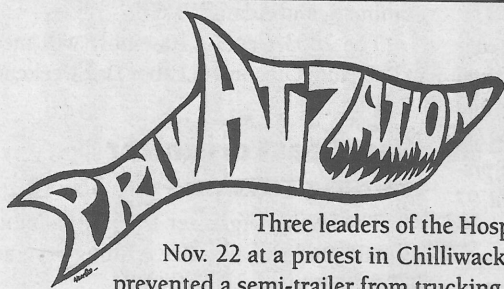


Industrial Worker

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

January/February 2003 #1650 Vol. 100 No. 1 \$1.00 / 75 p



B.C. hospital workers fight privatization

Three leaders of the Hospital Employees' Union were arrested Nov. 22 at a protest in Chilliwack, British Columbia, that successfully prevented a semi-trailer from trucking hospital laundry to Alberta to cleaning. The union took the action after the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority contracted out laundry services to K-Bro Linen Systems as the first step toward privatization of housekeeping and operating room cleaning in hospitals and long-term care facilities. The move would result in the layoff of more than 1,000 workers and put patient health and safety at risk.

B.C. Health Services Minister Colin Hansen insists that health care costs must be cut. "The bottom line for us is we don't need to be in the laundry business or the janitorial business or the security business or the landscaping business," Hansen said.

Workers responded to lay-off notices with mass rallies and by setting up barricades to block trucks from entering or leaving the Fraser Valley hospital to transport laundry hundreds of miles to Calgary for cleaning.

Edmonton-based K-Bro, owned by the Berkshire Group of Boston since 1998, does laundry for hospitals throughout Alberta. With the new Fraser Valley contract it has announced plans to build an automated laundry facility in lower B.C. and to expand throughout the province.

K-Bro is active across Canada and the U.S. in privatizing public sector jobs. The company has directly benefited from Alberta's move to contract out and privatize health services since laundry workers at Calgary General Hospital went on a wildcat strike in 1995 to stop the contracting out of their jobs. After ten weeks on strike, workers won a two-year delay in the contracting out of their work. But K-Bro was waiting in the wings to steal their jobs.

Since then K-Bro has built a monopoly in cities across Canada in institutional cleaning, exploiting lower-paid workers in order to make a profit.

Romanow Commission backs privatizing health services

BY EDMONTON IWW

The Romanow Commission report on the future of health care in Canada (<http://finalreport.healthcarecommission.ca/>) has left the barn door open to privateers who wish to profit from public health care.

The report, while condemning in principal privatization of health care services, still allows for the contracting out and privatization of laundry, cleaning, food and other hospital support services. This is the same recommendation made by Alberta's Mazankowski report and the Kirby Senate report. This means that monopoly contractors like K-Bro Linen services will be handed taxpayers' money while unionized workers are given their walking papers.

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Industrial Worker
PO Box 13476
Philadelphia, PA 19101

ISSN 0019-8870

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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Govt. & bosses give selves raises, workers the shaft

BY BRIAN OLIVER SHEPPARD

Shortly before recessing for the holidays, Congress voted itself a 3.1 percent pay raise for 2003 while failing to act upon a looming unemployment crisis that will affect almost one million American workers. Pay for members of Congress will rise to \$154,700 per year this year. This reflects a 19 percent increase in just three years, nearly quadruple the average pay rise. In the meantime, as of Dec. 28, nearly 800,000 unemployed Americans lost their unemployment benefits because Congress refused to extend them.

Claiming it was "too costly," prominent congressional leaders refused to act on a plan to extend benefits for 13 weeks over the holiday season. According to an AP news report, GOP leaders also "said the economy was improving," even as official figures showed the November unemployment rate edged up to 6%. This marks the highest unemployment rate in nearly a decade, signalling that the end of the current recession is still far off.

While workers scrounge for ways to make ends meet during the Christmas season, 43 percent of congressional freshmen – victors in the November mid-term elections – declared holdings of over \$1 million. "How representative of the American people are these new freshmen members?" asked Charles Lewis, director of the Center for Public Integrity, which helped analyze the data. In all, there are "dozens" of millionaires in Congress, according to the Associated Press. The rest make above \$100,000 per year, distancing them from the day-to-

day concerns of the majority of the public.

The Congressional Accountability Project noted that many in Congress make money from the same industries they are being called to regulate. For example, according to an Associated Press study of congressional financial disclosures, "Eleven of the 63 Senate and House freshmen have investments in banking or credit card companies, including bank directorships, as they prepare to consider industry-backed legislation making it harder for consumers to declare bankruptcy." Likewise, the majority in congress either are now or have been private sector bosses, or have financial interests that place them on the side of the boss class. The refusal to extend unemployment payments through the holidays is evidence of how this Dickensian class bias has played out so far.

One of the workers for whom extending unemployment benefits would be "too costly" is Joyce Smith, 52, of Ardmore, Tenn., who received \$190 per week until last August after being laid off from a factory. Still unemployed, Smith said, "There's not much out there. They don't want people my age. It's been a panic and a struggle and you just go into a depression."

Scott Carmichael, interviewed by the Associated Press, was laid off from Worldcom after managers defrauded workers and investors, dragging that company into the largest bankruptcy in U.S. history. Though executives escaped with golden parachutes, Carmichael, 45, remains unemployed – his

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Someday they'll give a war and nobody will come

BY STAUGHTON LYND

We all know what's wrong with business unionism, right? Top-down decision-making by union hierarchies that amount to one-party states. Bullshit contracts that require workers to give up their right to strike while management keeps its freedom to shut down the plant. An insufferable labor press that never prints critical letters and only records alleged victories.

That's about it, right?

Wrong. The worst thing about business unionism is its selfish, small-minded, supine acquiescence in the imperialist foreign policy of whatever nation a particular business union calls home

The Paradigm: World War I

The paradigm experience of business unionism and war was in World War I.

All over Europe in 1914 there were large Social Democratic parties. At one international conference after another, the delegates from these parties declared that if there were a war they would refuse to cooperate, they would be part of a worldwide general strike that would stop the war.

But these parties were dominated by the trade unions of the various European nations. The unions financed the parties. As a result, in practice the parties were unable to take positions to the left of the unions. (By the way, the same thing would be true if the much-talked-about labor party were ever created in the United States.)

And so what happened when, in August 1914, Great Britain, France and Russia went to war with Germany and Austria-Hungary? In each country the Social Democrats, following the lead of that nation's trade unions,

supported the government.

Only a handful of brave souls resisted. In Germany, Karl Liebknecht who was a delegate to the German parliament voted against war "credits" (taxes). He then joined with Rosa Luxemburg and Alexandra Kollontai to create a socialist opposition to the war. In Russia, Lenin called on workers to "turn the war into a civil war."

The United States was an honorable exception to this general pattern. Here too, the AFL led by Samuel Gompers slavishly supported the war policies of President Woodrow Wilson (who had been elected in 1916 with the slogan, "He kept us out of war"). But the Socialist Party opposed the war. Its leader, Eugene Debs, was put in prison. And the IWW opposed the war, and was decimated by savage repression.

This pattern continued throughout the 20th century. In the 1960s the U.S. trade union movement lined up behind the war in Vietnam. Supposedly "progressive" trade union leaders like Walter Reuther steadfastly supported President Lyndon Johnson when he abandoned the peace rhetoric that caused him to be elected in 1964 and, only a few months later, began to bomb North Vietnam.

But, I hear someone saying, doesn't Seattle show that unions are better now? I don't think so.

In the first place, why were the Steelworkers and Teamsters in Seattle? The Steelworkers wanted to keep imported steel out of the United States. They didn't care – and don't care – what happens to fellow steelworkers in Germany, or Brazil, or Japan, or South Korea. And the Teamsters wanted to keep Mexican truck drivers from crossing the

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Wage wars in the construction trades

Thanks for running the Gangbox URL at the end of that story you wrote last issue based on my article. Just a couple of things I think you might find useful to know:

In another article, you stated that the UBCJA has 520,000 members. That's what they claim on their website, but in 1999 they paid AFL-CIO per capita tax on 324,000 members.

They claim to have added 90,000 members since then, but a lot of those people quit once they realize that a union book does not equal a job – it just gets you a place at the bottom of the out of work list, unless you have a connection with a contractor to get work directly.

On jurisdiction and the "wall to wall" thing. It's really not a question of "technology" making the different trades' work more similar. Concrete pours are still done pretty much the same way they've been done for the last 60 years ... sheetrock walls have been framed, rocked and taped the same way for most of the last half century, and so on.

It's a question of different trades having different pay scales. And carpenters are the second lowest-paid trade (laborers are the lowest).

So, for example, if you're a contractor doing a concrete pour, you're supposed to have cement masons doing the cement finishing work, laborers pouring the concrete and stripping the formwork when the concrete has set, carpenters building the formwork before the concrete is poured, and ironworkers setting the rebar in the forms before the concrete is poured. But if you have carpenters or laborers doing the work of cement masons and ironworkers, you pay less in wages and benefits. And you can, theo-

retically, make one person do the jobs of three or four people, for one check ... so the same people who build the forms can be forced to set the rebar, pour the concrete, and finish it when it's poured

In other words, one man, doing the work of four, for one check. Jurisdictional rules are supposed to prevent that. The current leaders of the Carpenters and Laborers unions are violating those jurisdictional rules, and that's the core of the problem.

Greg Butler, New York

Readers' Soapbox

Unabashed bias

I am writing this letter over concern of many of the articles concerning the carpenters union that have been printed in the IW. I have been dismayed to see an unabashed bias against the UBC in supposedly objective articles.

When we left the AFL the reports in the IW were of a fear-mongering nature, speaking ominously of a trade war (which we were to be blamed for). Since our withdrawal we have been the victims of other crafts raiding our jurisdictions, which is neither here nor there, but worth noting.

Also the IW reported on the start of a strike in Connecticut which focused on how we had on previous occasions crossed other unions' picket lines and the outcome of the strike was dubious. We won that strike, where was the article on that?

While we do have many faults (I will not try to apologize for them here) the UBC is the only skilled trade that will accept and organize illegal immigrants, something which I am extremely proud of. It is also worth noting that unlike most construction unions (Electricians, Pipefitters, Plumbers etc.) we do not have the luxury of state licensing, anyone with a skillsaw can call themselves a carpenter and compete for jobs. That seems much more newsworthy than McCarron's antics, but this is all we are given.

Also I have noticed that when discussing the carpenter's union McCarron's "autocratic style," involvement in the Ullico trading scheme and cozying up to Bush seem to

keep popping up. The truth is that I don't know any business union boss who isn't autocratic, and while it is disturbing, McCarron was not the only union head to be investigated for their involvement in the Ullico incident. And while McCarron's asskissing makes me sick, it isn't any worse than the fact that most unions whore themselves out to the Democrats.

While most of the aforementioned items are small things, when put together they are tantamount to an indictment of the carpenters union and its membership. What saddens me most of all is to see my brothers and sisters, whom I love dearly, slandered by soft hands that have never known the hardships and trials of the job site.

Yours for OBU of all Workers (emphasis on the workers part),
Zach Lane, L.U. 1068

Editor's Note: The Industrial Worker does not publish "objective" articles – it is unabashedly on the side of the working class. We side with the workers, with the rank and file, when they are exploited on the job, denied the right to control their unions, or have their pockets picked by union piccards. That said, our Ullico coverage has discussed the sordid role played by many union officials, up to and including AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

Our articles on the disputes within the construction trades have argued that the traditional trade demarcations are largely obsolete, and that many unions (not just the Carpenters) are poaching on each other's turf, engaged in precisely the sort of wage wars condemned 97 years ago in the IWW Preamble.

Our brief report on the Connecticut strike did not predict its outcome, nor did it condone the union scabbing that undermined the carpenters. Unfortunately, it is often quite difficult to learn of the end of a strike (and, in particular, the terms of the settlement).

Correction

An editing change to Ilyan Thomas' letter, "Fundamental Regeneration" (December), altered the meaning of one sentence: "Abolishing the wage system might also mean abolishing money... modern technology, and the limitations described in those two web sites, call for very radical changes

in the way people live." Misreading the sentence, I replaced the ellipses with a comma.

"Partly my fault for not using one stop and a capital M," FW Thomas writes, "but I certainly do not advocate abolishing technology." I regret the error.

IWW election results

IWW members have elected the following members to serve on the IWW's 2003 General Executive Board: Jim Ellsworth (Philadelphia), Bob Helms (Philadelphia), Patrick McGuire (Winnipeg), Bethany Meisberger (Pittsburgh), Samara Paysse (Santa Barbara), Rochelle Semel (Upstate New York), and Donna Wilson (Providence). Jim Giddings (New Hampshire) will serve as First Alternate.

Alexis Buss was re-elected General Secretary-Treasurer; Colin Bossen, Zach Lane and Peter Moore will serve on the IWW's International Solidarity Commission; Jon Bekken was re-elected Industrial Worker editor; and Mark Damron was re-elected to head the IWW General Defense Committee.

The IWW's Conflict Mediation Commission will include Braden Cannon, Heather Hall, Lisa Hollingshead, Breeze Luetke-Stahlman, and Adam Welch.

The 2003 General Assembly will meet in Portland, Oregon, on Labor Day weekend.

West Coast organizer training session Feb. 15-16

The IWW's Organizer Training Committee will conduct a two-day training program February 15-16 in Los Angeles.

At 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 14, the branch will host a bowling party at the Shatto Lanes, at 4th and Vermont in Koreatown. (We love a good strike!) The training will be held at Arts in Action, at 1919 W 7th St., beginning at 9 a.m. sharp on Saturday the 15th.

The training is being hosted by the Los Angeles GMB, which asks those interested in participating to contact them by Feb. 1 at PO Box 91691, Pasadena CA 91109 (626-644-1973; lagmb@iww.org). Limited housing and transportation around the Los Angeles area is available by prior arrangement.

Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

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- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ EMANCIPATION

Official newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World

Post Office Box 13476 Philadelphia, PA 19101 USA 215/222-1905 • ghq@iww.org

General Secretary-Treasurer: Alexis Buss

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ISSN 0019-8870 Periodicals postage paid Philadelphia, PA and other mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Industrial Worker, POB 13476, Phila. PA 19101 USA

Individual Subscriptions: \$15 Library Subs: \$20/year (Member sub included in dues)

Published ten times per year printed by Teamsters union labor



Articles not so designated do not reflect the official position of the IWW. Contributions welcome.

Press Date: January 5, 2003



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IWW organizes Oregon Internet service provider

BY PATRICK WADE, EUGENE

Workers at the Eugene Free Community Network, an Oregon not-for-profit Internet Service Provider, have organized into the IWW's Telecommunications Workers Industrial Union 560.

EFN has been providing low-cost Internet service in Lane County since 1993, and in other parts of the Willamette Valley since August of 2002.

The union was certified on the 16th of December by a card-check certification; the workers and management invited Lane County Commissioner Peter Sorenson to confirm that a majority of the workers had signed authorization cards for the IWW to represent them.

In the coming negotiations the workers aim to establish agreement on collaborative decision-making and clarity of responsibilities, expectations, strategy and mission. Job security and hiring practices, grievance and discipline procedures, and living wages and benefits will also be negotiated.

The National Labor Relations Board has dismissed unfair labor practice charges filed by IWW IU610 members who lost their jobs at All Women's Health Services in Eugene after the clinic closed during their union drive. The decision is under appeal.

IWW meeting in Amarillo

Residents of Amarillo, Texas, recently indicated interest in the IWW and requested that a representative give a talk in their city, a conservative town of less than 200,000 inhabitants in the Texas panhandle. They had met members of the Denver GMB at a Utah Phillips show, and fellow workers Tyler and Zach Lane in Denver referred them to last year's GEB chair, Joshua Freeze, in Austin, Texas.

The people in Amarillo raised most of the funds for his travel and the Austin GMB agreed to cover the rest. Freeze spoke for close to an hour on the basic ideas of unionism in general and the IWW in particular, on the history of the IWW, and on current IWW campaigns. The talk ended with a pitch urging attendees to join the IWW to organize their jobs.

The primary event was held Dec. 6, with 15 people in attendance, a good number for a first event. Two new members joined, and they are confident that others will come soon. Saturday, Freeze gave a half-day organizer training. On the whole the weekend was a success and the union can expect good things from the new fellow workers in Texas.

Sydney IWW activities

Sydney (Australia) Wobs had a very successful May Day week. We attended the traditional Trade Union May Day toast on the evening of May 1st, held at the South Sydney Rugby League Club in the working-class suburb of Redfern.

South's Football Club was victorious in their 2-year battle with the National Rugby League after being booted out of the competition because the club and supporters did not meet the new corporate ideals of the game. They are now back in the comp!

The May Day toast was very large this year with over 500 unionists, politicians (ugh!), and lefties. The IWW had a visible presence with our t-shirts, *Direct Action* papers and through talking to the growing network of unionists we are dealing with.

On May 1 itself IWW members marched in the M1 protests, which targeted the offices of Australian Correctional Management, a US-owned company which has contracts to run a number of "private" jails over here as well as the detention centres for detained asylum seekers in the Australian desert. Whilst this was a small march, it allowed the IWW to show itself as the only union officially participating in the M1 protests.

The IWW also marched in the traditional trade union parade on Sunday May 5 with

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Palestinian unionists speak

BY ERIC HAYES PATKOWSKI

On Dec. 2, the Austin (Texas) General Membership Branch of the IWW hosted two labor activists from the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions – Mohammed Mahmoud Ahmed Saleh, who is on the PGFTU executive committee, and Hekmat Kamal Rateb Elsarraj, who represents the PGFTU's women's affairs department.

Saleh focused his talk on the impact of occupation on Palestinian workers. Even before the current Intifada, there was a big wage gap between Palestinian and Israeli workers at the same job site – where a Palestinian worker would earn \$500, an Israeli worker could earn twice that, often with less experience. Palestinian workers were forced to pay dues to the Israeli union, without receiving benefits or a voting voice in that union. Because of these factors, there was great tension between Palestinian and Israeli unions.

With the Israeli border closures, even these poor-paying jobs are now inaccessible, and in an effort to keep labor costs down for Israeli employers, foreign workers are being shipped in from Asia to fill the service jobs previously filled mainly by Palestinians. Amidst this economic dislocation, the Israeli military has been targeting Palestinian infrastructure and blocking aid that could go to rebuild the fractured Palestinian society.

In February of this year, U.S. military-supplied Israeli F-16s and Apache helicopters bombed the PGFTU headquarters, which had been largely paid for by donations from unions throughout the world. The attack on the headquarters of a recognized labor union was a clear violation of the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, which forbids civilian targets, and Israel's actions were condemned by many unions.

Saleh said that because Palestinian workers are denied access to their jobs, the majority of Palestinians now live below the poverty line, and the situation is very dire. Quoting Israeli leaders, he said that the intent of

Israeli government policy is to create a situation so bad that the Palestinians would have no choice but to leave, thus opening up more land for Israelis. On a positive note, Saleh said the PGFTU is working closely with some of the more progressive Israeli labor and peace groups, and part of the reason for the U.S. tour is to let people know that there is indeed more to Palestine and Israel beyond land seizures and bombings.

Elsarraj focused her talk on the impact of the occupation on women and children. Many women are suffering adverse health affects from the occupation, ranging from premature births to miscarriages. Children fare no better, with many suffering from bed wetting and constant fear and anxiety. Classes are large, often with a student-teacher ratio of 100-1. Under the strict curfews, no one is able to go to work or school and are forced to stay indoors. For short times, the curfews are lifted and the Palestinians are allowed to go out to buy food and supplies, but in several cases the markets where Palestinians would go to buy food and supplies were destroyed by the Israeli military.

Because Palestinian society is relatively young demographically, most of the people living under occupation have known only occupation and violence. Elsarraj expressed concern that much has to be done so that the Palestinian youth do not express only what they have learned from the conflict, but said that the policies of the Israeli government and the lack of a Palestinian social infrastructure are not helping the situation.

"The children are saying we prefer to die, rather than continue under Israeli occupation," Elsarraj said, adding that despair and



Mohammed Saleh and Hekmat Elsarraj speaking in Cambridge, Mass., as part of a U.S. tour to call attention to the harsh conditions facing Palestinian workers.

an inability to conceive of a better future has led many Palestinians to acts of desperation. The suicide bombings are as much acts of suicide as attacks on Israelis, Elsarraj said.

Neither speaker endorsed such actions, but they did understand why Palestinians would feel that such actions were necessary or some, feeling desperate and resigned to occupation, would decide to engage in acts of resistance. That being said, both expressed hope that international labor would be a positive influence, both on Palestinian working class, and also in pressuring Israeli policy changes.

Specific and concrete actions that both asked labor groups to engage in were to contact the International Labor Organization and pressure the ILO to toughen its requirements, particularly with how Israeli labor unions interact with Palestinian unions and workers, and to get international unions to exert pressure on world bodies to enforce UN resolutions that ask Israel to respect the pre-1967 Palestinian borders. Until these are done, the plight of the Palestinian labor movement, and the plight of the Palestinians in general, will continue to deteriorate.

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: _____

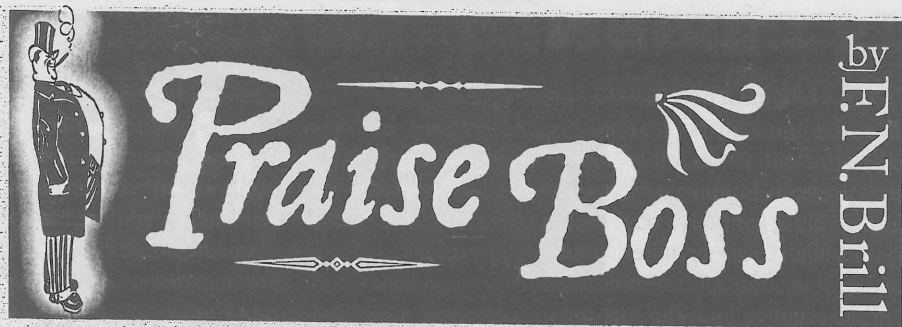
City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.



Ah, winter rains have set in here in puddle-land. Of, course, months of gray drizzle tends to encourage flights of fancy, especially those including sun. All of which reminds me of one of my favorite stories of proletarian individualist action against the system. This story is from the Chicago Surrealist magazine *Arsenal* and really occurred in the mid-1960s:

"A Chicago bus driver – on Halstead street I believe – announced to his approximately nine passengers that he could no longer endure the monotony of his employment, that he was at that moment leaving for Florida and that any passengers who wished to accompany him were welcome to remain on board. Two passengers got off at once; shortly afterward another, convinced the driver meant what he said, was also allowed to leave. The others evidently decided to go to Florida, or at least to see what would happen. Hours later, in southern Indiana, the bus with its driver and half-dozen passengers were stopped by the State Police. The drivers and passengers were placed under arrest and returned to Chicago."

★ ★ ★

Another escape story: In Saint Nazaire, France, more than 20 years ago, workers in the ship yard had been on a long strike. At one strike assembly, several workers proposed that since the ship they were working on was almost finished, the strikers should seize the ship for a trip to South America. This proposal was not accepted, but was seriously considered as a way to reach the objectives of the strike.

★ ★ ★

"When a man tells you he got rich through hard work, ask him whose."

— Donald Robert Perry Marquis, author, humorist, columnist

★ ★ ★

Top 10 Reasons why it's difficult to be an aging radical:

- 10) The red flag clashes with your sensible shoes.
- 9) Dialectics aren't as hard as they used to be, if you know what I mean.
- 8) The decadence of the capitalist system is the only decadence that interests you.
- 7) New members to you are everyone else's old timers.
- 6) You've seen the 4th International become the 4-to-the-4th International.
- 5) Where did I go wrong? My kids are Green Anarchists!
- 4) All your best Enver Hoxha stories are met with blank stares.
- 3) "Boring from within" is something that only happens in Sci-Fi movies.
- 2) The Greens are too hard-core.
- 1) The economy isn't the only thing that's sagging.

★ ★ ★

"Just because my grandfather didn't rape the environment and exploit the workers doesn't make me a peasant. And it's not that he didn't want to rape the environment and exploit the workers, I'm sure he did. It's just that as a barber, he didn't have that much opportunity!"

— Roger, from the movie "All of Me"

★ ★ ★

Just what the ultra rich need, a new luxury car. BMW has just announced the resurrection of the Rolls-Royce "Phantom" line. The new phantoms are hand built, weigh two and a half tons, are 19 feet in length and have a top speed of 150 mph.

The Phantoms also include "Lambswool floor rugs, hand-built folding picnic tables, GPS navigational aids, and an in-car audio system comprising nine amplifiers and 13 speakers come as standard." All this for a mere 250,000 Pounds Sterling. In doggie years that's Australian \$707,500, Canada \$627,500 or US\$350,000.

Which reminds me of why somebody wrote something called the Preamble of the IWW: "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 in life."

★ ★ ★

According to the *British Medical Journal*, drug dealers, I mean drug companies, have made up a new disease: female sexual dysfunction. "The corporate sponsored creation of a disease is not a new phenomenon, but the making of female sexual dysfunction is the freshest, clearest example we have..."

In a drugged-up frenzy, media have been broadcasting an inflated statistic, that 43 percent of women over 18 suffer from sexual dysfunction. One article reports, "The danger ... is the obsession with medicalisation, the idea that sexual problems are invariably rooted in physical causes and can be cured by simply taking a pill. That approach perilously trivializes why some women may have a lack of sexual desire, it says. Stress, tiredness or threatening or abusive behavior by their partners could be a cause, it says."

My question is will the government make these profit motivated designer diseases illegal? And if so, what will the mandatory minimum sentences be for these kinds of drugs?

★ ★ ★

I saw the ad, then some other radical geezers observed e-maily, the recent co-optation of Credence Clearwater Revival's Vietnam War-era protest song "Fortunate Son." Perhaps the most radical and class conscious of the popular protest songs, "Fortunate Son" is an attack on the hypocrisy of the capitalist ruling class, ready to use the flag and patriotism to their bidding even when they don't follow their own rules.

But now it is used (along with the American flag) to sell sweatshop jeans. Proving again Sam Johnson's truism, "patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels."

★ ★ ★

Paris, like many important and less important cities, has too many historical signs of the "on this site" history variety. Parisians report the recent appearance of some new points of interest along the streets of their city. Marble plaques have been put on walls, high enough so that they may not be easily removed, saying empty things like:

"This plaque was placed on this wall the 12th of September 1999" or

"In this place, on the 23th of April 1950, NOTHING happened" or

"In this place Marie Dupont, housewife, lived from the 15th of March 1966 to the 31th of October 1987."

Brighter than the average bear, F.N. Brill selflessly encourages readers to send in observations, jokes and other tokens of esteem to: FN Brill, c/o IWW, 616 E. Burnside, Portland, OR USA. Or e-mail fnbrill@yahoo.com.

Azteca strikers need solidarity

BY MICHAEL J. HARGIS

On Sept. 30, 63 workers with UE Local 1159 went on strike at Azteca Foods, a tortilla factory on Chicago's southwest side, to protest the company's unfair labor practices.

For years, they'd been represented by a corrupt company union that threatened workers and protected the company. Three years ago, Azteca workers – almost all are Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants – began their struggle for a real union, and on April 12, they won an NLRB election by a vote of almost 3 to 1 to form a union with the United Electrical Workers (UE).

The workers began contract negotiations with the company May 14. In spite of appeals from community leaders to negotiate fairly, millionaire Azteca owner Arthur Velasquez continues to demand concessions. Those concessions include lockout rights, cuts in medical and maternity leaves, the eradication of seniority rights, increased use of minimum wage temporary workers who have no benefits, a ban on union newsletters on company premises, and more.

On Oct. 28, striking workers launched a boycott of Azteca Tortilla products. Since then, solidarity has grown across the country. Still, the company continues to stonewall. Despite the bitter cold on the picket line and the hardships of the strike, worker and community solidarity remains strong.

What you can do: Call Azteca Foods owner Art Velasquez at 800-475-7997 and tell him to stop stalling and negotiate a fair contract now! Or, write: Arthur Velasquez, President Azteca Foods, 5005 S. Nagle Ave., Chicago IL 60638. You can also call LaSalle Bank's CEO Norman Bobbins at 1-866-904-7222 (it's a free call) and ask him to meet with the strikers and hear their demand that he request Velasquez's resignation from the bank's board of directors.

Domino workers pay price for union scabbing

Workers at Domino Sugar Corp. in South Baltimore have been on strike since Dec. 8, fighting efforts to gut their pension plan, eliminate two paid holidays, and cut-back on health care coverage. Domino has refused to negotiate since the strike began.

Nonunion workers are continuing refining operations, a highly automated process, and filling barges with liquid sugar for shipment to Domino's plant in Brooklyn, N.Y. Ironically, a two-year strike there was broken a few years ago by shipping the sugar to the Baltimore plant for final processing.

Today the cycle of union scabbing has come full circle. Uniformed guards with video cameras stand on each corner, filming pickets in a scene familiar to anyone who walked the Brooklyn picket line. Trucks rumble and machinery churns inside the refinery, as an estimated 150 managers, non-union workers and other scabs keep production going. And Domino executives sit back, confident that their workers will once again bludgeon each other into submission.

AK Steel, Steelworkers settle; workers still on the street

In the wake of winning a \$4.3 million verdict against the Steelworkers union for losses allegedly stemming from a 39-month labor dispute, AK Steel officially ended its lockout of union workers Dec. 11. However, only 30 of the 500 workers have been returned to their jobs at AK's Mansfield Works, where they are working alongside scabs.

United Steelworkers of America Local 169 and AK Steel reached an agreement to end the lockout that left many questions, most notably when workers would be returned to their jobs. The union had announced plans to appeal the court verdict; it is not clear whether the lawsuit was settled. Although AK reportedly made some compromises on work rule issues, workers are essentially returning on the company's terms.

Shaw Center workers win strike

BY EUGENE PLAWIUK

Over 1,000 demonstrators who crowded in front of Edmonton's Shaw Convention Centre Nov. 22, prepared to hold the line in solidarity with striking workers, instead found themselves joining a victory party. After seven months on strike, workers won a first contract two days before the Grey Cup football championship game was to be held in the facility.

This ended an ugly, drawn-out attempt to smash the union. The majority of strikers were women, and they showed strength and tenacity in their struggle with Edmonton's business leaders. Their efforts will give them strength on the shop floor to deal with the harassment and racism underlying their complaints about Shaw management.

Now that they have won we still need to demand that City Council fire the Economic Development Edmonton board. The city-owned agency spent millions of taxpayers' dollars to bust the union and failed. As we Wobblies say, Fire Your Boss!

The EDE represents the business class, not the majority of working-class taxpayers who pay for it. The EDE should be fired for forcing these workers out on strike and wasting millions of dollars trying to break their union. The Edmonton IWW is demanding that the EDE board be replaced with one that includes ordinary citizens and union members. Without the voice of workers on boards like the EDE and EPCOR, business will continue to run roughshod over their workers.

Solidarity boosts Niagara labour

BY BRUCE ALLEN

As 2003 begins, an unprecedented number of strikes and a lockout continue across the Niagara region in southern Ontario.

Two of these involve members of Canadian Auto Workers Local 199 – the lockout at Ronal of Canada Ltd. in Stevensville and the first contract strike at Niagara Motors in Virgil. Other strikes continue at Washington Mills in Chipawa and Fleet Industries in Fort Erie. Strikes at Anagram, Cornelius Pools and the Sheraton Hotel have just ended.

These battles have highlighted two things. One is that employers in the Niagara region are increasingly inclined to go on the offensive by seeking to impose major contract concessions or to deny workers even modest improvements in their contracts. The other is that organized labour in the region has risen to the occasion by providing sustained, meaningful solidarity to the workers who have been walking the picket lines in these struggles. This is clearly strengthening organized labour in Niagara.

The Niagara Area Labour Councils, and especially the St. Catharines & District Labour Council, are in the vanguard of these efforts. Many, many activities in support of the workers in these struggles have been organized. Three are particularly noteworthy.

On Nov. 29 a Solidarity Caravan toured all of the picket lines in place, bringing workers from all the struggles and many of their supporters together. Later that evening, the St. Catharines & District Labour Council organized an extremely successful fund-raising dance that raised almost \$14,000 for United Steelworkers of America Local 4151 members who have been on strike at Washington Mills for over 16 months.

Two weeks later a Niagara Labour Solidarity Rally was held at the CAW Local 199 Hall. This event reinforced efforts to forge unity between the striking and locked-out workers and their supporters by giving them the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts all of their respective struggles and expressions of support from the labour councils. Support was also offered by the keynote speaker CLC leader Hassan Yussuff. In addition, \$1,200 was raised to support the striking and locked-out workers.

Airline workers under attack

BY JOSHUA FREEZE

Airline unions are spearheading concessionary bargaining not seen since the early 1980s. US Airways' and United Airlines' unions are taking large scale cutbacks not only in the pocketbook, but in work and safety rules won over decades of labor battles. They are giving up flexibility, choice of work, pension levels, vacation, sick pay, meal pay, health care and "rigs," which for flight attendants and pilots help compensate for the 25 to 35 percent of the time they are at work, but not being paid.

The government is providing millions in grants and loans to the companies, but just like the government bailout of Chrysler in 1980, this round of corporate welfare contains requirements that companies force workers to give up hard-won gains to make up for the mistakes of management.

Just like the last round, other airlines are whining that they need concessions too. And just like in the 1980s, there is no such thing as enough in the eyes of management.

At United Airlines, the second-largest carrier in the world and currently in bankruptcy proceedings to reorganize, unions recently agreed to one billion dollars in concessions to help the airline get access to government loans. The loans were not granted and United came back to workers with a proposal for \$2.4 billion in cuts. And this is at a company where the workers theoretically own 55 percent of the company.

At US Airways, the smallest of the large carriers and also in bankruptcy, workers agreed to one round of concessions so the company could get the loans. Now, before

the ink on the first round of givebacks is dry, a new investor offered cash to buy a little over half of the company, but said he will liquidate the firm unless the workers make another massive contribution.

Both airlines threaten workers by noting that companies in bankruptcy have the legal right to request cancellation of labor contracts. Since the bankruptcy judge, whose primary responsibility is to creditors, makes the decision, such requests are often granted.

At Delta, the only major U.S. carrier that is largely non-union, workers didn't have any choice when management said it was time to tighten their belts. But the same thing has come to pass even where workers have unions. In defense of the existing unions, the concessions were approved by the members. However leadership has a responsibility to educate the membership about all the options. This was not done. It could be claimed that there was not time, but education is not something a union should leave for a time of crisis. It is the ongoing responsibility of union leaders to teach the members where the power lies and how it can be used.

If this process had happened, the officers could have presented a multitude of options, not simply a package of concessions.

Attacks on legal rights

Labor regulation for airline workers is covered not by the Wagner Act, which covers most private industry workers, but by the Railway Labor Act. Passed in 1926, the RLA was designed primarily to cut the legs out from under militant rail unions. Ten years later, it was foisted on airline employees as

well, and ever since the National Labor Relations Act was passed additional corporations have sought to be covered by the RLA, which in most regards is even worse for workers and unions than the NLRA.

Now, in spite of the unions accepting their concessions, management says this isn't enough. The Air Transport Association, the primary lobby for airlines, is demanding further erosion of the RLA. It isn't enough that contracts never expire under the RLA, or that it can take years of mediation before a strike is legal, or that even if that point is reached, the president can order an end to the action.

Carol Hallett of the ATA says the RLA "has failed to prevent strikes, it encourages acrimonious negotiations, and it leads to agreements that dangerously weaken the airlines." She doesn't mention the absurd demands and obstructionist positions taken by airline negotiators even when the industry was rolling in cash. The ATA demands that the right to strike, the one true power workers have, even with all the current roadblocks, be replaced with binding arbitration.

Where the power lies

The airline industry is one of the few in the U.S. where unions have the density to fight back across the whole industry. With over 80 percent of the workforce in unions, there is no good reason to accept cuts. If the unions would cooperate, they could not only prevent the cuts in wages, benefits and conditions, they could prevent layoffs.

Unfortunately the unions cooperate on little more than lobbying the government. There are several different unions for each work group in the industry. Within a given company, there may be half a dozen unions, all of whose

contacts end at different times. Even within each union, there is little vision about how to win. One US Airways pilot said, "pilot unity is a contradiction in terms," but unfortunately the same could be said of the rest of the work groups as well. The airline unions are going to have to start acting like a labor movement if they do not want to be reduced to simply negotiating how much they will give back. Many unions said they would not accept concessions, but a few weeks later the leadership was recommending huge cuts.

Instead of taking the path of least resistance, the unions could join together. The various unions representing pilots, flight attendants, mechanics and service workers, agents, trainers and everyone who is organized, could simply forge a compact. They could refuse concessions and refuse layoffs. If workers at one airline were in trouble, agents with code sharing airlines could refuse to issue tickets to the one where the difficulty was. If the ATA or government made industry-wide attacks, the unions could simply ground all aircraft. In short, workers must replace the craft unionism of the industry with one industrial union.

However the blame cannot be laid entirely on union officials. To make this happen, airline workers will have to take charge of their unions. They cannot continue to treat the union as a third party or as an insurance policy. Union officers are mostly not inclined to wage the sort of fight that is necessary and even if they were, they couldn't win without the active participation of the membership.

When workers in the industry decide it is time to make a stand, they will have to make the union their own and use it as a tool to make the entire industry their own.

Privateers profiting off public healthcare...

continued from page 1

These workers who provide support services are predominately immigrant women, working at hard-labour, low-paying jobs. Even as unionized workers they are at the lower end of the wage scale. These services are some of the lower costs of hospital operations. The contracting out and privatization of their jobs means the services will be provided by companies like K-Bro who pay even lower wages.

Hospitals still need food, laundry and cleaning services. Contrary to the Romanow report and the assertions of right wing think tanks like the Fraser Institute, cleaning and laundry services are essential services. Without them hospitals close down, because the threat of infection is too great.

The cutbacks in cleaning services in hospitals over the past decade have proven this at the cost of our lives. The spread of super bugs and opportunistic infections such as staphacoccus is evidence that cutting back on cleaning operations has a medical impact on our health and on hospital services. The spread of staphacoccus infections, which can kill, only occurs in a hospital setting – it is rare to find it elsewhere. (see CUPE backgrounder on health support services: <http://www.cupe.ca/issues/healthcare/>)

The provision of laundry and food services has already been contracted out in Alberta and other provinces. The quality of food has declined, plans for fast frozen microwavable food has been a disaster in Alberta and Manitoba.

These experiments in privatization have been failures, yet the right wing still promotes the myth that private for-profit companies can provide public services. The fact is that public services provided by unionized workers are higher quality and more cost effective. To be held to ransom by companies who have a monopoly in services is not competition, it's using taxpayer funding for private profit. And that profit is made on the backs of workers through low pay, cutting corners on supplies, food, etc. and a constant increase in the cost of these services.

Privateers low ball their initial bid to take



FACELESS BUREAUCRATS

over these services. To get their foot in the door they take an initial loss. Once they control the services they take over the plant, in effect getting to buy the machinery and equipment, and with their monopoly they are in a position to increase prices. Short term pain for long term gain. While the privateer profits, the wages and benefits paid to the workers in these companies remains low.

By allowing for the contracting out of these services, the Romanow Commission leaves the door open for the full privatization of health care in Canada. These jobs and workers are the thin of the edge wedge. If their jobs are expendable, if their services can be contracted out to privateers, what stops hospitals from contracting out other services, such as lab techs, radiologists, etc.?

Aramark, Sodexho and other American-based contractors now provide food services in our hospitals and long-term care facilities. They are an extension of the hotel industry, and rather than being competitive they actually are monopolizing the marketplace.

The Romanow Commission was to come up with a plan to reform health care, to address the ideological battle between those promoting privatization and those who believe in a public health care system. In siding with the privateers Romanow has left the door open for privatization, his public dec-

larations to the contrary notwithstanding.

Romanow is the darling of the Social Democratic left and the labour movement in Canada, being a longtime New Democrat and former Saskatchewan premier.

As premier of Saskatchewan during the nurses strike he declared the nurses an essential service and ordered them back to work. He smashed the strike. The use of back-to-work legislation is a violation of international labour law, which declares that workers have right to free collective bargaining. He did not order the employer to bargain, since in effect his government was the employer; instead he used the big stick of anti-labour back-to-work legislation against the Saskatchewan Nurses Federation.

How many times does Romanow have to prove he is no friend of labour? He has proven it in a big way with his Medicare recommendations. Once again a leader of the New Democrats has shown that the party is no friend of workers, only greedy for state power like the other political parties.

Unions associated with the New Democrats should seriously consider why they are affiliated to a political party that when in power acts no differently than the other capitalist political parties. Romanow proves that the once in power the party and ideology are irrelevant; maintaining "law, order and good

government" for capitalism is what political power is all about.

His recommendations for Medicare prove that. Once again workers are sacrificed for the good of the capitalist system. He has given carte blanche to the Campbell government in B.C. to smash the hospital unions, by allowing for the contracting out of jobs. He has, with a wink and a nod, approved after the fact provincial governments such as Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia, which have already contracted out these services.

The fight for the unionized public delivery of health care in Canada is not over. Workers must mobilize against the contracting out of any public health care jobs. This is not a sectoral battle, or a question of who has union jurisdiction over these workers – this is class war.

Every health care job sacrificed is another nail in the coffin of our public health care system. Thus every struggle to save jobs in health care cries out for all of our solidarity, to mobilize mass support on the picket lines to save those jobs.

In 1995 unionized laundry workers in Calgary showed the way to resist the contracting out and privatization of health care. They walked out in a wildcat strike, to stop the contracting-out of their jobs to K-Bro. The labour movement failed to mobilize a mass strike in their support. After ten days they won their strike but eventually lost their jobs to contracting out. That defeat has led to the slippery slope of privatization and contracting out that Romanow now recommends. That defeat meant that K-Bro now runs all the hospital laundry services in Alberta and is expanding into B.C.

The lesson is clear, the laundry workers showed how to battle against the privateers – to use our power as workers to walk off the job, regardless of contracts or the law. As workers we must support every strike against the privatization of health care in Canada. These are no longer just workplace issues, they are public strikes to save our public health care system. Any attempt to privatize these jobs must be met with mass mobilizations and a General Strike. Not one hospital services job must be lost or we will lose our public health care system to the privateers!

Workers for Peace

In our workplaces and poverty lines across our world, plutocrats and corporate royalty and their union lackeys collude to persuade us to see other workers as competitors and enemies.

We are pushed by powerful labor sell-outs to believe that it is now the business of trade unionism to put our brothers and sisters out of work.

We see how this dog eat dog attitude towards all workers – with whom we have everything in common – is on the same evil, competitive continuum as war itself.

We see that competition against other workers diminishes those workers in our eyes.

We see that in war, soldiers – the production workers of war – lose not only their jobs but also their lives while the rich profit.

We say that war is the inevitable outcome of worker against worker, dog eat dog competition which workers lose so the rich can be richer.

War is the ultimate, evil competition.

We call on workers everywhere to stop the competition between us and to fight for a world based on solidarity.

Everyone can at least talk and we ask that our talk include what we can all do to make the world a safe and happier place. We call on workers to simply talk about the traditional direct action tools of the labor movement.

Can we call for and have international conversations about redeveloping our traditional weapons – slowdowns, sitdowns, and strikes – to bring down those who kill us; and, to equalize wages and working conditions at the highest possible levels throughout the world?

If we must fight, let us fight against those who constantly divide us and play us against each other for their own profit even to the point of forcing us to kill each other.

If we must fight a war let it be a war

against selfishness and poverty.

Let us fight to unite all workers against the destructive, dictatorial greed of corporate moguls. Let us fight to see that those who have the least gain equality in wages, health care and education and the right to a happy life.

A simple conversation started amongst workers who believe in the working class values of solidarity, equality and democracy can change the world.

Let our war begin with the peaceful exchange of words and ideas. —Workers for Peace

Dennis Serdel, 11th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Div., Vietnam 1967-68, UAW Local 5960 Pontiac, MI

Gregg Shotwell, Editor *Live Bait & Ammo*, UAW Local 2151, Grand Rapids, MI

David Yettaw, Vietnam Vet, Strike Leader, Fmr. Pres (now retired) UAW Local 599, Flint, MI

John Kiel, Pipefitter, UAW Local 1111, Indianapolis

John Martinez, Editor, UAW Local 22

Trish Staiger, Anti-Poverty & Peace Activist, Hastings, MN

Al McKinnis, Fmr. USMC, UAW Local 879, St. Paul, MN

Tom Laney, Fmr. 82nd Airborne, UAW Local 879, St. Paul

Carolyn Lund, Trustee and Exec. Board Member, UAW Local 2244, Fremont, CA

Barry Sheppard, Steward, IAM Local Lodge 1781, UAL Mechanic, Oakland, CA

Nancy Schillinger, Fmr. Committeewoman, UAW Local 879, St. Paul

Wendy Thompson, President, UAW Local 235 Detroit

We invite readers to sign this statement. We must rely on ourselves to get the world we deserve.

E-mail Tom Laney at tlaney@pressenter.com



Someday they'll give a war and nobody will come...

continued from page 1

Rio Grande.

And in the second place, since 9/11 the business unions of the United States have been out to lunch. They didn't mumble a word of criticism about bombing Afghanistan. With one exception – the United Electrical workers (UE) – they haven't been heard from about the impending war with Iraq.

What about the union reform movement?

Sadly, the union reform movement hasn't been much better.

I don't mean to pick on the dogged Teamsters reform movement, but they are the strongest of the union reform movements, and their conduct has been shameful.

In the last general election in the IBT, the so-called rank-and-file candidate (Tom Leedham) criticized IBT President Jimmy Hoffa for not doing enough to keep Mexican truck drivers out of the United States. This position is no different than that of Gompers when, 120 years ago, he supported laws that would have kept Chinese laborers out of the country.

And at its recent convention in Cleveland, Teamsters for a Democratic Union is reliably reported to have rejected proposals from rank-and-file delegates to its own convention to take a position against war with Iraq.

Local 705 of the Teamsters in Chicago had adopted a resolution against the war. At the TDU convention two stewards from Local 705, Donny Schraffenberger and Joe Allen, asked TDU to take a similar position. According to Schraffenberger:

"The resolution ... was tabled in a vote recommended by the TDU steering committee. The result is that the longest-standing reform group in the labor movement is silent on the war drive against Iraq at a time when increasing numbers of union bodies are voting to oppose it."

Sorry, folks. This is shameful and inexcusable. It is opportunistic. It is rank national chauvinism. It betrays everything that a Joe Hill, a Bill Haywood, a John Reed, an Elizabeth Gurley Flynn stood for.

What is to be done?

Fortunately, as the Local 705 stewards point out, local labor bodies all over the country have been passing resolutions against the war. A list of the groups that have passed such resolutions has been posted on the Internet by Michael Letwin of New York City. The variety is astonishing: central labor bodies not just in the Bay Area and New York but in, for example, Duluth; the state-wide AFL-CIO in Washington state; the state-wide SEIU in Wisconsin; and so on.

Typically, these resolutions "connect the dots." They point out that the same Bush who feathers the nests of his corporate cronies inside the United States wants to take over all the oil of the Middle East (and southern Russia, Africa, and Venezuela).

In contrast to the AFL-CIO, which thinks that a movement can be built around prescription drugs for the elderly while keeping silent on the war, these local labor bodies oppose cowboy capitalism both at home and abroad.

The obvious next step is for the folks who have been passing these resolutions to reach out to each other, horizontally, and plan joint actions. Meetings to do exactly that have been planned for Chicago on January 11 and Pittsburgh on January 25. Any one wishing to find out more about the logistics of these occasions should contact me at salynd@aol.com or (330) 652-9635.

Finally, I'd like to mention a particular joint action I plan to suggest in Chicago and Pittsburgh.

I remember attending a Labor for Peace gathering at the Teamsters local union in St. Louis in June 1972. A rank-and-file resolution, which I had the honor to second, proposed that on a given day the workers in every workplace in the country do as much as seemed possible in each particular situation (buttons, leaflets, an extended lunch hour, up to staying away from work, as appropriate) to oppose the war in Vietnam.

The motion passed overwhelmingly but the union tops who ran the meeting killed the idea. I still think it's a good idea. And I'd like to do it on Thursday, May 1: May Day.

Let's take a stand against the war and at the same time bring back May Day as the real workers' holiday. We know that students will be in the streets on May Day. Let's be there with them.

Someday they'll give a war and nobody will come.

Duluth unions against war

On Nov. 14 the Duluth Central Labor Council unanimously approved an anti-war resolution noting that "a war with Iraq would require the re-direction of vital resources and funds to a destructive, senseless, and illegal goal while further strengthening an administration that has restricted the civil liberties of its citizens." The resolution condemned the Bush administration's march toward war and urged "its members and affiliates to get involved with organizations working toward stopping the trigger happy Texan's march toward war with Iraq."

San Francisco Labor Council opposes war on Iraq

On December 9, the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO) unanimously adopted a resolution titled "Labor Needs to Take a Clear Stand Against the War."

The resolution endorsed the January 18 marches in San Francisco and Washington, DC in opposition to the war on Iraq, and called on the "national AFL-CIO [to] take a clear and early stand against Bush's war."

It placed the war drive in the context "of a relentless new assault on labor – from the employers, and from the government acting on their behalf," including the Taft-Hartley injunction against the dockworkers, threats to privatize the jobs of hundreds of thousands of federal workers, "the racist firings of experienced airport screeners," threats to curtail the right to strike and organize, etc.

"National security," in the hands of a thoroughly anti-labor Bush Administration, is being used as a bludgeon against labor, with the intent of rolling back all the gains workers have won since the 1930s, including collective bargaining itself, and including social programs championed by the labor movement like welfare, social security, unemployment insurance."

Stress sickening workers

Britain's Health and Safety Commission reports that an epidemic of workplace stress has caused a near-doubling of days taken off sick by employees. Stress is now the biggest occupational health reason given on sick notes. The Confederation of British Industry responded by calling on managers to vigorously challenge claims of stress.

Morgan Stanley and the new class war

BY INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOODWORKERS, GENEVA

U.S.-based investment banking giant Morgan Stanley has issued a declaration of war on unionized labour. In a recent "research note" to investors, Morgan Stanley equity strategist Steve Galbraith advised them to "look for the union label ... and run the other way." Pension and healthcare plans for employees render unionized companies "toxic" to investors, declared Galbraith, and their non-union competitors should be rewarded accordingly.

It would be irrelevant to point out that unionized companies have, over the longer term, proven highly successful.

Or that the crash of the Enrons, WorldComs and other companies highly rated by the investment analysts was toxic to many shareholders as well as employees. Or that companies with real assets inevitably prove more durable than conglomerations of speculative capital. Morgan Stanley and other large investors will not be influenced by arguments of this sort.

Neither rational arguments nor appeals for a kinder, gentler neo-liberalism will sway these institutions. "Shareholder return," nourished on grossly inflated stock market values and speculative bubbles, has become the mantra of a new breed of transnational investor. Morgan Stanley's new investment doctrine reflects, in concentrated form, the financialization of the corporate mind.

Corporate financialization has been both a driving force in, and a consequence of, the neo-liberal deregulatory project of the past two decades. Ostensibly non-financial corporations now maintain considerable investment portfolios (often eclipsing their manufacturing assets). In the IUF sectors, for example, pure investment corporations inca-

pable of distinguishing a hotel occupancy rate from a loaf of bread trade in the ownership of food processing, food service and hotel and restaurant companies. The inflated share values of the stock market boom have conditioned a reflexive demand for ever-higher rates of return, achieved most easily by "reducing headcount" (i.e. laying off workers) and rapidly shuffling the ownership of corporations by other corporations on a global chessboard. A deregulated global political economy has been fashioned to facilitate the creation of paper wealth and the transfer of income from workers and the poor through the creation of massive debt.

It is the Morgan Stanleys of the world who are insisting on and profiting from the privatization of social security and public services, and who are intent on bringing world food production into their casino. There could be no better illustration of the socially-toxic character of the global finance regime than the dramatic upsurge in hunger and malnutrition in Argentina, a major food exporter, at a time when the IMF is insisting on massive reductions in public health expenditure as a condition of further loans.

Advising investors to flee from unionized companies is, to be sure, morally repugnant, socially irresponsible and, in the final analysis, bad financial advice. But it is the logical expression of the new world order which has been systematically constructed by the new breed of transnational investors. They will be defeated, not by the force of argument, but when labour and its allies have achieved sufficient strength to impose a global regulatory system in which genuine investment in wealth creation and human capital prevails over the institutionalized regime of global speculation.

There could be no better illustration of the socially toxic character of the global finance regime than the dramatic upsurge in hunger and malnutrition in Argentina, a major food exporter, at a time when the IMF is insisting on massive reductions in public health expenditure as a condition of further loans.

Hunger strike fights sweatshop tacos



BY MITCH CHANIN

"We'd rather go hungry than eat sweatshop tacos!" That is the cry that will go up February 24 outside Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine, Calif., as farmworkers from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the CIW's student, religious and labor allies begin an historic hunger strike.

The action — a hunger strike outside one of the world's largest fast-food corporations — will dramatically highlight the injustice of fast-food profits derived, in significant part, from farmworker poverty.

The union is asking supporters to organize solidarity actions in their own communities; to join them in Irvine for the hunger strike and for a "convergence" featuring music, theater and protest at Taco Bell headquarters Feb. 28; and to participate in the ongoing Taco Bell boycott.

The CIW is a 2500-member community-based farmworker organization located in Southwest Florida made up primarily of Latino, Haitian and Mayan immigrants.

The CIW is dedicated to achieving fair wages, more respect from growers, stronger laws and enforcement against those who violate workers' rights, the right to organize without fear of retaliation, and an end to indentured servitude in the fields. The CIW has been recognized internationally for its organizing around the Taco Bell Boycott and work to end modern-day slavery in the fields. In November 2002, the CIW helped bring to justice a slavery ring in South Florida, freeing over 700 migrant workers.

Farmworkers who pick for Florida growers that sell tomatoes to Taco Bell earn 40 to

50 cents for every 32-lb bucket of tomatoes they pick. At that rate, workers must pick and haul 2 tons of tomatoes to make \$50 in a day. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the median annual income of farm-workers today is \$7,500. Workers are denied the right to organize and the right to overtime pay for overtime work. They receive

no health insurance, no sick leave, no paid holidays, no vacation and no pension.

Hundreds of thousands of farmworkers across the country face similar conditions. They are excluded from protection under the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act, and many are excluded from social services and threatened with deportation because of their status as undocumented immigrants.

With almost \$5 billion in sales in 2001, and thousands of stores throughout the U.S. and around the world, Taco Bell is the largest buyer of tomatoes produced in Southwest Florida. The CIW believes that Taco Bell has the power and the responsibility to negotiate with the workers who produce those tomatoes and to ensure that farmworkers receive fair wages and decent conditions.

The CIW began organizing in the mid-1990s, challenging harassment and violence on the part of supervisors and contractors; fighting against cutbacks in the piece-rate they receive; demanding payment of stolen wages, access to bathrooms, and water breaks; and calling for dialogue with the growers to discuss solutions to the broader problems facing farmworkers.

They have organized small-scale job actions, general strikes, petition campaigns, hunger strikes, and a mass march to the state capital. While they have been able to stave off pay cuts and to win a small increase in the piece rate for tomato pickers across the state, talks with the growers have not brought about the larger changes that are needed. In 2001, the union decided to target Taco Bell, the company that has the most power to meet

their requests, initiating a boycott that rapidly spread across the country.

The corporate food industry, including grocery and fast food conglomerates, has created a demand for an enormous supply of cheap produce, allowing more resources to go towards advertising and branding. Companies like Taco Bell force their suppliers to compete with each other to sell fruits and vegetables for a little as possible, creating a devastating "race to the bottom" that leaves workers in desperate poverty.

Farmworker unions have often found that they cannot improve their situation without targeting the multinationals that benefit most from their labor, even if those companies do not directly employ them. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee, made up of workers in the Midwest cucumber and tomato industries, was able to win enormous improvements in wages and conditions in the 1980s through a consumer boycott that forced Campbells to sign a three-party agreement between the company, the workers, and the growers who directly employed them.

The CIW is asking Taco Bell to:

Contribute to an immediate increase in farmworker wages by paying one penny more per pound for the tomatoes it buys from Florida suppliers. This would allow growers to double the piece rate they pay farmworkers. Even if the entire cost were passed on to consumers, it would raise the cost of a chalupa by less than 1/4 of one cent.

Convene a meaningful three-party dialogue to discuss solutions to the problems farmworkers face in Florida's fields — bringing together representatives of Taco Bell, their Florida tomato suppliers, and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

Join with CIW and tomato industry representatives in drafting strict wage and working condition standards to be required of all Taco Bell tomato suppliers. Such standards would necessarily require respect for pickers' fundamental labor rights, including the right to a living wage and overtime, and the right to organize without fear of retaliation.

Students at more than 20 colleges around the country that have Taco Bell stores on campus have begun boycott campaigns. Students at Duke University, the University of San Francisco, and several other colleges and

high schools have succeeded in having Taco Bell removed from their schools, and students at other schools have been able to keep new Taco Bell stores from opening.

Last March, the CIW organized a cross-country tour that brought unprecedented national pressure on Taco Bell, as 70 workers and 30 students led a caravan from Atlanta to Los Angeles, on their way to a march of nearly 2,000 angry consumers on Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine. The tour led to the first-ever talks between farmworkers and fast-food executives, but not to the concrete changes in wages and working conditions that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers is demanding.

In February, the CIW plans to step up the pressure on Taco Bell with a hunger strike, speaking tours and a caravan for justice in California, and a mass protest. While the hunger strikers stand vigil at Taco Bell headquarters, a caravan of workers and allies will head south from Sacramento, stopping at college campuses and communities along the way and spreading word of the hunger strike through teach-ins and protests at local Taco Bell restaurants.

The caravan will reach Irvine Friday, Feb. 28, joining forces with the hunger strikers and with thousands of fair-food activists from California and across the country for a national day of convergence at Taco Bell headquarters — a huge day of protest and music that will rock Taco Bell. Throughout the week, solidarity fasts and protests will take place in communities around the country.

The workers are asking supporters to join them for the caravan and the events in Irvine, or to organize solidarity actions in their own communities. Solidarity actions could include pickets, video screenings, fasts, vigils or marches. Union members are available to speak throughout California.

If you'd like to set up a presentation, to find out how you can join the activities in California, or to order an organizing packet, including fact sheets, fliers, post cards, bumper stickers, buttons, videos and t-shirts, e-mail workers@ciw-online.org or call 239-657-8311 as soon as possible. The union's website provides information about the protest, fliers that are suitable for printing and copying, and background information about the workers' conditions and previous efforts. It is located at www.ciw-online.org.

William Frist: A true successor to Trent Lott

BY CURTIS VAUGHAN

Early last December, the media got another one of its chances to go on a rampage against a member of the political elite. In this case, I am referring to Trent Lott's racism, that was suddenly exposed by our ever-vigilant media.

The fact that he has flirted for years with the Council of Conservative Citizens, the successor to the segregationist White Citizens Council, apparently was not a dead giveaway. Not surprising the media predominantly concentrated on this one aspect of Lott's sordid past, rarely expanding it to other issues (racism in the United States) or to other politicians.

Although there should be no illusions in the Republican or Democratic Parties, there has been too little investigation into Lott's replacement as House Majority Speaker — William Frist. The fact is that he is about as right-wing as they come, and this is best exemplified by looking at his voting record.

Starting with labor issues, Frist has voted against a bill banning job discrimination based on sexual orientation or sexual preference; against workplace ergonomic standards, for the restriction of free speech for unions versus other groups on a companies premises; against giving collective bargaining rights to police and firemen nationally; against refugee status for Central American refugees; for massive cuts in National Labor

Relations Board funding; for weakening wage standards for federal construction projects; against minimum wage legislation.

Some other heinous votes by this most suitable replacement for Trent Lott include:

William Frist voted for a constitutional amendment outlawing desecration of the American flag; for a ban on so-called partial-birth abortion; for drilling in ANWR; to decrease voter registration by purging voter rolls; against increased global AIDS funding; against federal hate crimes legislation; and he supported legislation to allow religious organizations, when they are administering government aid programs, to require any religious observances they choose in order to qualify for the government aid!

PS.: In the end both the Democrats and the Republicans scored points in this affair. The Republicans ended up appearing as if they had come clean, despite the fact that Trent Lott remains a Mississippi Senator.

The Democrats came out looking better, as if they have no such problems within their ranks. Let's not forget the media, by the way. The media came off looking as if it was our faithful defender of public interest. The fact is, however, that this entire affair would have never have made the headlines had not Trent Lott's speech to Strom Thurmond been broadcast on C-SPAN and started an Internet debate, which then became newsworthy.

The Lott is rotten to the core....

Yahoo! janitors organize

The National Labor Relations Board is pursuing unfair labor practice charges against Team Services, a janitorial company employed by Yahoo! The charges allege union-busting activities ranging from harassment to threats and pay cuts, culminating in the firing of janitor Ricardo Olguin because of his union efforts.

On Dec. 12, 200 janitors and community members picketed Yahoo! headquarters in Sunnyvale, Calif., to demand Olguin's reinstatement. Two-thirds of all commercial buildings in Silicon Valley are cleaned by union janitors. Yahoo! is the biggest of the high-tech firms using nonunion cleaning services.

Boston SEIU members reject new janitors local

Two months after Boston's predominantly immigrant janitors settled a 24-day strike for far less than what they had sought (see report last issue), SEIU Local 254 has rejected a proposal to spin off the janitors into a new local. Only 367 of the 20,000 members participated in the vote.

Advocates of the plan said it would have benefited the local's newest members, mostly Spanish-speaking immigrants who work as janitors in the commercial office buildings in and around Boston. The local also includes building and grounds crews at the city sports arena and local colleges. The reorganization was proposed by leaders installed by the SEIU international after the local was trustee. Local 254 had a long history of selling out its members and accepting rock-bottom wages for the janitors in particular.

Bush to privatize post?

President George W. Bush has appointed a nine-member commission to consider options for reforming the post office, including raising rates, cutting service levels, allowing private contractors to take over pieces of the system, or privatizing the entire service. The administration also proposes raiding postal workers' pension funds in order to cut costs.

No postal workers will serve on the commission, which includes several corporate executives, the president of Yale University (which has been warring with its unions for decades), and (as its lone labor representative) the president of a prison guard union.

U.S. Labor Dept. proposes to swamp unions in paperwork

The U.S. Labor Department proposes to require unions to detail how much money they spend each year on politics, lobbying, organizing and strike benefits. Unions would also be required to itemize all expenditures above either a \$2,000 or \$5,000 threshold.

AFL-CIO general counsel Jonathan Hiatt said the new regulations would cost unions hundreds of millions of dollars a year in bookkeeping and accounting costs.

"We're talking about an administration that opposes regulations on air quality, water quality, on forests, on food safety, on repetitive stress injuries in the workplace," Hiatt said. "But when it comes to increased regulations on unions, requiring them to itemize every expense, that doesn't seem to trouble this administration at all."

Anti-strike law hobbles New York transit workers

BY JIM CRUTCHFIELD

An eleventh-hour agreement averted an expected strike by New York City transit workers in mid-December, but Transit Workers' Union members and local officers object to givebacks, and a movement is afoot to reject the proposed contract.

Tension mounted in the weeks prior to Christmas after TWU Local 100 voted to authorize a strike at the expiration of the old contract at midnight on Dec. 15. New York's infamous Taylor Law prohibits public employees from striking, and provides for steep fines and even jail time for workers who exercise the right to withhold their labor. The Metropolitan Transit Authority, the state agency that owns the city's public transport system, won a court injunction under that law that would have fined workers two days' pay for each day of a strike, and exposed union officers to higher fines and jail time.

More egregiously, the City of New York filed a lawsuit demanding that the union pay a fine of one million dollars for the first day of a strike, that fine to double every day thereafter; and that every striking worker be fined \$25,000 the first day, again doubling on each subsequent day of the strike. Whether the court would actually have imposed such ruinous fines is unclear, but the demand demonstrates the city's determination to destroy any union, and any individual worker, that refuses to submit to its arbitrary dictates.

Despite these threats, sentiment for a strike was strong in the local, particularly among workers in the Rapid Transit Operations division, which operates the New York City subway system.

Despite a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign by the MTA, the city and the boss press, emphasizing the cost and inconvenience that a strike would cause city residents, public support for the transit workers appeared to be high, with two well-attended rallies demonstrating labor solidarity and public sympathy in the days before

the strike deadline.

TWU international leaders, by contrast, pointedly distanced themselves from the Local 100 leadership, which is in the hands of the union's reformist New Directions faction. Local President Roger Toussaint is widely seen as a threat to International President Sonny Hall's pie-card empire, though Toussaint himself has caused division within New Directions by his own autocratic behavior since taking office in a landslide victory in December 2000.

The late-night compromise agreement evoked a sigh of relief on all sides, but dissent within the local began to emerge as soon as the terms of the proposal were made public. Officers in Toussaint's New Directions faction have circulated a letter criticizing the deal and calling for a "no" vote when the local holds its ratification vote in mid-January. "We elected these leaders as a militant leadership," said one New Directions member. "They're supposed to lead the struggle, not be an obstacle to it."

The proposal is not without gains for the TWU. The MTA has agreed to numerous improvements in medical benefits, a childcare program, and reforms to a disciplinary system that generated 15,000 formal actions last year, over a work force of 34,000. The MTA has also backed off of its earlier insistence that wages be frozen at 2002 levels for the next three years.

Local 100 executive board member Steve Downs, who is among the leaders of the "Vote No" campaign, expressed satisfaction with the new language on safety, which he considers a "considerable improvement."

Downs and his fellow dissidents, however, contend that givebacks in the proposal outweigh these and other gains. They point to the proposed elimination of the old contract's no-layoffs provision, increasingly significant as technology and reorganization eliminate jobs. They emphasize that the nominal wage increases (a \$1,000 lump-sum

bonus for most workers in the first year, three percent raises in the second and third years) are likely to result in a drop in real wages when inflation is figured in. And the proposal would allow marked degradation of benefits and conditions for bus operators and maintainers employed by the MTA's Manhattan and Bronx Surface Transit Operating Authority, under the proposed merger of that authority with the New York City Transit Authority's bus division.

Bosses delighted with longshore pact

West Coast dockworkers are voting on a proposed contract as we go to press, following its endorsement by ILWU local union officials at a Dec. 12 meeting.

The six-year contract would boost pension and health benefits, and boost wages for the highest-paid workers. Many other workers would initially see no increase in wages, widening the gap between crane operators and foremen and those who work the holds and docks.

The contract also allows the elimination of hundreds of clerks, who track cargo entering and leaving the docks. Those clerks would be transferred to other jobs, and some computerized planning and tracking work would return to union jurisdiction. None of the thousands of "casuals" regularly working the docks for lower wages when registered dockworkers are unavailable would gain union membership or conditions.

Many rank-and-file ILWU members oppose surrendering the clerk jobs, the length of the contract, and its tendency to divide workers by widening wage differentials and establishing different working conditions and wages in some ports. They point out that the agreement was negotiated with a Taft-Hartley gun pointed at the union's head.

National AFL-CIO officials played a key role in working with a federal mediator to push the deal through. "The culture of the

"This is a surprising proposal," Downs told the IW. "We thought we had a leadership who would do what it takes to get us a good contract. That turned out to be wrong." Downs said he is hopeful the membership will return the leadership to the bargaining table. "This is not a popular contract," he said. "Not that people will necessarily reject it — they might decide it's the best they can do. But there's a lot of disappointment with this contract."

ILWU will never be the same when it comes to bargaining," said AFL-CIO regional director Ron Judd. "They realize now there are forces out there they have to contend with. They can't be an isolated island in the greater sea of the labor movement anymore."

Many dockers resent that intervention. "The AFL-CIO is a tool of the politicians," said ILWU member Tim Milligan. "They believe as long as you have people under a union contract then they have won. ... Now we have started to go down that AFL-CIO path. Ninety percent of what unions have won in the past 120 years, unions have given back in the last 20 years."

Milligan suggested the union would have done better to turn to dock workers around the world for industrial solidarity when employers imposed the lock-out.

President Bush, however, welcomed the deal as "good for employers and ... good for America's economy." The *Wall Street Journal* also hailed the deal, in a Nov. 26 editorial titled "Taft-Hartley, Victorious." It asked readers to "give thanks for the Taft-Hartley Act ... [for] taking away the longshoremen union's bargaining chip — a stranglehold on the entire economy." The *Journal* went on to praise "the more moderate AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer, Richard Trumka, [for] parachut[ing] into negotiations to take the Luddite longshoremen in hand."

Agenda For Change: What a waste of time!

That's the headline on the current issue of the *IWW Health Worker*, published by our British Isles Regional Organising Committee (<http://www.iww.org.uk/>). The "Agenda for Change" is the Blair administration's spin on the ongoing attacks on the National Health Service and NHS staff.

The issue critiques a recent NHS pay deal negotiated with the established unions:

Three and a half years negotiating and what will health workers get out of Agenda for Change? A pathetic 3.225% next year!

Beverly Malone, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, in the understatement of the year said the deal was "very disappointing."

She has a cheek! What have the RCN, Unison and the rest been up to? Talks have been going on since 1999. This is their deal.

RCN evidence to the Review Body claimed a 15% increase for nurses next year. What on earth are they doing agreeing 3.225% instead!

"Nurses will be furious" Gary a Grade D nurse told *Healthworker*. "We have patiently been waiting for Agenda for Change for

years. We have been taking on extra work and now we are being told its only just over 3% next year."

Worse still the full new pay scales won't come in until October 2004!

"The consultants turned down a 30% deal in November. They told the BMA to go back and negotiate a better deal. Nurses must do the same. It is vital that a no vote to the deal is organised" Gary said.

Low Pay

It is not just nurses who are pissed off. Low paid staff will get just £5.18 an hour under the deal — but not until 2004! "Scotland has shown the way", a porter said.

"Strike action has forced three hospitals to pay £5.18 now, not in two years time" he explained.

IWW Healthworker doesn't think, unlike Unison who are going to push the deal, that £5.18 is anywhere near enough. The fact that the new rate won't come in straight away is a disgrace. The NHS employs some of the lowest-paid workers in the country.

While the lowest paid will get just £10,100, pay for NHS managers will go up to £65,000.

IWW Healthworker wants to know why NHS unions have given up so much for so little? Why was the deal pushed through so quickly in the end? Why did the unions agree to finish negotiations while the firefighters are still striking?

The government used Agenda for Change to attack the firefighters — and health unions let them!

The Deal

Here's what Agenda for Change means: Hours of work for staff will be 37.5 hours — that's a longer working week for

radiographers, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, dieticians and admin staff in London.

The increase in the working week will slash the pay of radiographers by 7%. Nurses and midwives get no cut in hours.

Pay next year will increase by just 3.225%. Inflation is already 2.5% and taxes will rise by 1% next year, wiping away any increase. The Pay Review Body will be put into mothballs for three years.

New pay scales and grades will be introduced in October 2004. The government says they will be worth 2% 'on average.'

There will be another 3.225% increase in April 2004, followed by a final 3.225% in 2005 — and that's it! Just 12% spread over three years.

There will be performance pay. Unlike now health workers will not be able to move automatically to the top of their pay scales, instead they will be stopped and their performance assessed by their managers.

If their manager doesn't think their performance is up to scratch they won't get a pay increase. If you thought discretionary points were bad wait for this! ...

What *IWW Healthworker* thinks:

The unions have sold their members out and they know it. They have given the government all that they want.

A pathetic 10% three-year pay deal. Performance pay. Modernisation, which means more work and longer hours.

Holidays will improve, but overtime rates for the weekend will be cut.

Most allowances will go, saving the government millions. Low paid nurses in London will see their London Weighting cut by over £200.

No wonder health secretary Alan Milburn looked so smug when he announced

the deal and no wonder union bosses looked so sheepish. They know the truth.

This is a bad deal for staff, and a bad deal for staff is a bad deal for patients.

Wasted Time

Agenda for Change has taken the unions three and a half years to negotiate. They have wasted their time. Health workers have got more taking one-day strikes than Agenda for Change has delivered.

All is not lost though. Unions will be balloting their members in the New Year.

They will try to spin the deal and claim it's a good one. Don't be fooled.

Health workers deserve a decent living. Agenda for Change means most nurses will still earn just £20,000 a year, even though they are being expected to take on more work. Occupational therapists and radiographers will have to work longer hours...

Some health workers in Scotland, Leeds and Carlisle have already fought back.

Enough is enough. Unison, Amicus, RCN, RCM and the rest have failed their members. ...

Agenda for Change would be a major setback. Health workers must vote no!

Leonard Peltier solidarity

A Feb. 8 march to demand justice for Leonard Peltier will begin at noon at the Portland Ave. park in Tacoma, Washington. A rally will follow at 1 p.m. at the federal court house. Feb. 6th marks the 27th year since the AIM activist's arrest. The government now concedes that they have no evidence directly connecting him to the deaths of the FBI agents he was convicted for, but still he has not been granted a new trial.

Information on the case and pending appeals at www.freepeltier.org.

READ

GEORGE ORWELL:
The Revolutionary



SEND A SELF-ADDRESSED
STAMPED ENVELOPE TO:

Raymond Solomon
Free Voices, The Solomon Press
98 - 122 66th Ave. Suite #2
Rego Park NY 11374 USA

Human guinea pigs "band together," win pay hike

BY ROBERT HELMS X341465

I am one of the hundreds of thousands of healthy people in the United States who serve as paid volunteer test subjects in clinical trials that determine the safety of experimental drugs. Our work falls in-between the legal status of a hospital patient and that of a temp worker. Our compensation is calculated according to the time involved, how many procedures are involved and how invasive and discomforting the procedures will be. We pay taxes on our earnings as "independent contractors," and our relationship with the research facility lasts only as long as the "informed consent" document stipulates. However, we are not discussed as employees in medical literature. Instead, the focus is on protecting (or failing to protect) our rights and safety, just as though we were hospital patients.

In early December I entered a study at Philadelphia's Thomas Jefferson Hospital, in a group of 20 men. We were given low doses of an anti-anxiety drug (enough to cause some drowsiness but too low for a mood change). We were obliged to defecate in a basket so that the staff could search through the stool for the remains of the drug tablet. A catheter tube was also inserted into a vein and we gave about 15 blood samples during each period. The diet was regulated so that we all got the same very dull institutional meals.

The schedule had five sections in which we stayed in the hospital for four days, and then were released for 36-hour periods, except for the break for Christmas and the New Year. We were obliged to refrain from drinking alcohol or using any other drugs (not even aspirin or vitamins) for the entire duration of the experiment, which, with pre-screening and follow-up appointment, lasted seven weeks. The hospital was conducting the experiment for Merck Pharmaceuticals, the company seeking government approval to market the new drug.

Because the experiment was fairly long and called for an unusually distasteful procedure, the recruiters invited only the most experienced and reliable guinea pigs. A newcomer to the trade is prone to misunderstand the whole affair and not complete a study for any of a hundred reasons. I've done at least forty studies at Jefferson alone, and most of the others had as much or more experience as I do. Three of us happened to know each other well, and most of us knew each other slightly from earlier studies.

I was also known both to the other volunteers and to the Jefferson staff for my journal *Guinea Pig Zero*, which deals with this very subject. In 1996, in fact, I evaluated

Jefferson as the best of six research units because of its decent pay and respectful, excellent staff. My high regard for the place has not changed since then, but now they have policies regarding me: the journal and its anthology are not allowed in staff work areas and they may no longer buy publications directly from me. That's ok; other units have barred me entirely from their premises.

The pay we originally agreed to for this study was \$3,350. Before the first segment of the study was over, every one of us agreed that the pay was too low. As veteran lab rats, we knew that the rate should hover around \$200 per day, with some variation from one facility to another and the details of a given study. During the screening period, some staffers could not deny that the pay should have been higher, and guinea pigs were comparing it unfavorably to other ongoing gigs in the area. We all knew of stories where lab rats did something to pressure the company for more money or better conditions, so our situation provided a good opportunity for a concerted effort. A few days into the study, I wrote up a one-page memorandum that respectfully said we wanted to re-negotiate the package and thought we should get \$4,500.

When gathering signatures on the memo and pitching it to management, I took pains to avoid giving the impression that the argument was coming mainly from me. Another guy walked the paper around the ward, and I signed my name in the middle of the list. Within a day or so we had all but one man's name on the sheet, and the lone holdout went to the boss after we handed it over and asked to see it so that he could sign too. Thus he went from being the most shy to one of the boldest among us. When we made our presentation to the head nurse and the unit director, about six of us did the talking.

When the job was planned, it was to be spread over a longer period in the fall season and be over with before Christmas. The breaks were to be three days long and each week was to have the same schedule. Various delays occurred, but the sponsor still wanted the job completed in 2003, so the schedule was compressed into a much shorter period (the staff wound up doing long overtime shifts and often sleeping at the unit). We volunteers were now expected to

refrain from drinking through the whole holiday season. The feces collection exposed us to unpleasant smells that had not been considered in the compensation. An old fringe benefit had been phased out before this study began: the volunteer telephone was restricted to local calls only, instead of allowing long-distance on the "honor system." Despite all these changes, the payment had not been adjusted.

Other strategies were used to boost the pressure. We kept referring to better-paying studies that would soon begin within a mile of Jefferson. This meant that some of us could drop out mid-way through the study, screwing up the science and causing a major financial catastrophe for the researchers. Anyone who bolted would be paid pro rata for the time he had put in. I suggested we ingest flexible vinyl propaganda scraps, so that the staff would find little notes reading "more money" in our poop, but many found the idea too vulgar. Go figure!

We were promised a yes-or-no answer before the holiday break, and the bosses assured us that they basically agreed with our request. It remained for them to get the drug company to agree. The promised deadline neared, and tension increased as unrelated issues came up. Two guys were caught breaking the dietary rules by burglarizing a cabinet and gobbling down snacks between meals. Staffers remarked that those guilty of such bad conduct didn't deserve a bonus. In response, we loudly talked about pulling a hunger strike or refusing to eat outside our rooms in order to keep the pay issue clear of any other concern.

On the evening before the first sub-group was to leave for the holidays and we guinea pigs were making more and more noise about being blown off, the unit director summoned everyone to the lounge for an announcement. They had gotten the nod from Merck two days earlier, but they had only just received a signed agreement over the fax machine. The payment would be increased by \$800, which is less than we'd asked for but plenty of money. We all cheered. Before the meeting broke up, the head nurse emphatically stated that this should not set a precedent, and we cannot just "band together" and put the sponsors over a barrel in the middle of an experiment. She said that this was an unusual

case, and that she herself had miscalculated the figure because of special circumstances.

Over the years I have been asked whether human guinea pigs would start a union, and I have said that it's logistically far-fetched and that we would suffer a lowering of status if we were to be included under the Labor Relations Act. Patients and lab rats hold a stronger hand in the courtroom than workers do, and the effort I have just described would have been a failure had it been aimed at union recognition or had we used a union rep to do the talking for us. However, the head nurse was wrong when she said we couldn't do this again. The guinea pig workforce may be too fragmented and fluid to form even an unofficial union, but the drug industry is extremely cash-rich and competitive. This makes the industry able to throw a bone to small groups of savvy volunteers. The victory at Jefferson Hospital demonstrates that healthy lab rats certainly can and should "band together" and demand changes in their contracts when the need arises.

California Labor rights for undocumented workers

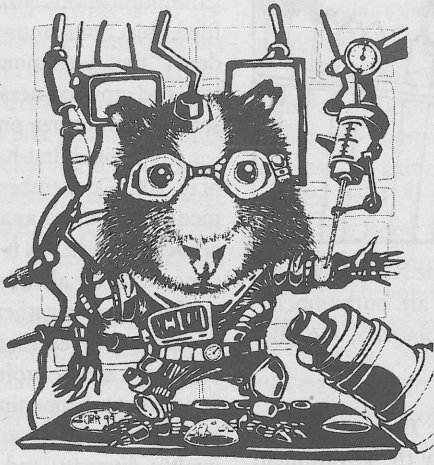
A new California law requires state agencies and courts to apply California labor and civil rights laws equally to all workers, regardless of immigration status. However, penalties against employers for serious violations of workers' rights were dropped because of opposition from business groups.

The law is a response to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling last year (the Hoffman Plastics case, see May 2002 *IW*) overturning a NLRB back pay award to a worker who was fired for union activity. Because the worker was in the country illegally, the court held, he was not entitled to labor law protections.

Federal law not only bans the presence of the undocumented in the United States but makes it a crime to employ them. Employers routinely flout the law, while using the threat of deportation to force workers to endure low pay and miserable conditions.

Employers across the nation have used the Hoffman ruling to seek disclosure of the immigration status of employees who have brought complaints against them in order to limit damage awards.

But now in California a worker's immigration status will have no bearing on any case before a court or agency unless a fired worker is seeking reinstatement, which is unavailable for illegal immigrants. By removing provisions for fining employers, however, employers will generally be able to avoid any penalty for illegal firings.



Sydney IWW activities...

continued from page 3

our banner and got a few more papers out to fellow workers. It is fair to say that awareness of the IWW amongst unionists is growing. More union members, shop stewards and organisers will be attracted to the IWW for a complete organising program to counter the decline of "pure and simple" unionism and continuing betrayals by our "leaders" and "pro-worker" politicians.

Following on from these events, the Sydney Branch held a fundraiser for the IWW East Timor Community Computer Project. Over 100 people turned up for a night of great music and drinking at the legendary Gaelic Club. Most of the comrades who came to the fundraiser had not seen the IWW active before and our literature table did a roaring trade, with t-shirts, badges and newspapers the most popular.

This was the first official IWW function in Sydney in my memory, and hopefully a sign of a return to the large IWW presence in Sydney many years ago. Entertainment was provided by Martin Doherty, a folk singer, local hip-hop MC Ozi Battla, and

singer/songwriter Fred Smith.

The ETCCP provides practical assistance to East Timorese people in relation to the installation and use of computer equipment in this war-ravaged country on Australia's doorstep. An IWW member in East Timor is the coordinator of the project. The project has been able to: install and train locals in the use of computers and software; ensure the free distribution of aid goods (especially in Oecussi, the East Timor enclave in West Timor and one of the poorest areas in the country); and disseminate union organising ideas. The project has been running since 2000 and in that time 100 computers have been installed, a training program was run for 8 months in Dili, and many locals trained in computer repair and maintenance. By the end of the project it is expected that there will be three functioning Computer Training Centres in Los Palos, Oecussi and Bacau.

The ETCCP still requires funds to distribute equipment and to keep the project going. No one is paid a wage, and running costs are kept to a minimum. For more information please contact the Melbourne IWW, Australian IWW (roc@iww.org.au) or check out the website: www.etccp.org.au

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According to university professor Stephen Zunes of San Francisco, the list of UN Security Council resolutions violated by Iraq as cited by Georgie the Tush are outnumbered enormously by the list of Security Council resolutions currently being violated by the allies of Freedomland.

Birds of a feather flock together.

Talking about hiring the fox to guard the chicken coop, Georgie the Tush had offered Henry the Kiss a cushy job of heading a commission to investigate why the government failed to avoid the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center. The commission would consist of a ten-member panel who would conduct an 18-month investigation into the attacks that killed 3,000 people. One cannot help but wonder about the need for such a panel when Tushie and his vice were conveniently distanced from both New York and Washington DC at the time. That would be a good point to begin such an investigation.

However, unser Heinrich turned this generous offer down as he apparently has an even cushier means of subsistence. Too bad, within his longstanding involvement with Chile, Cambodia, Iran, the Contras – just to mention a few examples – he would have been an expert authority on terrorism. There are many around the world, including those here in Freedomland, who believe he should be tried as a war criminal. He was just the one for the job; a man who was once quoted as saying: “There are only 90,000 Micronesians, who gives a damn!” He is right in with those like George Armstrong Custer, but it looks like Georgie the Tush will have to look for someone else.

While the Tush is blowing off about terrorists, few seem to notice his relaxation on such matters as environmental preservation. He wants to give the go-ahead for the further depletion of the first-growth forests, the Hell with whatever species are being endangered. Saddam Hussein ain't a fraction of the danger to the nature of Freedomland as Tush and the economic overlords he pimps for.

Incidentally, poor Henry the Kissoff can not travel to places like France, England and other places because he can not be guaranteed immunity from legal proceedings.

The airport raids what have been going on, ostensibly, to nab suspected near-Eastern terrorists have only netted people from Mexico trying to enter Freedomland without papers. It looks like the Feds don't know the difference between A-rabs and Mexicans either. That's not news; anybody with a dusky complexion seem to be behind the eight ball here in Freedomland.

It was Dick Gregory who said that the worst thing that can be said for the original inhabitants of this land was that they had a lousy immigration policy. Well might the Immigration and Naturalization Service be uptight, knowing how they took over this land.

There is the sad case of one young high school student here in Chicago. He has acquired a scholarship to Harvard University, but cannot take it because, despite the fact that he has lived in Freedomland since he was 4 years old, he is still classified as undocumented and would be subject to deportation. His plight is only one of many.

I saw an article saying that deer are still a menace on Wisconsin roads. It seems many speeding motorists have accidents running into deer. Your scribe can only ask who the everloving hell is a menace to whom?

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

— C.C. Redcloud

Ullico scandal still plagues AFL tops

AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney resigned Dec. 2 from the board of union-owned insurance firm Ullico to protest a decision to keep secret the results of an investigation into stock deals through which several union officials looted the firm. The report is said to severely criticize former AFL Building & Construction Trades Dept. head (and Ullico CEO) Robert Georgine and call on him and other officials to return millions of dollars.

Frank Hanley, president of the International Union of Operating Engineers, and Linda Chavez-Thompson, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, joined Sweeney in resigning from Ullico, which was formed as the Union Labor Life Insurance Company. None of them participated in the looting, though they took no action to prevent it.

Sweeney is reportedly also considering dropping Ullico as the provider of life and accident insurance under the “Union Plus” insurance program offered to members of AFL-CIO affiliated unions.

Sweeney resigned after it became clear that the Ullico board would not support his call for full disclosure. Close to half of the ULLICO board members are from the building trades, and some labor insiders are suggesting that the dispute may presage a broader struggle over Sweeney's leadership of the AFL-CIO.

Workers get shaft...

continued from page 1

benefits exhausted in December. As his wife prepares to take on a night job so they can meet their mortgage payments and support two children, she told reporters, “It's really an act of discrimination. They [congress] give themselves a raise before they leave and they leave all of us Americans high and dry.”

As I wrote in the August 2002 *Industrial Worker* (“Department of Labor – A Worker Funded Farce”), one of the Bush administration's priorities has been stripping the Department of Labor and other agencies of any power to help workers address grievances. In February 2002 Bush submitted a budget proposal that was literally wrapped in a U.S. flag; in this document Bush proposed slashing DoL funding by a staggering 40 percent. One of the programs axed in December was the “Mass Layoffs” program, which tracked large corporate layoffs. A “mass layoff” is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as any single layoff that leaves 50 or more workers unemployed.

According to the last report filed by the BLS, “Employers initiated 2,150 mass layoff actions in November 2002.” “The number of workers involved totaled 240,028,” meaning that in November alone, nearly a quarter of a million workers were left jobless. I read with surprise in the same BLS report that “[t]his will be the last Mass Layoffs news

Communications Workers warn of dangers of media concentration

As the U.S. Federal Communications Commission considers abandoning its present restrictions on media ownership, the Communications Workers of America has filed objections noting “overwhelming evidence” that restrictions on media concentration and cross-ownership are needed to preserve a vibrant free press in comments.

CWA cited first-hand reports from some of its 100,000 members working in the news media as well as analysis from numerous academic studies as it concluded that media concentration already has diminished the quality of news gathering and the diversity of viewpoints represented in the media.

CWA media professionals “know first-hand what is happening in this industry,” the union stated: “They witness a decline in news quality, diversity, and competition that is a direct result of the economic pressures from the enormous consolidation and concentration of media ownership that has taken place. They find it harder to practice their craft in an environment of reduced staffing and fewer resources....”

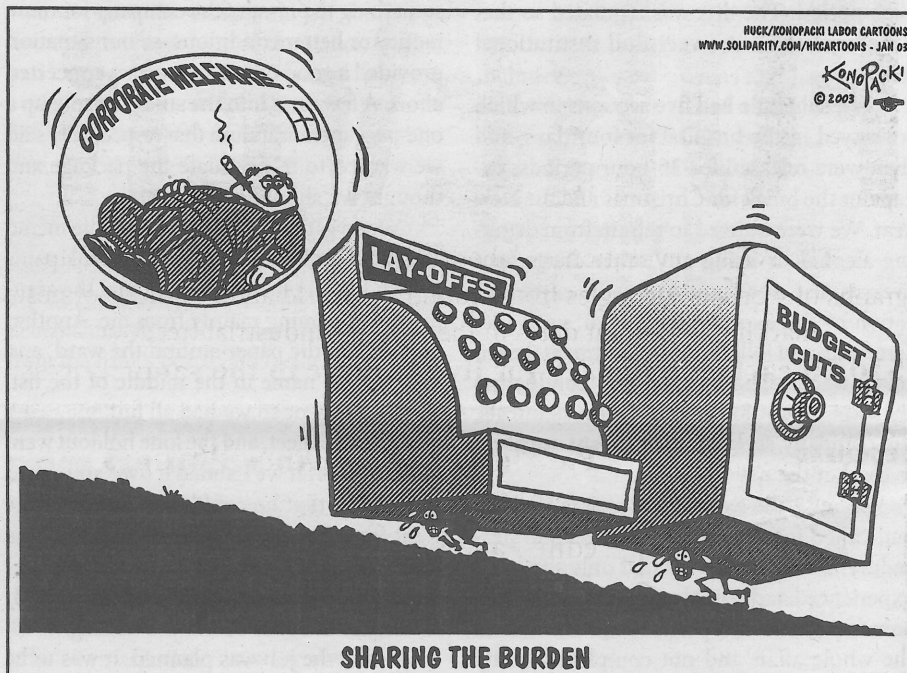
“They know that who owns the media outlet is the final arbiter as to what gets printed, broadcast, or posted on an Internet

news site. They are convinced that relaxation of media ownership rules that would permit further consolidation and concentration of ownership into fewer hands will reduce their professional ability to provide high-quality news from diverse and antagonistic sources.”

The union's filing includes quotes from several CWA newspaper reporters describing the chilling effect of media cross-ownership, such as this one from a TV columnist: “When the Nielsen TV ratings come out, I know I am expected to write a big story if the co-owned station's ratings are good and to bury the story if the co-owned station's ratings are down.”

CWA noted that growing media cross-ownership has contributed to “neglect of (coverage of) labor issues, and sometimes the outright refusal to air ads paid for by labor organizations because they might antagonize advertisers.” CWA cited several examples – including the ABC national radio network and local stations ranging from Dallas to Little Rock to Cleveland – where the union was blocked from airing its viewpoint during labor disputes with media organizations.

The full text of CWA's comments can be found at: www.saveourmedia.org.



release ... due to the termination of the BLS Mass Layoffs program for lack of funding.”

Certainly it must be a nuisance to industry leaders, that someone could be tabulating just how much damage corporate America is wreaking upon workers. But with Bush budget cuts finally taking effect, many programs that make labor economists' jobs easier will get the axe. The task of figuring layoff statistics will be harder, left largely to non-governmental volunteers who wish to spend the time and effort to try to track these numbers down for themselves. Many of us will be prevented from correctly analyzing the current state of workers in America.

The number of investigators employed by the DoL has also dropped sharply. There has been a decline in the number of DoL case-workers since the Eisenhower administration, despite the fact that the American workforce has grown by leaps and bounds since the 1950s. DoL agents with the Wage and Hours Division are charged with investigating complaints that employers are not following overtime law. That this sort of watchdog role is needed in some capacity is demonstrated by the recent victory of workers against Wal-Mart: In Oregon, “Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, forced employees in Oregon to work unpaid overtime between 1994 and 1999, a federal jury found Thursday in the first of dozens of such lawsuits across the country to come to trial,” the media reported. Being pressured to work off-the-clock is a common experience for many employees.

With the government squarely, in the hands of bosses, workers must turn to their own self-reliance and mutual aid to fight off economic attacks. Not surprisingly, worker

self-organization is not an alternative bosses are happy with, either. In short, the message from bosses to workers is simply, “Take it, and don't complain.” With the federal government getting ready to shed nearly half a million jobs – many of them union jobs – workers must decide how much longer they will tolerate this kind of treatment.

The picture painted here is admittedly dismal. In addition to using the U.S. government as a weapon in its class war, the boss commentariat is equally as vicious in its anti-union and anti-worker (one is tempted to say anti-human) rhetoric. Witness, for example, the recent *Wall Street Journal* editorial that claimed the poor were “lucky duckies” because they do not pay as much federal income tax as the wealthy (though they pay a greater share of their income in taxes than the rich). The *WSJ* also noted, “The Treasury Department is working up more sophisticated distribution tables that are expected to make the poor appear to be paying less in taxes and the rich to be paying more.” This is to pave the way for saddling the working class with a greater share of the country's tax burden.

Bosses recognize the government for what it is: an institution they can get installed into, make money from, and use as a club to beat down workers. By raising their own salaries even as they cut off benefits for the unemployed, by eliminating programs that have the slightest hint of ensuring workers are treated fairly, and by using federal agencies as siphons through which they can transfer wealth upward from the poorest to the richest, corporate elites ensure the new year of 2003 is inaugurated as another year of unfettered class warfare.

Books for Rebellious Workers



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Punching Out & Other Writings

by Martin Glaberman,
edited and introduced by Staughton Lynd.

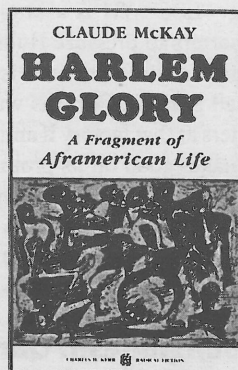
A collection of writings by autoworker, historian and poet Marty Glaberman. This collection reprints some of Glaberman's classic writings on the union movement, Marxism, the challenges facing radical movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, and a selection of labor poetry. Among the gems to be found are Egghead comics, a critique of Walter Reuther (which notes

that Reuther championed racial equality and democracy everywhere except in his union), an appreciation of C.L.R. James, and of course the reprint of Glaberman's classic pamphlet on business unionism, *Punching Out*. Glaberman celebrated the possibilities of informal work groups both to resist capitalism and to run industry once we've dumped the bosses off our backs. **231 pages, \$14.00**

Harlem Glory

by Claude McKay.
Written in the 1940s, this semi-autobiographical novel by the renowned Jamaican poet and novelist evokes the life of Harlem in the Great Depression and New Deal. McKay captures the exuberant clash of social movements and ideologies, acutely sensitive to the vitality and diversity of Black culture and drawing on McKay's experiences in the IWW and the socialist movement.

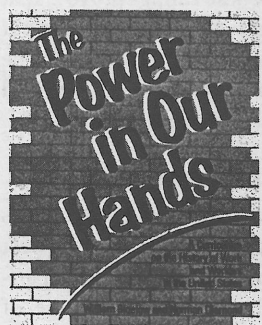
112 pages, \$10.00



The Power in Our Hands

by William Bigelow and Norman Diamond.

Curriculum materials for middle and high school teachers on the history of work and workers in the United States, including units on workers rights, exploitation, scientific management, the Homestead and Lawrence strikes, racial conflict and the labor movement, labor songs, and more. Includes lesson plans, hand-outs for students, and other resources. **184 pages, \$18.00**



You Have No Country! Workers' Struggle Against War by Mary Marcy. This book collects *International Socialist Review* editor Marcy's penetrating analysis of the consequences of war, and her perspective on the struggle against World War I. The *Review* was suppressed by the U.S. government in 1918, largely as a result of these writings. **77 pages, \$5.00**

Labor History

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

The CIO's Left-Led Unions

Edited by Steven Rossurm. In 1949 and 1950 the CIO expelled several left-wing unions. This collection explores the history of eleven of these unions, addressing the role of race and government policy in shaping unionism, the impact of anti-communism on race relations and working conditions, and the impact of the expulsions on the labor movement. Several of these provided an important counterpoint to more bureaucratic tendencies. **\$10.00**

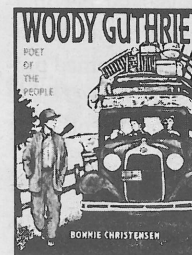
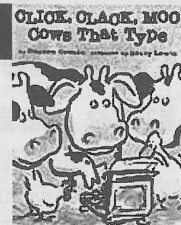
Books for Kids

Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type

by Doreen Cronin
with illustrations
by Betsy Lewin

Farmer Brown thinks it's odd when he hears typing sounds coming from the barn. Click, clack, MOO. Click, clack, MOO. Clickety, clack, MOO. But his troubles really begin when his cows start leaving him notes. First they demand better working conditions...and then they stage a strike, engaging in concerted activity with the chickens. Doreen Cronin's understated text and Betsy Lewin's expressive illustrations make the most of this hilarious situation. Join the fun as Farmer Brown's savvy – and literate – cows turn his farm upside down!

Recommended Age Range: 3 to 8 \$15.00



Woody Guthrie: Poet of the People

by Bonnie Christensen

Tapping into the tone of Guthrie's own lyrics, Christensen's folksy narrative offers a resonant profile of this songwriter's life and work. Born in Oklahoma in 1912, Guthrie "heard the songs that swept across the prairie, wind and rain songs, thunder rumbling, lightning crackling songs." Christensen deftly reveals how Guthrie's songwriting was propelled by the issues of his era. He sang his "Dust Bowl ballads" on the radio in Los Angeles and, moved by the plight of unemployed migrant farm workers, coal miners and factory hands, he "became their voice, and songs were his way of speaking."

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

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

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

Organizing Help

A Troublemaker's Handbook: How to Fight Back Where You Work and Win! by Dan La Botz. An encyclopedic work on worker initiative and organizing on the job. Shows that sitdown strikes still aren't dead and immigrant workers can be organized. **262pp \$17.00**

The New Rank and File

by Staughton and Alice Lynd. With this inspiring collection of interviews with working class organizers from many facets of the international labor movement, the Lynds demonstrate the type of grassroots approach that we need if we are to build the strength to win against a global, wealthy and well-armed foe. Directed at two groups – rank-and-file workers and young people entering the labor movement – this book directly takes on the ideology of business unionism and offers hope and ideas for democratic, solidarity unionism. **262pp \$16.00**

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Workers resist bosses the whole world 'round

Russian air traffic controllers win

BY CURTIS VAUGHAN

On Nov. 30, the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions of Russia (FPAD) and the Radar, Navigation and Communication Workers' Union of Russia (PARRIS) began a hunger strike at numerous airports throughout Russia. The strike began after the Russian Ministry of Transportation failed to fulfill demands workers had pressed for in mid-September 2002. These demands primarily related to salary increases and certain social guarantees that had been in force until the beginning of 2002.

Air traffic controllers and other airport workers have used the hunger strike in the past, as striking for them is illegal. As the hunger strike progressed, more and more airport workers joined in, thus further reducing flights. By Dec. 6, more than half of the striking workers had to be hospitalized.

On Dec. 7, the hunger strike was suspended until Dec. 22 in light of progress made in negotiations with the Ministry of Transportation. The negotiated suspension stipulated that the Ministry of Transportation would bring concrete proposals to the table on Dec. 20, at which time workers would decide whether to continue the strike. Many workers were sceptical of the Ministry's tactics and rightly so, as the hunger strike was resumed on Dec. 22. One of the major points of disagreement was the Ministry's offer of a mere 15% raise for upper level air-traffic controllers and less for all others.

In response to the renewed hunger strike the Ministry of Transportation caved in on Dec. 25, proposing a wage increase for all employees of 28.44%. The Ministry and FPAD and PARRIS have also agreed to address social issues demanded by workers, as well as staffing issues.

No shoes, no coats, no food

The Israeli Occupation Authorities have issued new work policies in the 'Eretz industrial zone' in the northern Gaza Strip, which forbid Gazans from wearing shoes, coats or bringing food from home.

These new policies come in the wake of recent promises made by Israeli PM Ariel Sharon to "ease the suffering" of Palestinians not "involved in terrorism."

Prior to the first Intifada, Gazans used to seek work in Israel. Since the Oslo peace process, Gaza has been completely sealed off, with devastating effects on employment and poverty levels. Small workshops, green houses and farm lands have all come under Israeli bombardment. Gazans have become a pool of extremely cheap labor for Israeli industrial zones (illegally built in the Occupied Territories) and settlement building.

Poverty is so endemic that some 86% of Gazans now receive humanitarian aid.

Japanese bosses demand wage cuts

The Japan Business Federation has called for pay cuts and other concessions and employers and unions prepare for Japan's annual wage-hike negotiations. The Federation says it wants to adjust wages to "an appropriate level" so that domestic corporations become more internationally competitive. Japanese wages are among the highest in the

The Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) has agreed not to press for across-the-board pay hikes, but says it will fight to improve working conditions for the growing numbers of part-timers.

Faced with record unemployment, the Japanese government is considering slashing jobless benefits by up to 27 percent, rather than raise payroll taxes to continue the current benefit level. Older workers would be particularly hard hit by the change.



Chinese activists face death penalty

Two labor leaders who helped organize massive demonstrations last year now face the death penalty. The government is charging Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang with subversion. The two were arrested following the protests in the northeastern city of Liaoyang.

Another protest leader, Wang Zhaoming, had been released on probation Dec. 20 after nine months in prison, but was reportedly re-arrested after indicating that he intended to sue the police for illegal detention.

Nearly 30,000 workers took to the streets March 11 and 12 to protest unpaid wages, missing pension funds, and corrupt officials who were stripping factories of assets and then shutting them down, throwing workers on the streets. Five days after negotiating with workers, authorities began arresting them. Thousands of workers joined protests against the arrests, but police were able to disrupt the movement by buying off some activists and arresting others.

However, hundreds of workers have continued to stage demonstrations demanding release of the activists and payment of unemployment benefits and back pay. In late December, more than a thousand chemical factory workers blocked the Avenue of the Red Flag in the district of Shuangtaizi, demanding payment of back wages. A factory official confirmed that wages had not been paid for more than nine months.

Vietnamese strikers beaten

At least four Vietnamese workers were hospitalized in November after managers attacked striking workers with metal bars.

Workers at Vietnam's Dzoanh Duc furniture plant have been complaining about working long hours at low pay for some time. They were regularly forced to work overtime, with some laboring through 24-hour shifts for no extra money.

A group of night shift workers decided they had had enough of the poor conditions and stopped work Nov. 26. Twenty factory managers attacked the strikers with steel bars. A running battle ensued and police were called in to calm the situation.

Binh Dzuong province is a centre for industry and hosts a number of foreign firms.

Locked-out tea workers dying from starvation

At least 35 workers on tea plantations in Assam, India, have died of starvation and abuse since the Hindustan Tea Co. locked out 5,000 workers six months ago. Hundreds of others, including family members, are "virtually staring at death" according to a union representative. The Assam government has termed the lockout illegal, but has thus far taken no action against the firm.

Lesotho garment workers win union

After a year-long campaign to defend workers' rights in Lesotho, the garment workers' union has achieved a significant breakthrough at the country's two largest garment factories. On December 5, the Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union signed an agreement with management at C&Y Garments and Nien Hsing Intl., both owned by the Taiwanese multinational Nien Hsing.

The agreement recognizes the rights of union shop stewards and establishes procedures for resolving grievances. The Nien Hsing factories formerly produced "Cherokee" brand jeans for the Hudson's Bay Company, which are sold at its Zellers stores across Canada. When confronted with evidence of serious worker rights abuses at the Nien Hsing factories and a third factory called Sun Textiles, Hudson's Bay chose to cut and run from Lesotho rather than working with its suppliers to improve conditions.

In contrast, Gap, which also sources from the Nien Hsing factories, responded to pressure from unions and anti-sweatshop groups by encouraging Nien Hsing to allow union representatives access to the factories, as required by the Lesotho Labour Code. As a result, LECAWU was able to sign up a majority of the workers at both factories.

In a Dec. 6 letter, LECAWU expressed its thanks to "all trade union movements and NGOs who made this milestone a reality for the workers of Lesotho. In solidarity forever, the struggle continues."

LECAWU is asking its Canadian supporters to pressure Hudson's Bay to resume orders with the Nien Hsing factories and to tell Sun Textiles it is willing to resume orders at that factory if and when management makes good on its promise to improve conditions and sign a union recognition agreement. Please email Rob Moore (VP, corporate communications): rob.moore@hbc.com, or fax him at: 416-216-7887.

Bangladesh: Garment Workers Safety Day

Garment workers of Bangladesh observed Garment Workers Safety Day Dec. 27. Several garment workers unions decided in 2001 to observe garment workers safety day, commemorating the Dec. 27, 1990, fire at the Saraka garment factory in which 27 workers died. Since then, 252 garment workers have been killed and several thousand injured in more than 50 fires in different garment factories in Bangladesh.

Garment workers unions held programs across the country remembering their fallen fellow workers and demanding that employers implement safe working conditions. Some 1.6 million workers are employed in 3,300 Bangladeshi garment factories.

Mexican workers seize factory

Some 250 workers took control of a factory in the border city of Ciudad Juarez to prevent machinery from being removed by U.S. owners intent on closing the plant without giving the severance pay and Christmas bonuses required by law, *La Jornada* daily reports.

On Dec. 10 managers of the A & R de Mexico maquiladora contacted police, complaining that workers were refusing to allow them to remove machinery and furniture from the plant. Police decided not to intervene after discovering the problem stemmed from a labor dispute.

The plant had been closed for almost a month when the personnel department informed them no money was available to pay their back salaries, bonuses and severance pay. In response, the workers blocked the factory's entrances and demanded the Municipal Conciliation and Arbitration Assembly impound the plant's machinery.

The factory – which had operated in the city for over 12 years – was one of many to shut its doors in recent years. Many companies are moving operations to China where labor is cheaper than the average \$6 per day paid to workers at Mexican assembly plants. The closures have meant the loss of some 80,000 jobs in Ciudad Juarez.

Seizing factories has become increasingly popular among workers angry with company owners who try to dismantle plants without compensating their workers.

Firemen join defense of Polish factory blockade

When dozens of security guards attacked workers blockading an Ozarow, Poland, cable factory, volunteer firemen rushed to the scene and used their hoses to force back the thugs. However, state police soon joined the fray, forcing open the way for trucks to enter the factory and cart away disassembled production lines under a hail of stones and bricks.

The factory had been the economic lifeblood of the industrial town of Ozarow before – like thousands of other such factories – it was looted in the wave of scam privatizations and economic restructuring now sweeping Poland. Workers blockaded the factory for 210 days in an attempt to keep the factory intact and regain their jobs.

No rights for workers

Indonesia's Supreme Court has intervened in a two-year-long dispute at the Shangri-La Jakarta hotel, by reversing an appeals court decision and permitting managers to fire 80 workers for union activity.

The Shangri-La Independent Trade Union (SPMS) has vowed to continue its struggle, which has gained international support, by organizing mass pickets and blockades of the hotel.

Jakarta's Legal Aid Institute (LBH) issued a stinging critique of the verdict, concluding that it was so contrary to law and the facts that they could no longer respect the judges involved. "These rulings prove ... that the law is no longer about what justice but rather about who is more powerful." The LBH declared that in the future they would refuse to appear before these judges.

A part-time economy

Although British government figures claim unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in 27 years, the gains are entirely in part-time jobs. October saw an increase of 110,000 part-time workers and a fall of 5,000 full-time workers.

While government figures show 934,200 unemployed workers, the International Labour Organisation reports 1,532,000 are jobless. The ILO figure has increased by 44,000 over the past year.