill

It's said the Roman Empire gave its citizens bread and circuses. French philosopher, Paul Virilio says capitalism demands mandatory movement. This last month we get at least circuses and movement.

Those of us stuck in these United States of Amnesia were subjected to a spectacle of a man standing atop a 90 ft. pole for 35 hours only to jump into a 5m/15 ft stack of cardboard. This was TV material. Really.

New York Times reports one passerby commented: "Man, I wish I had 35 hours to spend in one place."

★ ★ ★

Two FBI agents are talking to one another. The first asks the second, "What do you think of President Bush?" "You know I think the same thing as you" comes the reply. "In that case, I must arrest you."

★ ★ ★

It's said that art approximates life. Or maybe it's the other way around. Anyhow, this comes from a professor of psychology from Indiana:

"Your column in the May issue of *Industrial Worker* carries a joke about economists whose punch line reads: 'Then why don't they experiment on animals first?' It turns out that economists and psychologists have carried out animal experiments on economic questions. I told the story of this kind of research in a book published in 1983 by Praeger (New York) called *Behavioral Economics*. The animal model of economics continues to flourish..."

YIKES!

★ ★ ★

Will fortune never come with both hands full, But write her fair words still in foulest letters? She either gives a stomach and no food – Such are the poor, in health – or else a feast And takes away the stomach – such are the rich, That have abundance and enjoy it not.

King Henry, Act 4, Scene 4.

★ ★ ★

"If the future belongs to you, then why do you have to buy it?" — J. Neo Marvin from his album "Slowly I turned"

★ ★ ★

Q. What do economists and computers have in common?

A. You need to punch information into both of them.

Q. How many free market economists does it take to change a light bulb?

A. None. If the light bulb needed changing the market would have already done it.

"I'm thinking of leaving my husband," complained the economist's wife. "All he ever does is stand at the end of the bed and tell me how good things are going to be."

★ ★ ★

Q. What do you get when you cross the Godfather with a business union negotiator?

A. An offer you can't understand.

★ ★ ★

McTravesty: In Baku, Azerbaijan, the most famous square is called Fountain Square. It was famous for the beautiful rose garden at the end of a magnificent array of fountains. The square survived Stalinism but is succumbing to another imperialist tyranny. McDonald's is building a new "restaurant" on the site.

The next-most historic place is called Istiglal Kuchase (Freedom Street). There's a great little palace here that has been used as a philharmonic theatre for the last 100 years until it fell into disrepair through lack of funds. It is a truly magnificent structure that has a commanding position in Baku. McDonald's is going to plant the iron burger right on top of this lovely bit of architecture, too. Evidently, just enough cash in the back pocket of the mayor, who happens to be the best mate of the president, and the job's done. Demolition & construction starts in a couple of months. So there you have it, McDonald's – less bothered about preserving history and architecture than old Joe Stalin. (from *McWorkers Bulletin*)

★ ★ ★

The following was submitted by FW Earl from back east in Texas:

Did you know that the "Poor Boy Sandwich" was invented during a strike? In 1929 the New Orleans streetcar workers went on strike against their for-profit-only employer. What's interesting is that a spontaneous worker-consumer alliance formed, in which the streetcar riders hated the bean counters running the company as much as the workers. A popular streetcar boycott ensued, which everyone supported as well as they could.

A newspaper published an item that a delicatessen owner was giving away free sandwiches to, as the journalist put it, "the poor boys on strike." So the strikers would tell the guy, "Gimme a sandwich, I'm a poor boy." And that's how the Poor Boy Sandwich was born.

Against his better judgment, F.N. Brill is a figment of your imagination. At one point he was your imaginary playmate. You are invited to send jokes, stories, observations and those small packets of honey you find in restaurants. Contact him at fnbrill@yahoo.com or c/o IWW, 616 E Burnside, Portland OR 97214 USofA

Thousands protest B.C. gov't attacks

More than 30,000 marchers joined protests May 25 against the province's Liberal government, which has cut public services by one-third since being elected a year ago; torn up collective agreements with government workers; reduced funding for social services, pharmacare and legal aid; and passed legislation allowing the wide-scale privatization of health services.

Proposed amendments to the Labour Relations Code and Employment Standards

Act would further erode workers' protections, reducing overtime premiums and easing restrictions on employing children.

B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair said the rally was a way for people to express their opposition to the neoliberal agenda. "People should be standing up to the government and saying it's time to go back to what they promised," said Sinclair. "Instead of closing schools and hospitals, they should be opening them."

Laid-off workers wage rank-and-file fight for their jobs

It seems as though there is no end to the indignities heaped upon workers at Lomans warehouse in Langley, B.C. After being stuck in a 10-year contract, the workers were recently pink-slipped by their employer, which provides warehouse services for Overwaitea Food Group stores in western Canada.

Their union, UFCW Local 1518, says that OFG and Lomans are closely connected and should be treated as common employers, but its complaint to the BCLRB came 10 years after Lomans took over the warehousing operation and won't be decided until after the workers are unemployed.

In the face of the workers' growing anger about the layoff, their union appears to be distancing itself from them.

Workers who asked to attend a Local 1518 bargaining conference were initially

told that the conference didn't concern them. Only after threatening to picket the upscale resort where the conference was being held was their shop steward invited.

Now, to add one more indignity to a growing pile, they've been told by their union that they must pay for their own leafleting campaign!

The workers have developed a leaflet to raise awareness of their situation and plan to get their message out at a number of OFG stores over the next several weeks.

The workers are funding their leafleting campaign through 50-50 drawings.

Said one angry member, "If there is a story here it is most definitely the absolute gall of the union head office to expect us, after all these years, to come up with our own money for a leafleting campaign. Very classy."

I.U. 330 rolls on Labor Ready

BY X351694, PORTLAND

Oregon Labor Commissioner Jack Roberts recently proposed imposing a \$49,500 fine against Labor Ready Inc. for repeatedly failing to pay prevailing wages to workers it dispatched to publicly financed job sites.

Labor Ready's fingers were caught in the cookie jar when they dispatched Aaron Wadsworth to a job site paying him the princely sum of \$6.75 per hour when he should have been paid \$43.83 per hour and classified as a carpenter working overtime. Additionally Labor Ready was found to have filed inaccurate payroll records and numerous other labor law violations.

Construction Workers I.U. 330 immediately responded to this latest violation by flyering several Labor Ready shops in the greater Portland, Oregon, area explaining what the prevailing wage is, how workers can determine if their job site is covered, and who to call for more information.

With an established presence in two shops and ongoing contact with several others, what began as a campaign of agitation has the potential of becoming an organizing drive. The agreed-upon goal is to establish as company policy a proposed Temp Workers Bill of Rights that would immediately improve wage and work conditions and change the way people are dispatched to job sites.

For several years the Building Council

How to keep poor workers happy

BY BRIAN OLIVER SHEPPARD

Fast food outfits are notorious for liberally handing out nice-sounding titles like "Assistant Manager" and "Management Trainee" to low-end workers who don't get paid enough to live on. This phenomenon, which keeps workers poor but content, has crept into the corporate culture at large as bosses try to find ways to keep workers loyal in recessionary times.

"People view a grander title as recognition of their contribution to the organization and feel more committed as a result," said Paul Rapacioli, director of employment agency Reed's Internet service, which studied the trend it calls "up-titling." It costs nothing for an employer to change a worker's job title, yet many employees report feeling more appreciated when their title sounds more impressive, the study says.

Some examples the Reed study found: janitors were called "technical sanitation assistants" at one firm; stock boys could delight in being called "stock replenishment executives" at another. A woman answering phones was rechristened "head of verbal telecommunications," while at another company a window cleaner was dubbed "optical illuminator enhancer."

Trades Department (AFL-CIO) has fought the labor pimp by filing numerous civil complaints which to date have not benefited individual workers. I.U. 330 joins this effort by establishing a second front focused on conditions. In the near future we will be seeking a meeting with BCTD to agree on ways to cooperate to sweep the scheme of temporary enslavement into the dustbin of history.

In order to be successful the campaign must have as its linchpin concerted activity nationally and internationally at numerous Labor Ready shops. At the minimum a weekly union presence must be established. This will help Portland create some elbow room so that we can push this campaign to a successful conclusion and your help is crucial to ensuring that victory.

To help roll the union right over the enslavement industry please contact us immediately: IWW I.U. 330, 616 E. Burnside, Portland OR 97214

Temp Workers Bill of Rights

1) We have the right to a sustainable living wage.

Most jobs through Labor Ready and other such enslavement schemes pay \$6.50 per hour. This is inadequate to support ourselves and our families.

2) We have the right to a fair dispatch process and to know what that process is.

Most labor halls use the term "equal match" as a basis of dispatch. We find this term to mean a few company rats get to work while the rest of us sit idle.

We affirm the right to a dispatch process strictly based on the number of report days. The only exceptions being those providing transportation to job sites and assignments requiring a specific skill.

3) We have the right to be treated in a fair and non-abusive manner. The days of verbal abuse, threats of physical harm, arbitrary termination, etc. must end immediately. We affirm the right to a written policy that is binding on both the company and its clients which prohibits such behavior.

4) We have the right to a grievance structure. At some point conflict will occur with either company representatives or clients. Presently resolution of these conflicts rests entirely with company representatives. We find this situation to be grossly unfair. We affirm the right to design and implement a grievance procedure which is binding on all affected parties.

5) We have the right to association.

If we feel it necessary to create formations of economic self-defense, hokey pokey dance clubs, beer drinking teams or whatever, we affirm the right to do so without company interference or fear of retaliation.

(Comments, additions, questions, criticism, etc. on this draft document are greatly appreciated and necessary so that it reflects the opinions of all of us in the industry.)

Toronto Wobs back hotel housekeepers

BY JEFF SHANTZ

Wobblies in Toronto have been standing in solidarity with 20 housekeepers at the Quality Hotel in downtown Toronto over the past months. The workers, most of whom are women of colour, are members of HERE Local 75. Their main concern is that they are being made to clean rooms at a pace above the industry standard: 18 rooms in an eight-hour day while the standard is 16.

Failure to clean at that pace (even if visitors put Do Not Disturb signs on their doors) costs the women pay reductions for every room not done. These reductions push the women's wages, lower than industry standards to begin with, below the poverty line. The workers have been pushing for hourly rather than room-based pay.

Despite boss threats, suspensions and reprimands, the women have not backed down. Every day they have been holding hour-long information pickets at the end of their shifts. The women, in solidarity meetings with the Ontario Common Front, decided to hold "Solidarity Wednesday" rallies to draw greater attention to Quality practices.

It's important that the OCF, which has been viewed largely as an opposition to the provincial government, has gotten involved in this fight since outfits like the Quality Hotel are benefactors of Tory government policies which make it easier for bosses to press more work out of workers, especially vulnerable workers, for less pay.

76 trombones lead Seattle protest

BY MARK WOLFF

Members of the American Federation of Musicians rallied June 4 to protest the opening of "The Music Man" in its second year on tour. On Broadway the show was an Equity production where actors, stage hands and musicians worked for the union rate. When the show went on tour it was "Broadway"—meaning trouble, big trouble, from Big League Theatricals Productions, where pay on the road could be less than half the union rate, without benefits.

At Seattle's Paramount Theater, Musicians paraded in costume carrying trombones. Other unionists leafleted in solidarity with Actors Equity and other theater unions. The King County Labor Council, participating in the AFL-CIO 'Voice @ Work' month of action, joined the rally.

Musicians union attempts to bargain with Paramount management, according to Seattle indymedia, included Clear Channel Communications. Clear Channel is a conglomerate owner of musical tour companies, radio stations, TV stations and sporting events in the United States.

The protest against the Big League tour goes back to March 2001 in Iowa City, where locals commented on the damage to Iowa's image from having workers paid so badly. By the end of the month the AFL-CIO had Big League on its national boycott list.

In April 2002 over 1,000 union actors, production staff and musicians protested Music Man's Chicago opening, encouraging people to boycott the show. The rank and file questioned the effectiveness of discouraging on-site ticket sales where subscribers were most likely to attend; however, reports from Chicago pointed to an empty theater.

On May Day 2002, Actors Equity filed with the National Labor Relations Board to represent Music Man cast members. According to the Actors Equity web page, the filing came after touring cast members signed cards in New York and elsewhere on the tour.

Actors Equity delayed its leafleting in Atlanta, Detroit and California while organizing, but Big League Theatricals refused to recognize the union. Seattle marks a resumption of direct confrontation with companies hosting the Music Man tour.



News Item: U.S. "Democratic" senate approves Fast Track legislation.

Bosses: Workers must pay more for health care coverage

BY BRIAN OLIVER SHEPPARD

On June 11, at a conference titled "Wall Street to Washington" attended by major employers and health care industry representatives, the future of workers' health care was mullied over. The bosses' conference came to a startling decision: The current U.S. health care system is too generous to employees and needs to be scaled back.

"I do think people have been shielded from understanding the cost for far too long," Roberta Walters Goodman of Merrill Lynch told the conference. Goodman said the system of "copayments" is on its way out because "it encourages people to consume health care without any regard to its actual cost." Instead she advocated a "co-insurance" system where those who do still get health care will pay a larger portion of the cost.

The U.S. health care system leaves over 44 million Americans uninsured. Many who are lucky enough to get insurance from their employer find that they are saddled with so many co-payments, premiums, and paycheck deductions that it is not worthwhile to keep any coverage. And even when employees bite the bullet and accept deductions to keep their insurance, they still may not be covered for the vision, dental and prescription expenses they will face. In short, even for those nominally insured, the employer-sponsored health care system fails.

In a rare moment of honesty, Joe France of Credit Suisse First Boston said that many insurance plans "have boosted premiums and

cut benefits" and have therefore "driven away most of their potential enrollees." He admitted that this is "because the cost is no longer worth the constraints" to many employees.

However, there was no talk of a single-payer health care system or of a public health program where uninsured Americans get benefits similar to those of U.S. politicians. Instead, the "Wall Street to Washington" industry gathering predicted a bleak future of rising costs and tough times for workers. Although the conference attendees were associated with large corporations that could change this, they cynically situated themselves as observers of an unfortunate trend that they were powerless to control.

Hershey strike saves benefits

After six weeks on strike, and days after management announced it was reopening two Hershey, Penn., plants with scab labor, 2,700 members of Chocolate Workers Local 464 returned to work June 10 with their health benefits intact.

Management backed down from demands that workers' share of health premiums triple from the present 6 percent to 18 percent over four years, in exchange for pay hikes 5 cents an hour smaller than had previously been agreed.

The strike had shuttered one-fourth of Hershey's production capacity for products such as Hershey's Kisses, chocolate bars, and chocolate syrup. Analysts estimate the strike cost Hershey \$500 million.

Unions gave politician millions

California Gov. Gray Davis is a money-making dynamo, pulling in donations at a rate of \$1,800 an hour, 24 hours a day for the past five years. Since he first launched his successful campaign for governor in June 1997, Davis has raised \$78.7 million.

Davis's largest donors include the California Teachers Association, which pumped \$1.1 million into Davis' 1998 campaign and has clashed with him ever since over his austerity budgets.

Davis's top ten: 1. Service Employees: \$1.6 million; 2. pipe trades unions: \$1.2 million; 3. Carpenters: \$1.1 million; 4. California Teachers Association: \$1.1 million; 5. A. Jerrold Perenchio (Univision president): \$961,000; 6. American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees: \$961,000; 7. California Correctional Peace Officers Association PAC: \$772,000; 8. Laborers: \$763,000; 9. Firefighters: \$668,000; 10. Electrical Workers: \$630,000.

Clinton Library non-union

The Clinton presidential library is being built in Arkansas by non-union labor, prompting some unions to threaten to with-

hold money from Democrats.

"It's ironic that the presidential library dedicated to Ronald Reagan — an ardent foe of our unions — was built 100 percent union," said Edward Sullivan, president of the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department. Unions "are furious at being treated this way by former allies," and most will stop their contributions to the Democratic National Committee, Sullivan said.

While the AFL-CIO has occasionally threatened to stop funding the Democratic Party, notably after Democrats approved "free trade" deals, they have never carried through. Democratic spokeswoman Maria Cardona expressed confidence that unions would once again swallow their pride and back the party in the coming elections.

AFL-CIO adds \$19 million to political war chest

The AFL-CIO has agreed to assess member unions \$19 million over three years for its political efforts. The increased assessment comes to 4 cents a union member per month. The money will help finance the AFL's \$34 million program in the next two years.

Labor Dept posts union data online

The U.S. Labor Department has begun posting the annual reports unions are required to file each year, which includes the names and salaries of all officers and other financial information, on its web site.

Most of the reports currently available are for relatively small unions, though the government says it will eventually post reports from all unions.

However, the government does not intend to post the annual reports required from union-busting consultants and labor spies and from the employers who hire them.

More than 10,000 workers are fired each year for "protected" union activities, giving workers a vital interest in being able to learn how much money companies are spending to trample on their rights.

Anti-union groups are also seeking legislation to bar employers from voluntarily recognizing unions, claiming that workers need to be protected from union coercion.

Oddly, these groups seem unconcerned with the tens of thousands of documented abuses of workers' rights committed by employers each year. In 1999, the most recent year for which data is available, the National Labor Relations Board awarded nearly \$60 million in back pay to workers who were illegally fired or discriminated against in retaliation for their union activity.

Chicken workers entitled to paid safety suit-up time

Workers must be paid for time spent putting on and taking off required safety gear, the U.S. Department of Labor has ruled.

Perdue Farms was ordered to pay \$10 million to 25,000 chicken workers who were required to put on and remove protective clothing and equipment during personal, unpaid time. At that, workers have been short-changed, as the department estimated the time involved at just 8 minutes a day.

Two years ago, government inspectors found that 100 percent of inspected poultry plants were violating federal minimum wage and overtime laws.

Workers robbed of \$106m

In 2001, the government ordered employers to pay some \$106 million in unpaid overtime to 155,439 workers. The government does not monitor overtime compliance, instead responding to worker complaints.

Hoffa allies ousted from Teamsters

The longtime Chicago leader of the Teamsters has been expelled from the union by an independent oversight board.

The oversight board said Teamster official William T. Hogan Jr. tried to negotiate a deal whose effect would have been to push down wages and benefits for thousands of the union's members in Las Vegas.

Hogan was motivated, the board found, by a desire to send work to an employment agency that would have provided nonunion laborers to do convention work in Las Vegas. Hogan's brother was a senior executive at that company.

IBT President James P. Hoffa initially had Hogan as his running mate when he first ran in 1996. Hogan dropped off the ticket after government investigators accused him of nepotism at the local he ran. Dane Passo, a personal aide to Hoffa until last year, was also ousted for his role in the scheme.

NLRB elections decline

The National Labor Relations Board conducted 349 fewer representation elections in the latest six-month period for which information is available; unions won 169 fewer elections in the period. 2002 is likely to see the fewest NLRB elections since the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935.

Resisting Canada's racist immigration crackdown

BY JEFF SHANTZ

September 11 offered an excuse to openly display the cruel forces of xenophobia and racism which are ever-present, if often denied, features of Canadian society. Among the institutions feeding those renewed forces is the Federal government with its zealous focus on "security" and its manic obsession with the phantom of permeable borders. In an effort to show its allegiance to U.S. world order the Canadian government has entered into discussions around joint agreements around border security and immigration controls up to and including the creation of a security perimeter around North America, a "Fortress North America."

The dangers facing us in this epoch are painfully illustrated in the recent experiences of three of our neighbours who have been set upon by Canadian Immigration: Irma Joyles, Brendalyn MacDonald and Shirley-Ann Charles. Despite each woman having lived in Canada for many years, working, attending school and raising families, immigration authorities targeted them for deportation without hearings. In order to avoid having to make the awful choice between leaving her child behind without her only support or bringing her to a climate which will worsen her health, Irma filed a humanitarian and compassionate claim. Brenda, facing a similar impossible choice, also filed a claim. Unfortunately, on Nov. 26, with no hearing at all, Shirley-Ann was deported.

According to Canadian immigration policy all three women were entitled to have humanitarian and compassionate claims heard. Instead, without explanation, officers were sent to Brendalyn's home to arrest her. (She was released in May after winning permanent resident status.) In this time of war increased "security" apparently means that government can remove women without notice or hearing. Poor immigrants and refugees now stand without rights to due legal process. Prior to September 11 none of these women would have been targeted and pursued with such viciousness. It is likely that because they have children, homes and jobs they would not even have been investigated.

In addition to increased harassment and threats of deportation are the frightening numbers of people who have been detained in Toronto jails and detention centres, often in solitary confinement. People have been denied access to sanitation and medical care and hearings often occur by video link. At the notorious Celebrity Inn, a motel near Pearson International Airport used as a de-



tention centre for more than 100 immigrants, families are split up. Full information about people detained since September 11 has yet to be disclosed despite the efforts of groups such as Anti-Racist Action and Colours of Resistance.

In response to the increasingly inhumane treatment inflicted on immigrants and refugees, OCAP, Colours of Resistance and Anti-Racist Action, along with allied groups, have organized a series of actions and events, including rallies outside the Celebrity Inn to draw attention to these issues and to demand rights and dignity for all detained people. As the situation facing immigrants and refugees worsens and as xenophobia becomes the basis for social policy, the need to develop creative and effective means of struggle becomes more and more pressing.

Racial and economic profiling maintains the system of divide and conquer which allows bosses and governments to play sectors of the working class against each other. It is part of long-standing practices which drive wages down and prevent opposition movements from forming.

The unequal distribution of rights ensured by state definitions of citizen, immigrant, refugee or "illegal" serve the interests of capital in several ways. The limitation of political or legal rights on the basis of birthplace makes people vulnerable and open to intimidation and extreme exploitation. Denial of social benefits such as welfare, disability benefits and unemployment benefits ensures a precarious work force willing to take on undesirable or dangerous work and

less able to organize for better conditions. Differential categories of citizenship also serve as markers of difference separating workers.

Workers have to get past the racist anti-immigrant hysteria, so readily manipulated by bosses and politicians, to recognize that immigrants are not the cause of the social ills of capitalism. Poverty, violence and unemployment are standard outcomes of capitalist production for profit.

Immigration is the movement of people affected by that exploitation. Poverty and unemployment result from the capitalist structuring of work which sees some work 60-hour weeks while others are left without work. In reality, the ills of capitalism can only be alleviated when those affected by exploitation – employed and unemployed, immigrants and non-immigrants – embrace each other in defence against exploitation. The initiative for this must come from organized workers.

Flying squads & labour unity

In early September 2001, OCAP, along with allies in Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903 flying squad, went to Pearson International Airport to demand an end to threats of deportation against three families. Leaflets were given to passengers alerting them to the situation and a visit was paid to the Immigration Canada deportation office in the basement of Terminal One.

OCAP demanded and received a meeting with the airport's Immigration management and gave a deadline of the end of the business day to issue stays of removal in all three instances. All three deportations were eventually cancelled. This unusual result, in which the removal dates were cancelled prior to a Federal Court challenge, is a testament to the powers of direct action.

The presence of the flying squad was crucial in the success of this action. The flying squad, a decentralized group of rank-and-file activists on call to support strikes, demonstrations or casework actions, demonstrates how labour organizations can step out of traditional workplace concerns to act in a broadened defence of working-class interests. The expansion of union flying squads, with autonomy from union bureaucracies, could provide a substantial response to the state's efforts to isolate immigrants and refugees from the larger community.

This is just one action that organized labour can take in the here-and-now to build a global network of solidarity and support. The emboldened aggressiveness of Immigration Canada after September 11 make such actions in defence of innocent people much more pressing, as the case of Shirley-Ann Charles shows with frightening clarity.

There is more that unions could do. In the Netherlands, pilots have refused, as a health and safety issue, to transport people who are being deported. This is something which should be implemented in airline unions in North America. Instead of refus-

ing to attend the Pearson action, as they did, the Canadian Auto Workers, which represents many airline workers, could have used the opportunity to discuss the issue with their members as a first step in actively pursuing such a policy.

A new underground railroad?

These emerging circumstances of increased repression against immigrants and refugees mean that unions and social movements must develop much more advanced strategies for support.

Labour needs to organize outside of the limited confines of collective bargaining and the workplace to build networks of class-wide support. This must include support for unemployed workers, poor people, injured workers, immigrants and refugees, among others. In effect these networks should form the basis for a new underground railroad which can secure safe travel across borders for people seeking to flee economic exploitation or political repression.

While community organizations can be expected to play a part in this, only organized labour has the resources to make this an effective and ongoing practice. Labour can help to provide transportation, safe houses and even employment.

We need to challenge the statist categories of citizenship which arbitrarily grant workers differential political and legal rights. As long as these citizenship categories exist bosses will continue to use "illegal" labour for their own purposes. As long as there are vulnerable and hyper-exploitable categories of workers, capital will use these differences to subject workers to harsher working conditions at lower pay without social benefits. Legal precariousness will always be a mechanism for exploiting those workers who find themselves in such a situation. Thus labour must work to abolish those practices which make anyone illegal. As European movements have stated: "No One Is Illegal."

Bosses have established free movement for themselves through free trade deals and other mechanisms while simultaneously working to limit the movement of workers. This works to their benefit by allowing them to pursue low wages and weak environmental regulations while limiting workers' options for seeking improved living conditions. Limiting the movement of workers makes it tougher for them to refuse the bad deals bosses offer them, which in turn weakens wages and working condition.

Of course we have always maintained that people have the right to live, work and travel wherever they choose and to associate with whomever they choose. As internationalists, we actively oppose the national borders which serve to divide and segregate people.

These views were once central parts of the international labour movement. It is time for labour to remember this vital part of our history.

U.S. anti-Arab job incidents rising

Hundreds of reports by Muslim, Middle Eastern and Arab workers about workplace discrimination have been filed since the Sept. 11 attacks, and new claims are pouring in.

The increase has alarmed federal officials enough to start a first-ever campaign to stem the rise. As part of a national outreach effort, officials from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's 51 field offices are meeting with employers to discuss the need to prevent discrimination.

"The Sept. 11 backlash continues," says EEOC spokesman David Grinberg, adding that many workers discriminated against never file charges. "This type of discrimination is unlawful, and anger about Sept. 11 shouldn't be targeted against innocent individuals in the workplace."

Worker fired for supporting human rights

Disturbed by televised images of Israeli military forces invading Palestinian cities and towns, 24-year-old computer engineer James Hanna took a 10-day leave from his job at the Munich office of Cadence Design Systems in late April to do humanitarian work with the International Solidarity Movement, a group of pro-Palestinian activists who believe in non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

"For me, it was the injustice, the fact that nobody really seemed to care," said Hanna. Hanna was detained by the Israeli army May 2 after he participated in an attempt to deliver food to armed gunmen and others hiding in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. He was deported two days later.

When Hanna returned to work he was fired "due to unacceptable conduct and political actions in a geographical area where Cadence does business," according to his termination letter.

A spokesman for the San Jose company, which is a leading provider of software used to design chips and electronic devices, con-



firmed that Hanna's employment contract had been terminated but declined to elaborate as to why.

Dean Fryer of the California Department of Industrial Relations said firing workers for political activity is illegal in California. However, the state law generally does not apply to contractors like Hanna or to employees of foreign subsidiaries, Fryer said.

Hanna said he is still at a loss to explain what happened to him. "I went to Israel on my personal time and did not affiliate myself with my company while I was there. I didn't associate with any militant or radical groups, and I conducted what I thought were thoroughly humanitarian acts," he said.

"I want people to be aware of what happened to me, so they can understand what corporate America is thinking and doing in regards to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict," he said. "People who speak out or act on behalf of the Palestinian people are being punished, both in the corporate and academic spheres."

Welfare "reform": The road to poverty

U.S. welfare rolls have been cut in half since the Clinton "reforms," but most of the former welfare recipients were dumped in low-paying, unstable jobs, according to a new report by the Joyce Foundation.

Most of the former recipients' income is below the federal poverty line, and half sometimes are unable to pay food, rent or utility bills. About one in 10 former recipients have been evicted or have become homeless.

Meanwhile, the U.S. senate is considering reauthorization legislation for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (the major welfare program) which would dramatically increase the pressure on welfare recipients to take low-paying jobs, even as unemployment rates steadily climb.

At least half of recipients are currently required to put in at least 30 hours a week in work and work-related programs (which do not include taking care of their young children). Under the plan recently approved by the House, this requirement would be increased to 40 hours a week, at least 70 percent of recipients would be required to participate, and education and job training programs could last for no longer than four months. Because the bill does not acknowledge the reality of holidays and sick time, many poor mothers could find themselves forced to work overtime while their children languish at home or in the streets.

The Senate Finance Committee is currently considering the House legislation, as

well as an alternative proposal that would maintain the present 30-hour work requirement, and allow job-training and educational programs for up to two years (the present limit is 12 months). They are expected to send a bill to the full senate in July.

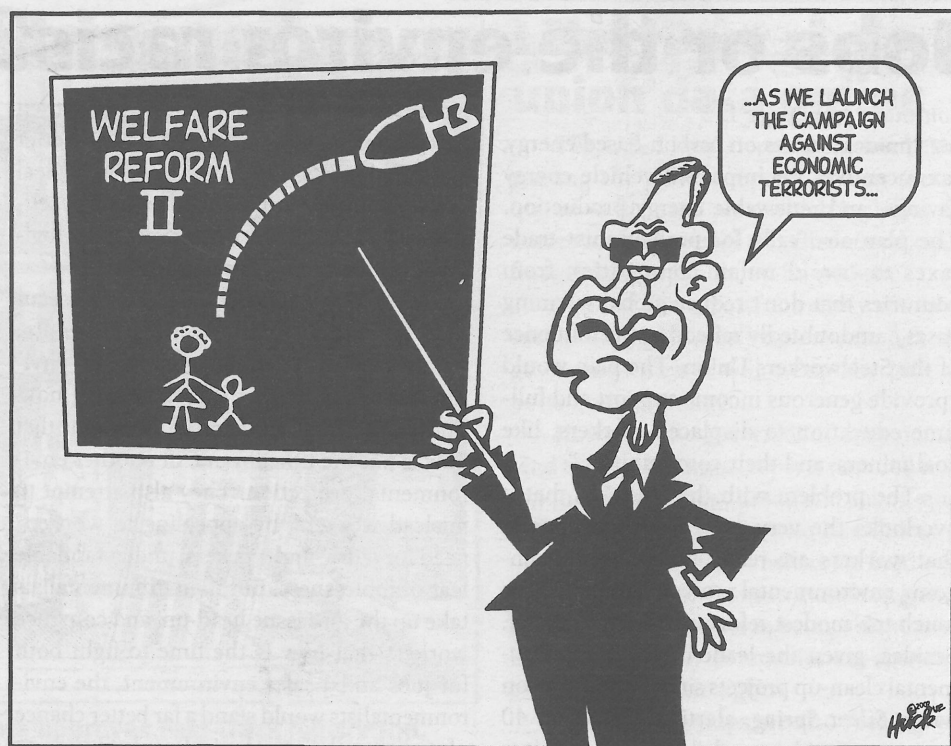
Many organizations are calling on people to lobby senators, urging them to oppose plans to extend work requirements to 40 hours, to expand educational and job-training opportunities, and to provide adequate childcare support.

But the entire premise of the TANF program is indefensible, according to the Every Mother is a Working Mother network (www.allwomenscount.net).

The network is circulating a petition which argues that the present debate on welfare "reform" reauthorization ignores the value of the vital work that mothers, grandmothers and other family caregivers do, instead focusing on how many hours mothers must be made to perform "work activities."

"What job is more important, or harder, than raising children and caring for those of us who are elderly, sick or have disabilities?" they ask, calling for recognition of the vital and largely unwaged work of caregiving.

"Welfare reform assumes that only those with the money have the right to care for their own children. ...Welfare 'reform' treats care-giving work, and those being cared for, as a nuisance that stands in the way of getting a job - any job, at any pay.



Long hours, no childcare

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that it would cost \$11 billion more than is currently budgeted to provide the child care and other support services necessary to enable the mothers of very young children to work. Already hundreds of thousands of children are on waiting lists for childcare programs.

A recent AFL-CIO survey found that two in three working mothers put in 40 or more hours every week (some many more), and many (particularly younger women) want more control over working hours, and equal pay and benefits for part-time work. Ironically, working women with children find themselves forced to work longer hours than do their childless counterparts.

Bosses defy Living Wage laws

Several Boston-area cities have passed living wage laws requiring companies doing work for the city to pay employees enough to survive. But when the city asked for bids to handle the city's recycling work, all three companies that responded refused to follow the law. So city officials are considering following the lead of nearby Cambridge and Somerville, and waiving the law.

The firms - KTI Recycling (Casella Waste Systems), Waste Management, and BFI (Allied Waste Industries) - are seeking "hardship waivers" on the grounds that paying a living wage to Boston-area employees might inspire their workers in other cities to seek higher wages as well.

Paying higher wages in Boston would not cost the companies directly, as they could pass the wage bill on to the city. Living wage supporters say the waivers would enable any company that prefers to pay starvation wages to evade the law. And many recycling advo-

cates believe that if the cities held firm, one of the companies would break ranks in order to get the business. If not, some say, the city could do the work itself.

More than 80 U.S. cities and counties now have living wage laws in place. Like Boston's, most of these ordinances set the living wage well below the cost of supporting a family. Boston sets its living wage at \$10.54. Since few two-bedroom apartments can be rented for less than \$1,200 a month, a full-time worker earning the "living wage" would be unable to afford rent. However, the three firms are undercutting the Boston ordinance by about \$3 an hour.

KTI workers in the Boston area reportedly work under unsafe conditions, sorting glass and metal recyclables without safety equipment. When KTI workers in New Jersey sought to unionize, management threatened to have workers (most of whom are immigrants) deported.

Spying on bosses?

Managers at a Scottish factory fired six AEEU shop stewards May 10, claiming they had been caught checking recording equipment hidden above a management office at the Waukesha Bearings plant in Polmadie, Glasgow. Although managers spy on workers on a routine basis, even going so far as to place hidden cameras in washrooms, it seems they don't like it when the tables are turned.

UK post axes 17,000 more workers after £1 billion loss

The privatized British postal system, now known as Consignia, announced it was sacking 17,000 more postal workers, cutting back on mail deliveries, closing 3,000 post offices and raising rates.

Staff and the public are being forced to pay for disastrous management, which saw the firm lose £1.1 billion on the fiscal year, or £1.2 million every working day. Consignia will revert back to Royal Mail by the end of the year after spending £800 million on the rebranding. The CEO is retiring.

Postal workers are threatening strike action if management moves ahead with compulsory redundancies or jobs are subcontracted to private companies. The Communication Workers Union backed down on threats of strike action earlier this year, after a token 15-minute strike, agreeing to plans to eliminate 30,000 jobs over the next three years on a "voluntary" basis. Postal officials say many staff are seeking early retirement.

246 mill. child workers

Some 246 million children around the world work, nearly three quarters of them in jobs that put their lives at risk, according to the International Labour Organisation.

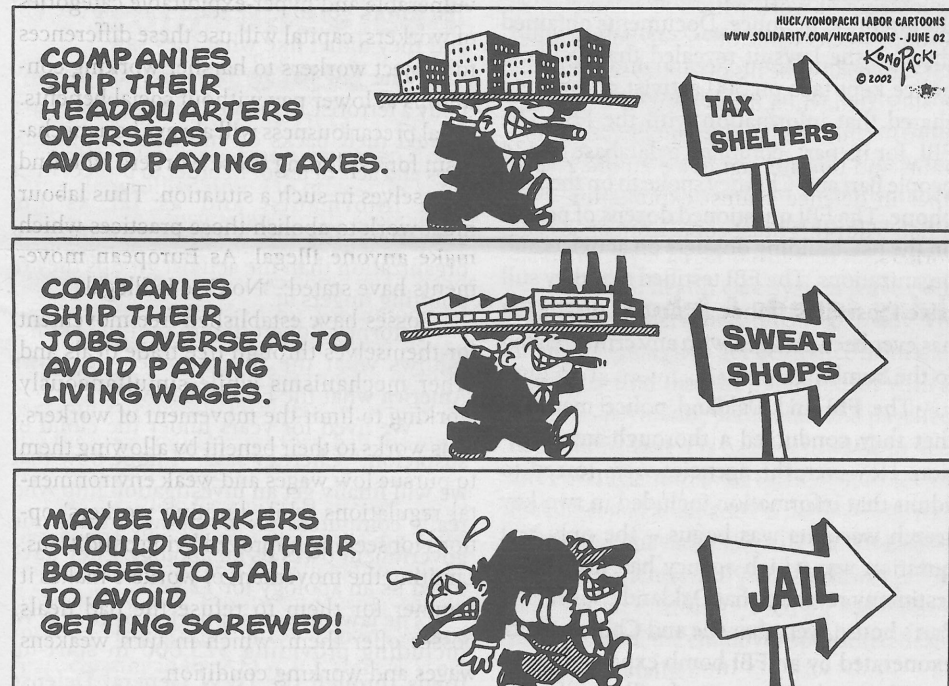
Most are working in agriculture, where they are exposed to long hours in often harsh conditions, breathing toxic chemicals. Half of the 15 million bonded child laborers in India are herding cattle or tending crops for up to 17 hours a day, according to Human Rights Watch. In Ecuador, 600,000 children as young as 8 years work in banana plantations and packing plants, while 7 year olds work on pest control in cotton fields in Egypt.

In the United States, children interviewed by HRW began working in farms from the age of 12, for about 14 hours a day during the harvest season.

In Egypt, Ecuador and the U.S., HRW found that children worked on crops while they were being sprayed with pesticides or fungicides. Several reported symptoms including headaches, fever, dizziness, nausea and rashes.

Child farm workers in the U.S. make up 8 percent of the children who work but account for 40 percent of work-related deaths among minors.

The ILO estimates that about 8.4 million children are caught up in work that clearly violates international law, including slavery, prostitution, pornography and forced recruitment for armed conflict.



World unions demand halt to Mideast conflict

The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions approved a resolution June 7 "express[ing] its grave concern over the continuing conflict and violence in the Palestinian Territories and Israel, which is having a devastating effect on workers and their families in both Palestine and Israel."

The resolution condemned "Prime Minister Sharon and his government for its acts of aggression and for its invasion of the Palestinian Territories" and appealed to Palestinians "to refrain from any acts of violence, which will only delay a peacefully negotiated settlement."

AFL-CIO council picketed over support to Israel

An AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting with a top Israeli official was picketed by 50 union members May 21. The AFL invests members' dues in Israeli government bonds, so New York unionists came out to send a message: Not all union members support Israel's war on the Palestinians. The demonstration called for divestment from Israeli bonds and an end to Israel's occupation.

"Israel is carrying out ethnic cleansing," said Marty Goodman, a member of the TWU Local 100 executive board. "We're com-

pletely opposed to the labor movement giving any support to Israel's genocidal war."

Union members who tried to enter the hotel to meet with the executive council were expelled by security.

"American workers need to be on the side of human rights and support the Palestinians and the Israeli peace movement," said Michael Letwin, president of UAW Local 2325. "It's bad enough that our tax dollars are going to fund Israel, but our union dues - that's intolerable."

UK building boss jailed

Brian Dean has become the first British building boss to be jailed on manslaughter charges. He was sentenced to 18 months May 24 for causing the deaths of Michael and Carl Redgate. The father and son were crushed to death during demolition work in July 2000. No experienced safety personnel were on hand to protect workers against the structure's collapse.

Call centre staff stressed

A survey of Scottish call centre workers found that almost two-thirds have suffered pain in their hands, wrists or back. More than 80 percent also complained of excessive noise on the job. However, equipment had been much improved and most workers received regular breaks, probably in response to growing unionization.

Jobs or the environment? A false choice

continued from page 1

for "modest" taxes on carbon-based energy, tax incentives for improved vehicle energy savings, and renewable energy production. The plan also calls for protectionist trade taxes to "avoid unfair competition from countries that don't reduce global warming gases," undoubtedly reflecting the influence of the Steelworkers Union. The plan would "provide generous income support and full-time education to displaced workers, like coal miners, and their communities."

The problem with the "plan" is that it overlooks the very polls that demonstrate that workers are ready for real thoroughgoing environmental protections, unlike the much too modest reforms the plan calls for. Besides, given the leaden pace of environmental clean-up projects since Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*, alerting the world 40 years ago to widespread chemical poisoning, the economists' very modest proposal seems far more reckless than practical.

Clearly, what is needed is a plan that has solutions that match the enormity and the urgency of the nation's ecological problems. But such a far-reaching plan must remain lifeless without the necessary social power to overcome the corporate beneficiaries of ecological indifference.

Only workers have the enormous social power needed to implement a workable plan to maintain a sustainable planet. That social power includes the working class's ability to choke off corporate profits, as demonstrated

by the nation's anti-labor laws. It seems then that environmentalists would have a better chance of saving humanity from ecological disaster, if they appealed to workers' self-interest in living in a world free of ecological blight and social insecurity.

Why appeal to workers' social insecurity? In part, to counter certain top union officials who are certain to get in the environmentalists' way, as they are doing now. Those union officials do more than argue that now is not the time for one or another environmental protection. They also attempt to mislead workers, by appealing to workers' need for work, and workers' understandable fear of joblessness. But if environmentalists take up the jobs issue head-on, and convince workers that now is the time to fight both for jobs and a safer environment, the environmentalists would stand a far better chance of realizing their ecological goals in time to matter.

A plan to take up a fight for jobs and the resulting social security would benefit from workers' rich tradition of fighting for jobs, by fighting to reduce the work day. That tradition reaches back at least to the period following the Civil War, down to the Second World War. During the Great Depression (1929-1939), a time of mass joblessness, organized workers won the basic eight-hour work day. Moreover, the demand for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay became increasingly popular during the 1930s.

Admittedly, union leaders have not hon-

ored that tradition for decades. Since the 1980s the eight-hour day for millions of workers, unionized and not, has been replaced with longer shifts, split shifts and weekend shifts. At the same time, millions of families have been forced to seek multiple incomes just to protect, not raise, their living standards. But the memory of the fight for a shorter work day is not dead. Moreover, the work day concessions that labor unions have accepted — often without a fight — hurt younger workers the most. Younger workers' élan and idealism, the basis of youthful militancy, can be the dynamo that drives a fight for jobs and environmental protections to a deserved victory.

The U.S. economy is a ten trillion dollar goliath dominated by a corporate elite, a minority that distributes the nation's wealth on the basis of class ownership, not majority interest. That same corporate elite determines the environmental risks that we all face. Environmentalists need not sell their cause short by settling for third-rate nostrums, enacted slowly, if at all. That's because



workers and environmentalists have a common stake in the physical and social well being of the world.

Despite the failure of the AFL-CIO to join in a nation-wide alliance, the environmental movement's best hope is still the workers who are marching to a different drummer than the labor tops. Fighting for "Jobs and Environmental Protections for All!" can cement a powerful alliance for change.

Bari, Cherney win \$4.4m

continued from page 1

been abandoned by their union. While only a handful of timber workers joined the IWW, these efforts did reduce tensions in the region and helped lay a foundation for more cooperative relations between workers and environmentalists in the region.

Bari and Cherney's efforts did not escape the attention of police. Documents obtained through the lawsuit revealed that Oakland police kept tabs on 300 activist groups and shared that information with the FBI. The FBI, for its part, compiled a database of 634 people Bari and Cherney spoke to on the telephone. The FBI questioned dozens of people on the list, building dossiers on activists and organizations. The FBI testified that they still have those files, although no one on the list has ever been charged with any crime related to the bombing.

The FBI and Oakland police maintain that they conducted a thorough investigation. However, the agencies were forced to admit that information included in two key search warrants was bogus — the only real question was which agency had lied. Later testimony revealed that Oakland cops raided Bari's house even after she and Cherney were exonerated by an FBI bomb expert.

The explosive sent a fusillade of nails rocketing through the car. In their affidavits for search warrants, police falsely claimed that a bag of nails found in Bari's car matched the nails in the bomb. The nails were not even remotely similar. (Bari made her living as a carpenter, and so had nails and tools in her car and home.)

In their testimony, police and FBI agents blamed each other for the false statements.

Green Ban protects Aussie timber jobs

A new green ban in the building and construction industry will prevent further wastage of priceless rainforest timber while protecting Australian forestry jobs.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union has joined forces with the Greens and the Wilderness Society to ban the use of tropical rainforest timbers on New South Wales building sites.

Developers are increasingly using a style of concrete finishing that uses rainforest wood as a mold, outraging unionists and environmentalists alike and inspiring them to forge an alliance to fight the wastage.

Currently the rainforest timber is being sourced from South East Asia at a price so low it is easy for developers to justify using it as 'throw-away' formply molding. Formply is used for concrete pouring operations such as footpaths, hoardings and bricks.



Recently we saw the end of a big murder mystery that had baffled the minions of law and order for a considerable length of time, despite the fact that a number of people knew who the culprits were. One young woman who had known one of the perpetrators finally did inform the authorities, even though she feared for her life. Meanwhile the two killers had been enjoying the luxury of obscurity.

Since this one young woman came forward, others who knew who the killers were also came forward, explaining that they too had feared for their lives. Shortly afterward, yours truly happened to be listening to a radio talk show — the kind where people can call in to voice their opinions. Many who called in condemned the young woman for being quiet for so long, saying she should have come forth even if she was afraid.

I do not disagree. However, it must be taken into account that in our modern-day culture fear is an all-pervasive element. For centuries, those who rule us have been using fear to dominate and control us. Our consumerist society, through the barrage of TV ads, informs us that if we do not avail ourselves of the right brand we will either have a lousy sex life or be missing out on something else — besides, horror of horrors, not being able to keep up with the Joneses.

Some of those who called in self-righteously said she should not be let off the hook even if she did muster up the courage to finally disclose the killers. She should be meted out some sort of penalty.

Yours truly can not help but remember when certain persons on high knew in advance of impending disasters but kept mum. Frankie the Rose knew the Japanese fleet was headed for Hawaii, as was confirmed by the fact that the navy brass had their derrieres safely in Honolulu while the enlisted men at Pearl Harbor were being bombed into their watery graves.

It has recently been disclosed that the destruction of the World Trade Center with the thousands of innocent victims was far from a complete surprise to Freedomland's present head of state. (Note that head is also a slang term for a flush bowl.)

Shouldn't those people also have some form of penalty for keeping their traps shut? What's sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander!

In the case of Pearl Harbor, it was the catalyst that motivated an outburst of patriotic hysteria on a populace that had little interest in being involved in World War II. The destruction of the World Trade Center provided a diversion from the rising world-wide tide against the globalization of capitalism. Those two austere personages, along with others of their ilk, certainly merit censure for their crimes.

However, be informed, fellow worker reader, that to those on high, those of us who have the fortune to belong to the lowah classes are expendable, no matter how large our numbers. They are the ones who merit an appropriate punishment — that of being reduced to the level of the rest of us. I can think of no greater argument for one big union of all the workers.

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

— C.C. Redcloud

Their attorneys argued that the discrepancies were honest mistakes. But the jury did not believe them. While the jury rejected conspiracy charges, their verdict suggests jurors concluded that both the FBI and police fabricated evidence in order to implicate Bari and Cherney.

"The FBI can't be trusted," Cherney said. Ten jurors got a good, hard look at the FBI and they didn't like what they saw."

"The FBI has no business calling anybody a terrorist," Cherney added. "They have turned their backs on murders and bombings and acts of terror in order to protect their own informants, and as far as I'm concerned, the FBI is closer to a terrorist organization than the activist groups they're pointing fingers at."

Attorney Robert Bloom said the verdict "shows what the FBI did then, it shows America what the FBI does now."

"We lived for years under the cloud of suspicion," Cherney said. "I hope now that we will finally get an investigation into who really committed the bombing. I think the government owes us an apology. They have owed us an apology for 12 years."

The lawsuit was supported by the IWW, including providing \$25,000 in start-up funds through the IWW General Defense Committee.

We have to stand together

BY JUDI BARI

We are being targeted for infiltration, disruption, destruction and violence because we are effective organizers. We have begun to speak not just about the destruction of the earth, but about what system is destroying it. As long as we concerned ourselves only with the preservation of wilderness areas, we were not a serious threat. But now we are beyond just talking about trees, though of course that is a central issue; we are talking about corporations.

The same system that is destroying the redwoods is destroying people's lives in Central America. It is exploiting workers. It is suppressing cures for AIDS. It is oppressing Black, Latino, Asian, American Indian and other people. When we say this, our movement becomes stronger and more dangerous, and they'll use more repression to try to stop us. We are shaking the core of their power structure.

I have been singled out, and this is why. But don't view me as an individual. I was attacked as a symbol of the movement. What happened to me was an act of outrageous terrorism. We cannot back down. We have to stand together as a movement, one movement. (*Industrial Worker*, September 1990)

Building global solidarity from the ground up

Labor, peace, globalization and student activists gathered at Kent State University, Ohio, May 31-June 2 for a conference called to mark the 40th anniversary of Students for a Democratic Society's Port Huron Statement.

A common theme underlying discussions of various campaigns was the importance of building a horizontal movement unfettered by the ossified bureaucracies of the mainstream union movement — one that would challenge corporate globalization with direct links between workers in different countries, and respond to the Bush administration's "war on terrorism" by calling attention to the victims of state terrorism around the world.

One proposal to emerge from the conference calls for a week-long memorial, teach-in and possible work-stoppage remembering the tragedies of Sept. 11.

"Our nation has embarked on a foreign policy similar to that of the 1960s, and there's nowhere we can look for help," said co-convenor Staughton Lynd. "The general attitude of mainstream unions is to support U.S. foreign policy, ... [but] we learned during the Vietnam days that people and institutions can change. Circles like this one have the responsibility to encourage resistance to what's going on."

Fighting overtime & long work hours

continued from page 1

special hiring incentives and other give-backs to the bosses that are costing the government \$15 billion a year. (Even with the incentives, many companies instead are using shorter hours as an excuse to speed up production.) The new conservative government is expected to whittle away at the law, but is unlikely to overturn it given the widespread demand for shorter hours.

BOSTON: The first meeting of a Shorter Work Week Coalition initiated by the Boston IWW branch drew 22 labor, environmental, immigrant and welfare rights activists, overflowing the Campaign on Contingent Work's conference room.

In a wide-ranging discussion, participants touched on the different ways in which American workers are affected by the issue — ranging from mandatory overtime, to low wages that force many workers to take multiple jobs to survive, to pending legislation that would lengthen the number of hours welfare recipients are required to put in on "work-related" activities. U.S. workers put in longer hours than workers in much of the world, with devastating consequences for our communities, our families, and ourselves. One veteran activist noted that when she asks coworkers if they're getting rich from the long hours they put in or just getting tired, the answer is invariably that they're just getting tired.

Participants expressed interest in an educational campaign around overtime and the need for a shorter work week, alongside efforts to support workers fighting mandatory overtime or other shorter hours issues. The Coalition's first project will be to campaign against a longer work week for mothers on welfare.

An IWW member facing long hours of unpaid overtime said her coworkers were discussing simply going home at 3:30 on a coming Friday afternoon, abandoning the impossible task of getting the work done without sufficient staff.

The Coalition hopes to develop a variety of shorter hours resources in the coming months, including a web site, leaflets and a speaker's bureau that would bring the issue to community and labor organizations. Among the ideas discussed were bringing together the unemployed and workers facing forced overtime for joint actions, a regional conference, and a series of forums bringing the issue to different communities.

Lynd echoed Tom Paine: "My country is the world, and my fellow citizens are the people of the world."

The memorial for 9/11 should be a memorial for victims of terrorism all over the world, Lynd argued, and the message should be that the tragic deaths of nearly 3,000 people in the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon are no more tragic than deaths anywhere.

Two HERE members suggested that work stoppages and other workplace observances be organized to remember the many union victims of the attacks, and to protest government policies which have hit workers hard while giving billions to the bosses.

Also discussed was Wal-Mart's status as the embodiment of the new face of corporate globalization, with the contrast between the enormous wealth of its founders and the

poverty wages paid the workers who produce and sell Wal-Mart goods around the world.

Wal-Mart has about a million workers at any one time, but because of its huge turnover millions more have punched a Wal-Mart time clock. Many participants believed Wal-Mart offered a prime opportunity to combine the issues of sweatshops, destruction of American communities, and casualization.

During workshops, activists swapped stories of their efforts to build solidarity, and to link workers' day-to-day grievances with broader social struggles. Many pointed to the limitations of struggles for union democracy which too often fail to offer a broader vision of solidarity and emancipation. In the recent IBT election, one Teamster pointed out, the reform candidate competed with Hoffa over who would wage the most vigorous fight to keep Mexican truck drivers out of the U.S.

Others spoke of the need to develop direct links with workers around the world, to give solidarity a human face and enable workers to learn from each other's struggles. Participants offered examples of rank-and-file solidarity in action, but also of cases where workers' impulse toward solidarity was diverted into protectionism.

In another session, Vietnam vet Mike Boehm spoke on his work establishing loan programs for Vietnamese women in nine villages and planting peace gardens in My Lai, scene of one of the most gruesome massacres by U.S. ground forces during the war, and another in a village north of Hanoi.

Charleston waterfront tied up

Charleston, S.C., crane operators returned to work May 19 after a two-day dispute snarled the city's busy waterfront cargo terminals. The work stoppage began after the State Ports Authority suspended crane operator Virgil Cross after he complained about management to a television crew while standing near his truck, which had bumper stickers that said "Save the Port Workers — Replace Top Management."

The 35 crane operators responded to the suspension by staying away from work. South Carolina law prohibits the operators from collective bargaining or striking.

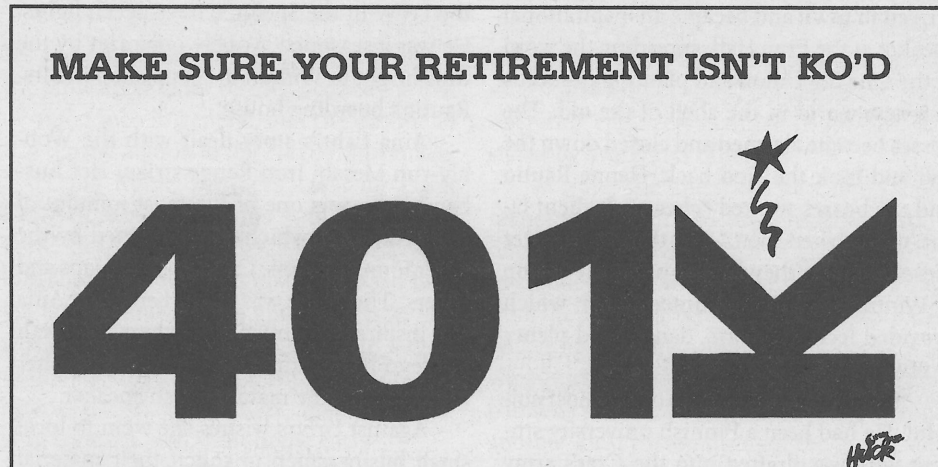
The SPA suspended 18 operators when they didn't show up Saturday, but quickly learned that supervisors were unable to do the work. Management quickly agreed not to fire the 32 workers who joined the stoppage and to address the operators' grievances.

The crane operators joined the ILA recently after the Authority stopped paying overtime for most weekend work.

Prisoners work for Dell

PC giant Dell is employing prisoners through the federal Unicolor program to handle its new consumer recycling program. While some critics have charged that this has the potential to be little more than a high-tech chain gang, in fact PC recycling facilities are about as low-tech as they come.

By employing very cheap labor, Dell can cut corners on costs. The residual value of second-user PCs have fallen through the floor, while new environmental policies threaten to stop companies from simply throwing away highly toxic components. In the U.S., the big PC brands are setting up consumer recycling schemes in an effort to head off mandatory recycling programs.



Wealth fell for most Americans

The May 26 *New York Times* reports that despite claims that middle-income Americans benefitted from rising stock and home valuations in the 1980s and 1990s, in fact their net worth declined.

New York University economist Edward N. Wolff found that although many workers did benefit from stock portfolios and homes, the situation looks very different when you add in other forms of household wealth.

The main culprit is shrinking pension wealth, although rising debt also cut into the gains from rising home prices.

While the gains in 401(k) plans were often dramatic, company-paid pensions, now gradually disappearing, would have left most better off.

"I think the 401(k) is a real scam," Wolff told the *Times*. "People get their monthly statements and they say, 'Wow, look at how much money is in my 401(k),' and they don't see what has disappeared."

Wolff calculates that the median U.S.

wealth was \$162,800 in 1998, the last year for which government wealth data is available. Adjusted for inflation, the same calculation for that age group in 1983 produced \$188,100 in wealth at the median. (Half the households had more, half less.) That is a 13.5 percent decline in wealth, losses which were similar for almost all the households with annual incomes of \$35,000 to \$75,000, Wolff found.

Millions of workers who earned less — and so did not own homes and 401(k) plans to soften the blow from rising debt, vanishing pensions and skyrocketing rents — will have been hit much harder.

Wolff said the best way to reverse the loss would be to re-establish the defined-benefit pension plans which used to cover more than two-thirds of middle-income workers. The swing from company-guaranteed pensions to 401(k)-style individual plans has relieved employers of billions of dollars in pension obligations.

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Review: Tales of struggle and life

REVIEWED BY HARRY SIITONEN

Lynn Maria Laitala, *Down From Basswood – Voices of the Border Country*, Beaverton, Ont: Aspasia Books, 2001, 211 pp.

Down From Basswood is the inspired work of a master story-teller, Lynn Maria Laitala, as she weaves in and out of the lives of Finnish immigrant settlers and of the Chippewa Indians in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Each chapter stands alone as a story in itself but the same characters keep popping up throughout the book so that in composite it really works as a novel. It tells of the hardships these people suffered as farmers, miners, mill workers and loggers, as well as of the Chippewas being dispossessed of their lands and culture to serve the greed of the capitalist system.

Of special interest to Wobblies is the IWW-friendly tone of the book and the chapters dealing with the impact of the One Big Union on these immigrants in that far-off northern corner. Lynn Laitala once told me that her grandfather had been an IWW organizer in the region and her sympathies show. Her comprehension of issues affecting the Chippewas is strong, too. She was once married to a man half-Indian, half-Finn, and they have a daughter who embodies both traditions.

One of the stories deals with the building of the Finnish workers' hall in Winton, Wisconsin, where the author grew up. Hanna Rautio, who ran a boarding house for single

men, had a husband who had an emotional breakdown while working in the mines and became a hopeless alcoholic. Alcoholism was rife among these working stiff. So she and others started a campaign to build a hall, which would serve as a community and cultural center with a library, to serve as an alternative to saloon life. They even persuaded a mill boss to donate land on which to erect it to help bring sobriety (and less absenteeism) to the work force. Everything was cool, but the hall became more than that.

The winds of industrial unionism pervaded the Mesabi Range and the IWW grew like wildfire among the Finnish workers. An itinerant worker nicknamed "Korva" (Ear) arrived in town and became an inspirational speaker at the Finn Hall, spreading the word of the One Big Union and planting the seeds of a new world in the shell of the old. The bosses became alarmed and closed down the hall and took the land back. Hanna Rautio said the bosses wanted "cheap, obedient labor, not spirited men." But this didn't deter these workers; they built a new hall on top of Winton Hill with volunteer labor, which provided lectures, plays, dances and plenty of revolutionary songs – in Finnish.

"Korva's" story was one of the most colorful. He had been a Finnish university student who was drafted into the Czar's army

and was wounded at the Battle of Mukden in the Russo-Japanese War. He was sent to Moscow to recover just as the popular unrest which ended in the Revolution of 1905 was taking off. Korva began to agitate in the army for more humane treatment of soldiers.

In the ensuing crack-down, Korva fled in a harrowing journey across Siberia, and finally crossed the Bering straits into Alaska. At a Finnish dance hall, a drunken jealous swain lopped off Korva's ear with a knife because the latter was dancing with his girl friend. In a reflex action, Korva's knife found its way into the assailant's ribs, who died. So Korva took another hike, into the Lower 48, where he ended up with the IWW in the Spokane free speech fights. He was a seasoned Wobbly organizer by the time he got to Winton to set up shop in Mrs. Rautio's boarding house.

Aina Lahti's story dealt with the Wobbly-run Mesabi Iron Range strike. Her husband Urho was one of the most militant of the strikers, in which he was joined by the other Finns, Italians, Croatians, Serbians and others. The strike was going badly but Aina was inspired by a huge rally where Elizabeth Gurley Flynn addressed the crowd and her husband was the main Finnish speaker.

Against Urho's wishes she went to local small businessmen to solicit their material

and moral assistance to the strikers. Urho felt that was consorting with the class enemy. But in her broken English she gained the ear of these merchants whose living was made possible by the paltry income of the miners. Urho beat her up for it.

The strikers' families were being evicted from the company houses and the women were forbidden from drawing water from the well on company land. So Aina led the women of all nationalities, kids in tow, into some direct action and invaded the well area en masse to get the water. Sheriff's deputies attacked them, beating up on them and punched Mrs. Romau, eight months pregnant, in the stomach. They were hauled off to jail, screaming kids and all. It was the merchants whom Aina had addressed who bailed them out. Later Urho's body was found on the side of the road, murdered.

The characters of this book, even the guys on the right side of the struggle, weren't all necessarily saints, and the author tells it like it is when dealing with real folks. The characters in this book are not just figments of Lynn Laitala's imagination. They were based on researched case studies she did of people of the Winton area as a young graduate student. She has a beautiful, sensitive writing style and one feels her characters might be your own friends and neighbors. She knew and loved them as she does her hometown of Winton and wants them to be our friends, too.

The book can be purchased from a number of sources, including from the author herself at lml@centurytel.net.

THE Minority Report Being union on our own authority

BY ALEXIS BUSS

For the past few years, I've been contributing an occasional column called "Wobbling the Works" focused on how labor law affects union organizing. I'll still be writing on this topic once in a while, but lately my attention has been on a concept which I'll call "minority unionism," a way to describe a method of organizing that does not wait for a majority of workers in a workplace to win the legal right to bargain. This month I'm going to share some of the things that piqued my interest and pointed me in this direction.

I recently had to redo the IWW's constitution for our fellow workers in IWW Regional Organising Committees, who were tired of American misspellings of words like labour and organising. Searching through the constitution got me thinking about the idea of job branches. A job branch is a group of five or more IWW members at a given workplace who are charged with getting together on a monthly basis. The plain implication is that they would discuss grievances, come up with strategies to resolve them, and build a union presence on the job.

I am working on a project that started out as a video version of the classic IWW pamphlet *A Worker's Guide to Direct Action*, but has grown a bit in scope since we started. Researching the video, I saw Miriam Ching Yoon Louie speak about her book *Sweatshop Warriors*, which provides some excellent examples of how immigrant workers centers have helped individual workers understand their rights and organize on a variety of work and community issues. I also got the chance to interview Barbara Prear, a housekeeper at the University of North Carolina and president of UE Local 150, when she visited support staff at Swarthmore College, who have been conducting a living wage campaign for six years. The UNC union has no legal right to bargain, but has been very successful in using pressure tactics to get administrators to the table and negotiate improvements for the lowest-paid workers on campus.

I have been thinking quite a bit about ways that workers who do not have a legal mandate to bargain and have no contract can act union, using the law to augment their work. This came up because Staughton Lynd

asked me to work with him on a new edition of *Labor Law for the Rank and Filer* at a moment when I had become particularly cynical about the potential for using labor law in organizing. I've just come back from spending a weekend with the Lynds, people from the Youngstown Workers Solidarity Club and their rank-and-filer-troublemaking cohorts from near and not-so-near places, veteran activists, and student organizers.

The club developed as a "parallel central labor body" to fill a void when the local central labor council could not provide sufficient support for a strike. Hanging out with these folks was the antidote for the cynicism I was feeling; not that I now have more confidence in the law, but I feel more able to look at the possibilities...

A month ago I saw a documentary on the Overnite trucking strike, "American Standoff," which I reviewed last issue. "Standoff" illustrated a lot of problems that labor has not adequately confronted. How do we deal with organizing in companies that are so anti-union that they are willing to spend millions of dollars to keep workers from even getting to the bargaining table? The Teamsters' Overnite campaign, which is now on a road so difficult that it isn't clear it can be salvaged, is one of a long string of campaigns that seem to have left labor scratching its collective head, wondering what to do in the face of self-destructive upper management and backwards labor law. Clearly, the answer is not to give up. It isn't to settle for a minority clique of agitators in each workplace. It's to form meaningful, organized networks of solidarity capable of winning improvements in individual workplaces, throughout industries, and for the benefit of the international working class.

And last but not least, several fellow workers from across the water forwarded me an article on minority unionism that ran in a recent issue of *The Nation*. The article, by Richard B. Freeman and Joel Rogers, argues that the AFL-CIO should develop a plan for organizing that does not depend on having a majority at a workplace. The thing that was so great about getting multiple copies of this article in my inbox was the puzzlement of the non-American unionists who sent it. The

Farewell, Fellow Worker TRIM BISSELL

Trim Bissell, national co-coordinator of the Campaign for Labor Rights, died June 15 after a 20-month battle with a brain tumor. While working with Central America solidarity groups, Trim helped launch anti-sweatshop campaigns that grew, in 1995, into the Campaign for Labor Rights. CLR soon became known as the "grassroots organizing department of the anti-sweatshop movement," with its focus on building ties with sweatshop workers and developing campaigns that responded to their needs.

As a result of his efforts, many Wobblies had the opportunity to meet Trim and the fellow workers he brought from around the world to meet with U.S. workers.

way us backwards Yanks do things is absurd. Few countries do unionism the way it's done in the U.S., with the union being the sole bargaining agent of a declared majority. I think it would help if more workers I talk to knew how other places do it, and would also be good if folks outside the U.S. saw the implications of how it's done here.

So, that's the point of this column. I want to share these stories and experiences. I want to connect my fellow workers with resources that others have found useful to their work. I can't offer a recipe for success – not all of these examples will be appropriate for everyone. But smart thinking on a way forward isn't just possible, it is happening. And by developing resources to try these things out, we will give one another the confidence to turn comments like "what a good idea" into "I'm going to give that a try."

National Labor Repression Board

The NLRB never was a friend of labor, but in January President Bush filled two seats on the five-member board with recess appointments (leaving one vacancy): Michael Bartlett and William Cowen. Cowen was lead attorney with the union-busting firm Institutional Labor Advisors. Bartlett directed labor law policy at the Chamber of Commerce. In the 1980s he was Eastern Airlines' veep for employee relations overseeing a vicious union-busting drive that led to its death.

Helicopters and riot police can not break Aussie strike

Some 280 maintenance workers at Australia's BHP steel held firm on the picket line as bosses moved steel by helicopter, and then deployed 120 riot police to slam 20 trucks through the line in the early morning hours of June 12, sending one worker to hospital.

Despite the violence and threats of criminal charges and crippling law suits, mounting losses and a looming crisis in the country's auto manufacturing industry – starved for steel since the strike began May 21 – forced BHP to settle June 14.

As part of the settlement, BHP withdrew criminal charges against 12 strikers and abandoned threats to sue the unions involved for damages, prompting an angry response from the government, which warned of "industrial anarchy" if employers did not subject unionists to legal prosecutions during industrial disputes.

Australian government officials said they were investigating the possibility of taking legal action against unions when employers did not follow through with the draconian penalties provided for in the 1996 Workplace Relations Act.

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission had authorized car manufacturers Holden, Ford, Toyota and Mitsubishi to sue those organising the picket outside the BHP Steel plant in Hastings. The companies had threatened to lay off thousands of workers if steel supplies continued to be held up by the dispute.

Members of the Electrical Trades Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union struck against plans by Australia's largest steel maker to replace maintenance workers with contractors and part-time workers. Negotiations had dragged on for 11 months before workers struck.

The strike was settled after unions were able to force BHP back to the bargaining table. The company agreed to give preference to existing workers before bringing contract labor in, not to use contractors who undercut labor standards, and enhanced severance benefits if any workers who lose their jobs in a joint review of staffing needs.

books for rebel workers

Fun Summer Reading



The Autobiography of Mother Jones

"The most dangerous woman in America" - that's what employers and politicians called Mother Jones. But rebellious working men and women loved her as they have never loved anyone else, before or since. Today more than ever those who are struggling for a truly free society are inspired by her exemplary courage and devotion to the cause of solidarity and freedom. In this classic work of American nonfiction, Mother Jones details her fight for labor's liberation and her unwavering belief in industrial unionism as the key to that struggle. Her lively narrative -

every page bristling with her characteristic humor, indignation and uncommon sense - is a masterpiece of American radicalism. It includes the exciting story of her crusade against child labor, her innovative efforts to organize working women, her experiences in court and jail, and her daring involvement in the Mexican Revolution.

302 pp. \$12.00

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

by Howard Zinn

Consistently lauded for its lively, readable prose, this revised and updated edition of A People's History of the United States turns traditional textbook history on its head. Howard Zinn infuses the often-submerged voices of blacks, women, American Indians, war resisters, and poor laborers of all nationalities into this thorough narrative that spans American history from Christopher Columbus's arrival to an afterword on the Clinton presidency. There's also extensive coverage of the IWW's heydays.

Addressing his trademark reversals of perspective, Zinn—a teacher, historian, and social activist for more than 20 years—explains, "My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us all)—that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth."

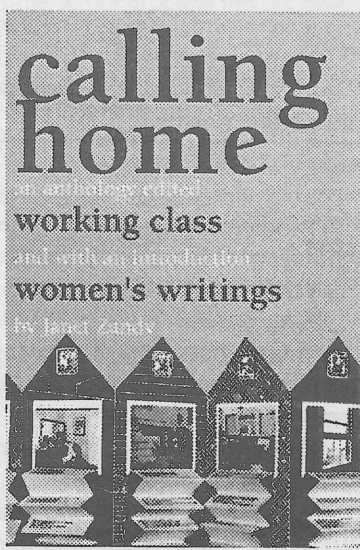
688 pages, \$18.00

Calling Home: Working Class

Women's Writings Edited by Janet Zandy.

Zandy's book brings together a collection of 69 mostly American, but ethnically, racially and geographically diverse essays, stories, poems and oral histories about, and in large part by, working-class women. Some of the writers are young, others long dead, some well known (Meridel Le Sueur, Mother Jones, Margaret Randall, Andre Lourde, Marge Piercy, et al.), others less known or hitherto virtually unknown. The pieces cover upbringing, work experiences, cultural roots, sex, childbirth, marriage, old age, strikes, revolution, and more - all from a women's perspective.

Available in hardcover or paperback 366 pp. \$10.00

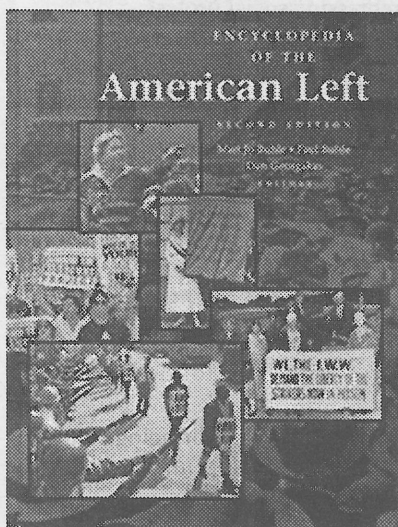


Encyclopedia of the American Left

Second Edition. Edited by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas

The first comprehensive reference book on radicalism in the United States from the Civil War to the present, this work fills serious gaps in basic reference materials on American politics, labor, and culture by focusing on radicals rather than reformers. Merging previously unutilized sources such as oral history with the wealth of insight available from feminist, ethnic, racial studies and popular culture analysis as well as traditional scholarly approaches, their efforts retrieved a hitherto inaccessible history.

Published at \$125.00, Now \$35.00
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Class-Conscious Environmentalism

The Fate of the New Carissa

by Arthur J. Miller A first-hand account of a ship explosion which filled Oregon's Coos Bay with chemicals, fuels, and filth. Also discusses the "flag of convenience" system which allows ship owners to escape safety, environmental, and labor laws. 16pp \$2.00

Labor History

Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology

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

Blackboard Unions By Marjorie Murphy
Murphy tells the story of the struggle to unionize public school teachers, a group workers traditionally considered "professionals" but paid starvation wages and denied any say in their working conditions. We learn of the struggle to win the right to organize, efforts to crush radicals in union ranks, and of the union's abandonment of its allies when it was forced to confront civil rights issues at home. **Special price: \$10.00**

Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948 by Zachary Lockman
Lockman explores the interactions between the Arab and Jewish working classes, labor movements, and worker-oriented political parties in Palestine just before and during the period of British colonial rule. *Comrades and Enemies* presents a narrative of Arab-Jewish relations in Palestine that extends and complicates the conventional story of primordial identities, total separation, and unremitting conflict while going beyond both Zionist and Palestinian nationalist mythologies. **Special price: \$10.00**

Solidarity Forever by Stewart Bird, Dan Georgakas, and Deborah Shaffer Oral histories of IWW members. \$13.00

Union Democracy

Democracy Is Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom Up by Mike Parker & Martha Gruelle. This book offers practical ideas of how the rank and file can run unions. Major discussion of Teamsters for a Democratic Union experiences in this area. 254pp \$17.00

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Global Workers Organizing

Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory

by Miriam Ching Yoon Louie
Sweatshop Warriors highlights the voices of the pioneers of the anti-sweatshop movement: immigrant women workers. In this up-close look at these organizers, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie records the voices of these working-class heroines sounding the charges for the anti-WTO legions. 256pp \$18.00

Made in Indonesia

by Dan La Botz
A dynamic labor movement emerged in Indonesia in the 1990s, helping to bring down the Suharto dictatorship. Through personal interviews with activists leading the rebirth of struggle for democratic rights in the world's fourth-largest country, La Botz draws valuable lessons for workers seeking to build international labor solidarity. 256pp \$18.00

Orwell Audiobooks

Perfect for a long road rip or popping into your walkman, three classic George Orwell books on cassette! \$8.50 each, or take all three for \$22.

Homage to Catalonia Orwell describes with bitter intensity the bright hopes and cynical betrayals of the Spanish Civil War. Writing of its influence he said, "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it."

Down and Out in Paris and London Orwell's first published work, he shocked readers with observations of the misery of the poor, as he lived in a bug-infested hotel, surviving between the pawnbroker and a little teaching.

The Road to Wigan Pier An account of working-class life in Yorkshire and Lancaster, Orwell describes the horror of the class system, of squalor and hunger, and writes of them with a blend of compassion and fury.

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African workers angered by globalization

BY JOYCE MULAMA, AFRICAN CHURCH INFORMATION SERVICE

Economic globalisation is playing havoc on the lives of millions of Africans. Workers are increasingly displaced as the so-called free market economy encourages dumping of cheap goods. As a result, their traditional workplaces have been driven out of business.

Concerned African unionists gathered in Nairobi May 27 - 29 to work out a continental survival strategy.

Kenya's Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU) Secretary General Francis Atwoli said International Monetary Fund and World Bank aid conditions were dehumanizing and amounted to slavery. He said they had crippled Africa's economy.

"Donor communities led by IMF and World Bank pretend to be giving aid to African nations and in return expect payback with huge interest. For this reason, Africa spends all its finances paying off the interests while the actual sum stands," Atwoli said, adding that if he had his way he would do away with IMF and World Bank.

Kenya's Labour minister Joseph Ngutu agreed, saying that since the adoption of donor policies, economic conditions in the continent had worsened.

One billion unemployed

More than one billion people are unemployed around the world according to International Labour Organisation Director General Juan Somavia, prompting 120 million migrant workers to leave their families and homes in the hope of finding a job elsewhere.

"The present form of globalisation has not produced enough jobs for all those who seek them or in the places where they are most needed," Somavia said. He called for localised development initiatives and new ways of guaranteeing social protection and support for those in the informal economy.

Fiji airport workers win

After unions began cutting off air and sea transport to the Fiji Islands, the government intervened June 9 to force Airports Fiji Ltd to recognize the Fiji Public Service Association, ending a 16-month dispute.

The cases of 30 union members suspended, disciplined or terminated for union activity are still pending. The settlement came two days after Australian workers refused to service an Air Pacific flight to Fiji.

Against war and the Europe of capitalism

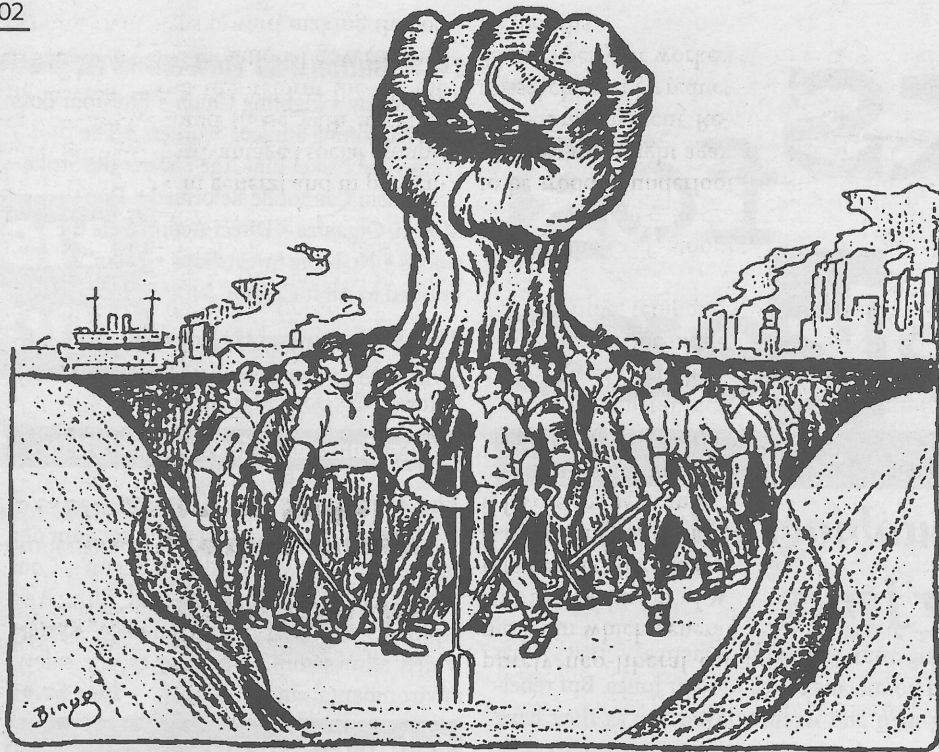
More than 150,000 demonstrators marched through central Madrid May 19, chanting against capitalism and war and dancing to the beating of drums. It was the last and the biggest of three demonstrations held to protest the European-Latin American summit, which gathered government leaders from the European Union, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Protesters marched behind banners that read: "No - against the exploitation of Latin America" and "Against war and the Europe of capitalism."

A crowd estimated at between 50,000 (police) and 250,000 (organizers) workers marched through Seville June 9 to protest government plans to tighten unemployment benefit rules. Some two million unemployed would be affected by the plan, which has also prompted a June 20 general strike.

The government wants to cut payments to fired workers, even when their sacking is still being reviewed by labor courts.

It also wants to deny unemployment benefits to those who refuse jobs offered within a 50 kilometer (31 mile) radius of their home town and curtail benefit payments to temporary agricultural workers.



Unionists 'guilty' of subversion

Two Chinese labor activists were convicted of subversion and sentenced in May to 10- and 11-year prison terms for organizing labor protests two years ago.

The two were arrested last year for their involvement in protests by workers of the Dazhou Iron and Steel Factory demanding payment of wage arrears. The two activists had called on the government to respect workers' rights to set up independent unions, provide a better social safety net, and end rampant corruption.

"Union" represents bosses

When 131 Guangzhou workers were laid-off by the Heng Bao Industrial Company, they negotiated a severance agreement calling for monthly payments for a year and two lump-sum payments. When the company failed to make the agreed payments, workers took them to court.

The Baiyun district Labour Disputes and Arbitration Committee ordered the company to pay the entire balance. In response the company turned to "union" officials in the plant to cross-examine workers on the company's behalf. The Chinese daily Nanfang Gong Bao ran a cartoon with its March 4 report of this incident showing a union official sitting in management's lap.



We have more than enough reasons... General Strike!

As we go to press, Spanish workers are preparing for a June 20 general strike, just before the European Union summit ending the six-month Spanish presidency. Excerpts from a leaflet being distributed by the syndicalist Spanish CGT union follow:

The "Reform of Unemployment Protection and the Employment Law" imposed by the government means yet another attack on the working class in general and in particular on the most disadvantaged social groups: the unemployed and those with unstable employment. With this reform the PP, the conservative party in national government, is taking giant steps toward making the job

Govt-run "union" elected to ILO

When Yao Fuxin was arrested in Liaoyang City March 17, more than 30,000 workers took to the streets the next day demanding: "Release Our Representative."

Workers were not only defending their right to genuine, independent representation, but were directly challenging the monopoly of the state-controlled All China Federation of Trade Unions. Three months later, while Yao and three other workers remain in detention awaiting trial for "illegal assembly," the ACFTU has been recognized by the International Labor Organization as the "legitimate" representative of Chinese workers.

The ACFTU had campaigned for several years to gain a seat as a worker delegate in the ILO governing body with the aim of limiting criticism of worker and union rights violations in China.

The same ILO congress elected the Belarus government to its governing body, days after the regime announced it was shutting down the Federation of Trade Unions.

Since coming in power in 1994, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has repressed union activities to the point where functioning is a virtual impossibility.

Lukashenko is trying to replace the country's unions with an association of government-friendly company unions mirroring the associations created by multinationals with governmental support in Russia. In its 2001 annual survey, the ICFTU labelled Belarus "an unabridged encyclopedia of trade union rights violations."

market even more precarious:

- The obligation to accept any job, ... with no choice, no possibility of refusal, ... under threat of losing unemployment or social security payments. ...
- The movement toward *Free Dismissal*, removing the possibility of receiving [back] pay in the case of a court sentence of unfair dismissal ...
- The introduction of even more precarious forms of temporary contracts.

We are faced with the imposition of a purely neo-liberal economic and social model in which generalized precariousness and the exclusion of wider and wider sectors has become the norm. The government is legislating for the large companies, which it favors so they can increase their profits.

Meanwhile the vast majority of society becomes poorer: workers, the unemployed, those with unstable employment, immigrants, young people looking for their first job, women in the hidden economy or working part-time, temporary workers and farm workers.

For the CGT, stopping this renewed attack is essential if we do not want our rights to be trodden underfoot. In addition, however, we must fight against other attacks:

- Employment Reforms: making dismissal cheaper by reducing compensation to 33 days per year worked and a maximum of 24 months. ...

Job shark office smashed up

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union state secretary Craig Johnston is accused of leading a group of people, including the union's president, who allegedly caused up to \$50,000 damage when they smashed computers and other equipment at the Skilled Engineering Box Hill office last June. The incident followed the sacking of 29 workers contracted through the firm.

Seven union activists face charges of riot, affray, criminal damage and burglary. The identity of the unionists accused of ransacking the suburban labour hire company was the central issue at a recent hearing in Melbourne court. While several witnesses told the court they could identify one or two of the defendants, many said they were uncertain and none could identify all seven defendants.

Union win in Yarra dispute

The ACTU has brokered an agreement which will see Australian crew sail the CSL Yarra. MUA National Secretary Paddy Crumlin said that the outcome means that Australian seafarers will retain their right to work in an Australian industry.

Japan rail workers in 15-year job fight

Hundreds of laid-off Japanese workers surrounded the National Railway Workers Union offices May 27, to protest union officials demands that they abandon their struggle to regain their jobs.

More than 1,000 Japanese National Railways workers lost their jobs 15 years ago after the national railway service was privatized and divided into Japan Railway companies in 1987. The laid-off workers sued, saying the dismissals violated Japanese labor laws.

Now the government is demanding that workers accept a "compromise" under which the union would agree that the JR companies were not responsible for the dismissals, after which they would discuss the possibility of re-employment or severance payments.

"The compromise proposal is the only way we can take now," said Shoichi Takashima, head of the NRU. "We will have no choice but to strictly punish union members who oppose the leadership's stance."

The union has been trying to end the dispute for years, but rank-and-file workers have refused to abandon their struggle.

- Immigration Law: condemns thousands of people to a situation of exploitation and marginalization as they are refused even the most basic of human rights...

- Union-Government Agreement 2002: signed by CCOO, UGT and the Government. Freezing of salaries, working hours to be calculated on an annual basis with the distribution of hours left in the hands of employers, total geographical and job mobility.

- Privatization of Public Services. ...
- Cuts in Public Freedom: The government has cut or modified much of the public freedom won after the dictatorship, severely repressing social protest ...

The government's economic and social policy, exemplified in the field of economics by budgets that become more regressive every year and a tax reform that serves the interests of capital, and the complicity shown by the CCOO-UGT institutional union model, has meant that the last few years have been of permanent decline. ...

It is possible and essential to turn this situation around. The CGT believes in a sustained process of mobilization in which a 24-hour general strike is not just an isolated event. A mobilization which every day includes wider and wider sectors of society: workers, ecologists, students, immigrants, unemployed people, with the aim of organizing a broad, deep and continuous social response to the neoliberal policies of the PP.