

# Industrial Worker

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## McJobs BY MIKE LONG

One of 10,000 new words in the latest edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary is McJobs, defined as "low-paying and dead-end work." The Associated Press reports that McDonald's is very unhappy with this un-

wanted publicity. McDonald CEO Jim Cantalupo asserts in an open letter to Merriam-Webster and the media that McJobs is "an inaccurate description of restaurant employment" and a "slap in the face to the 12 million men and women" who work in the industry.

Not so. Under the headline 'Evidence proves McJobs a reality,' the April 19, 2002, issue of *Workers Online* reports research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies showing that whereas "gold-collar" workers – those with high skill levels and high salaries – often enjoy family friendly, flexible work conditions, such as paid maternity leave, service sector workers are locked into highly rigid, impersonal structures, with such benefits vanishingly rare. Commented New South Wales Labor Council Secretary John Robertson, "This is proof of the so-called McJobs syndrome."

In the United States, two thirds of fast food workers are under 20. There is a high turnover rate, supposedly in the range of 300 to 400 percent, and one in eight Americans has worked at McDonalds at some time in their lives. The work they do is overwhelmingly low skill, low paid, low prestige and monotonous, with the rote demands of any assembly line. The most valued quality among employees, reported sociologist Ester Reiter, after working at Burger King for ten months (see her book, *Making Fast Food: From the frying pan into the fryer*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), is obedience. While accepting hundreds of millions of dollars in federal subsidies for training workers, reported Cynthia Peters (Z Net, August 4 2001), the fast-food industry pours money into research and technology to reduce employee training. Wrote Jerry Sus, the leading equipment designer at McDonalds, "The easier it is for [the worker] to use, the easier it is for us not to have to train him" (*The Guardian*, April 7 2001).

And it's not just McJobs. McDonaldization, wrote George Ritzer in an insightful analysis, "is the process where principles of the fast-food restaurant come to dominate more and more sectors of society and the world" (George Ritzer: "McJobs," ERIC Clearinghouse, 1997). McDonaldization has five dimensions, Ritzer explained: an emphasis on efficiency, calculability (quantifiability valued over quality of process or product), predictability (products and services will be the same from one place or time to the next), control over workers and customers through the use of technology to regulate what workers do (even what workers say on the job is highly routinized), and the paradoxical-sounding irrationality of rationality – recognition that rational systems tend to produce irrational consequences, e.g., the dehumanization of McDonald's workers and customers. McJobs have spread through much of the economy, Ritzer noted, with many middle-level jobs also being McDonaldized through deskilling. Examples include banking and credit, and the rise of the "McUniversity." The process is likely to continue, he argued, as the values of the McDonaldized workplace are both increasingly reflected in, and reinforced by, those of society at large.

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**"To cope with the disasters of neo-liberalism and militarism, we need to build a broader solidarity"**

## Asian unions meet to tackle globalization

Union officials from militant unions across Asia participated in the Asian Regional Trade Union Solidarity Conference held in South Korea in early November, noting the need for coordinated action to confront globalization and neoliberalism.

Unions from Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand participated, alongside observers from Australia, Norway and South Africa.

Korean Confederation of Trade Unions President Dan Byungho welcomed delegates with a speech in which he noted the difficult and even tragic circumstances facing unions. He condemned South Korea's government for its brutal labor policies, economic policies that directly attack decades of economic gains which Korean workers fought bitterly for, and the decision to send troops to Iraq.

"In short, the Roh government, not satisfied with killing the workers and the people by destroying their livelihood, has shamelessly decided to participate in the unjust invasion of Iraq, and to force the Korean people to kill Iraqi workers and people."

Welcoming delegates from independent, progressive unions from across Asia, Dan noted that workers' internationalism had too long been merely a slogan. "If we cannot put this into practice, then we will not be able to defend even the historic products attained by the struggles of those before us. Under the system of global capitalism, workers' internationalism must be included as an essential part of the workers' struggles, and only then will we be able to defend our livelihood and basic labor rights, and move forward."

He noted the need to overcome differences in working conditions in order to win greater equality. "Our fates are already deeply connected. While the low wage labor of Thailand directly affects the wage conditions of

Malaysian workers, the long working hours of Indonesian laborers directly affects working conditions of Korean workers."

Dan concluded by noting that the KCTU had failed to reach out to workers employed by Korean multinationals throughout the region, many of whom suffer appalling conditions, and pledged to address the issue more forcefully in the future.

After presentations and discussions by the participating unions, many of which are available on the KCTU web site ([www.kctu.org/](http://www.kctu.org/)), the delegates adopted a statement noting that the problem is not simply globalization, even if the region is dominated by transnational corporate power: "Our own governments are the agents of neoliberalism and imperialism."

The delegates resolved to develop joint campaigns to target employers across borders, to strengthen their opposition to the WTO and to regional and bilateral trade agreements, to confront the growing casualization of labor, to campaign against gender-based discrimination, to oppose privatization, to demand full rights for migrant workers, to struggle against U.S. militarism as well as the increased militarization of East and Southeast Asia, to oppose terrorism laws which are so broadly formulated that they can be used against union activities, and to strengthen the Asian workers' network.

"Its purposes should be to facilitate the discussion and debate among Asian trade union movements, to enhance exchanges and solidarity, and to strengthen militant trade union movements. And in order to cope with the disasters of neo-liberalism and militarism, we need to build a broader solidarity with social, and popular movements, based on the development of trade unions. This solidarity will be the one of the priorities that the Asian workers' network will pursue."

## Portland Women's Crisis Line staff win IWW vote

BY LAURA PRICE

On November 5th Portland Women's Crisis Line workers won their union ratification vote by a landslide to become the IWW's newest IU 650 shop.

Crisis Line staff first approached the IWW for help with their campaign in June. Doug Geisler served as organizer in the first half of the campaign, followed by Anne Eldred who saw the effort through to victory. Credit for success of the five month process was given to the strong shop floor organizing and worker solidarity that the Portland Women's Crisis Line staff created.

The non-profit group was founded in 1972 as a ground-breaking human service agency in Oregon, and one of the first of a handful of crisis lines in the U.S. They work with survivors of domestic violence, rape, incest and sexual harassment, with their caseload including men as well as women. The PWCL describes their program as one embracing a feminist philosophy with the intent of enacting "social change through the empowerment of women." An important goal for the workers was to hold on to the democratic principles upon which the organization was founded 30 years ago.

Staff had rejected an idea to organize with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union because they wanted to have more control on the shop floor. There was also a concern that operating under a big business union model could bog down the process already in motion. Ties to Portland area IWW IU 650

had already been formed through local social worker get-togethers and staff friendships, so the workers sought out an IWW organizer to assist with their campaign.

Then the workers decided to pursue a non-NLRB (National Labor and Relations Board) election. This meant that they had to get management to agree to a voluntary union ratification vote. Staff chose the non-NLRB path in the interest of expediency – they didn't want to lose the momentum that had been building.

Before the election, 11 out of 13 staff took out IWW membership cards. As their campaign progressed the staff decided to meet the agency's board of directors with a request for a voluntary recognition. The Board agreed to a non-NLRB election once the details of the process were decided upon. A written agreement was reached that the election would be observed by two people: a Wobbly organizer/staff person and the Board chairperson. A neutral community person was agreed upon by both sides to oversee the election.

The ratification vote resulted in 11 votes for the union, one against and one abstention. Workers are now planning their first contract bargaining sessions.

Wobblies attributed the board's cooperation to the campaign message that unionizing was partially about making the agency a more financially stable entity. As with most non-profit agencies there were deep concerns about funding stream instability and the threat

*continued on page 3*

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



## Public health care

I'm told that you suckers in the USA don't have a public Health System. Let me tell you what happened here in Australia, in our public health system.

My daughter broke her arm at a sporting event. An ambulance was called and took her to the local small

town hospital. For FREE. She was attended immediately by the duty doctor. She was X-rayed, and given painkillers. For FREE. The doctor showed us the X-ray, and explained that he wanted our daughter to go to a specialist. The ambulance was called back. My girl and my partner went in the ambulance to the major town 30 miles away. A FREE trip.

She was attended by the excellent duty doctor at Majortown Hospital. The specialist was not there, but his underling was on our job. Dr. Underling was good, and the specialist was consulted throughout.

We spent most of the afternoon in Casualty. We waited a lot. People were coming in for treatment all the time. It was busy – our public hospital system is under stress, a conservative government is trying to run it down. There is pressure. A cast was made, my daughter spent three nights in hospital. It cost us a little for hospital meals for parents – say \$30 for parents' costs, our only hospital expense.

But there was almost a problem. It looked for a while as if an operation to insert a pin would be needed. In our Public Health System you are required to take the doctor provided. The specialist we drew was Doctor Roughhands. We were told by our local doctor not to have the operation done by him. The other specialist there was Doctor Safehands. But to transfer over we would have to go to a private hospital. This would have cost us BIG. We got a second opinion from a third specialist (free) and it was finally agreed that the operation was not needed.

Some doctors in Majortown hospital are poorly regarded. When my partner had our children we had the time to find hospitals with

good doctors. You can choose your hospital. So one child was born in a town 100 miles away, the other in Sydney because we thought there could be complications. Both on the public health, both for free.

For our daughter's broken arm follow-up visits to hospital, monthly X-rays, ongoing physio, splints, medication etc., were all FREE. There was nothing second rate about the treatment, the hospital is two years old. You don't get a private room though, and you do feel part of a production line at times.

Now tell me. How much would this little lot cost there in the Land of the Free?

I hear health costs cripple the poor and delay you seeking and finding the treatment that you need. Two years ago I had an eye cataract removed and an interocular lens put into my eye. In a public hospital, for free. I imagine that this is the sort of discretionary operation that working people in the USA would go without? Looks to me that workers in your country live their lives with poorer health because you do not have a public health system.

Cheers,  
Wal Larkin, Australia

## Union worker, anti-union job

Dear Industrial Worker,

This is to inform you that anti-unionism is alive and well in America! I was just hired at a job where we have a three-day "orientation." Part of this was a two-hour seminar on "at will" employment and unions. Basically we were told that we were not forced to work here and that we were here at their pleasure. This plant is just about the only decent wage manufacturing job left within 60 miles.

They went on to say all the negative things that unions would do to us, like how we'd lose all our money to them. The boss then came within a hair of outright threats to our jobs if we were found to be advocating for union representation. He said unions were not allowed on the grounds, and that our parent company was committed to a non-union shop and would close us down if we ever unionized. Of course this was all alluded to and never direct so that we wouldn't have anything to bring to the NLRB. I've only been

there for a month now but I've seen that their four-step "corrective action" system is gone around by management and is often used by them to cover their own mistakes. I've also been told you know when someone is going to get the axe when new temps show up!

None of this is new to me though, I was a member of the United Papermakers International Union which was rolled into the PACE (Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union) supposedly for our own good and without a vote by the union body at large. Over a six-year period I saw our real wages and benefits shrink (but our executive board got big fat raises) with the benefits increasing greatly in cost. Representation also became much more company friendly. Finally after PACE took over they brokered a "giveaway" deal with the company – they had a seat on the board for Christ's sake! – that was supposedly to save our GREAT(?) union jobs. What we got were frozen wages, increased job duties, rising benefit costs, and yes man representation by the union. It's sad when I feel better taken care of by an anti-union company than I did by PACE.

Don't get me wrong, I am strongly pro-union (but some unions are more union than others if you get my drift) but I must exhort my fellow unionists: don't repeat my mistake and assume your local or even your international body is taking care of you, GET ACTIVE! Demand answers and above all keep supporting the IWW.

Brian  
Berkshire County  
Massachusetts

## Ballots in the field

All members in good standing should have now received ballots to elect IWW General Administration officers for 2004, select a site for General Assembly, and vote on proposed constitutional amendments. Ballots must be received at headquarters by Dec. 17. In order for your ballot to be considered valid, if voting in November, you need to have paid dues at least through October. If voting in December, you need to have paid dues at least through November.

## From the editor

With this issue we return to our regular publication schedule, in which each month's issue is printed and mailed in the middle of the month preceding.

The deadline for copy for our January 2004 issue is Dec. 11. Your letters, articles, etc. are very much appreciated and needed. As Wobblies, this is your newspaper, and we rely on your efforts to make it possible.

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I certify that all information on this form is true and complete.  
Jon Bekken, editor, Nov. 15, 2003

## Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
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## Powell's Books workers in ULP quickie strike

Workers at Portland-based Powell's Books struck Nov. 10 to protest unilateral changes in company e-mail policy that single out union activists. Workers, represented by the ILWU, have been working without a contract since their initial agreement expired Oct. 2.

Postal workers honored the picket line at Powell's flagship Burnside store.

Powell's is seeking a four-year agreement that would limit pay increased to 2 percent, while allowing workers' health care premiums to more than double. Powell's is also demanding the right to open a new warehouse that would not be covered by the union contract.

IWW and Jobs With Justice members joined Powell's workers on the picket line.

## Ottawa Wob faces trial

IWW member Evan Dalrymple is one of several Ottawa-Outaouais activists facing charges stemming from the "Seven Year Squat," broken up by police in July 2002.

Several Wobs participated in the very public squatting action, which challenged the housing crisis facing the working poor in Ottawa, Ontario. Meanwhile, many buildings sit abandoned as the landlords find it more profitable to take them off the market (thereby propping up prices for their other properties) than to meet people's need for housing.

The Ottawa IWW and General Defense Committee have issued a \$5 voluntary assessment stamp to raise legal defense funds. To purchase a stamp send a check or money order in U.S. or Canadian funds, with 7YS written in the memo line, to: Ottawa IWW, PO Box 52015, Ottawa ON K1N 7E7, Canada.

## Ludlow Monument repairs

More than \$78,000 has been donated to repair the statues at the Ludlow Massacre Memorial in Colorado that were vandalized in May. The heads were knocked off the life-size granite statues of a man and woman.

Mike Romero, president of United Mine Workers of America Local 9856, said that donations should just about cover the cost of the nine-month restoration project. Donations have come from all over the world.

The annual June memorial service at the monument may have to be delayed, depending on when the statues are returned to Ludlow from the workshop where they are being repaired.

## Women's Crisis Line win...

*continued from page 1*

that presented to both worker security and client services. The Bush tax cuts and the U.S. economic downturn have had devastating effects on both government and private non-profit social services around the country. In economically depressed Portland the concerns were heightened.

The Portland Women's Crisis Line campaign included the concept that by unionizing and stabilizing conditions for staff, the agency was in a better position to remain a strong institution for the people of Portland and the tri-county area served by the organization.

Important issues for staff included compensation for on-call time, institution of regular break times for night and weekend workers, benefits, and the ability to maintain a voice in agency decision making. One of the favorite features of the campaign was the red bandanas that the workers wore in place of buttons or pins.

Stacie Wolfe said that in addition to winning the vote, the process helped to encourage more sharing and less isolation amongst the staff. Helping clients in emergency and crisis situations is a demanding role. Having increased worker solidarity not only empowers the line staff in labor relations, it also helps prevent burnout and increases job satisfaction. The PWCL crew is hoping that their effort and victory can serve as a model to other non-profit social service workers.

## Boston's Lucy Parsons Center investigated by Secret Service

A U.S. Secret Service agent visited Boston's Lucy Parsons Center Nov. 7, acting on "intelligence reports" linking the Center to an image showing a gun pointed at President Bush's head. The Center had received a suspicious package containing the image, with a faked LPC return address, and immediately contacted the National Lawyers Guild.

The Lucy Parsons Center is a radical bookstore and community center established more than 30 years ago. The IWW's Boston Area General Membership Branch is among several organizations that meet there. The Center has been hosting meetings to plan protests for next summer's Democratic convention, which will be held in Boston.

The Center has issued a statement noting that they "had nothing to do with producing or disseminating these images. We assume it is the work of provocateurs looking to both disrupt the daily operations of our bookstore, and also intimidate members of Boston's radical community by instigating a campaign of federal harassment, surveillance and intelligence gathering. Although these claims may seem an over-reaction, the workings of the Governments security apparatus — as revealed through the exposure of the FBI's COINTELPRO operations — place them within a demonstrated realm of behavior."

## Whole Foods union busting

Whole Foods has withdrawn recognition of the UFCW at its only unionized store in Madison, Wisconsin, after supervisors and anti-union employees gathered the signatures of a majority of store workers on a petition requesting removal of the union. The UFCW has filed unfair labor practice charges against the company.

Whole Foods is the world's largest natural and organic foods retailer, with \$2.7 billion in sales in fiscal 2002. The company has 145 stores. Madison workers voted for union recognition a year ago, but were unable to win a contract or protect union activists.

# They've bullied and oppressed us, but still our union grows

*And we're gonna find a way, boys  
For shorter hours and higher pay, boys  
And we're gonna win the day, boys  
At the good ole Wild Oats*

Members of the Industrial Workers of the World at Wild Oats in the Rookwood Commons shopping center in Cincinnati, Ohio, are being subjected to an anti-union campaign brought on by the human resources department of the company. Management found out about the organizing from a snitch.

In the week since the anti-union campaign began, IWW members and supporters at the store have been subject to the dissemination of lies about the union. Calling the union the International Workers of the World, a leaflet urged workers not to join and not to sign authorization cards. Management also plastered up signs that said NO TO UNION and posted the bright yellow leaflets all around the store.

This action came in retaliation for several members wearing IWW buttons to work the day before. One worker, who is thought to be the 'ringleader' of the organizing, was picked out from management and told to remove the button because it was against company policy. When the worker replied that it was a worker's right to wear the button, the manager stated, "we'll see about that" and marched away to the office.

Last week the human resources manager was at the store to try and butter us up by scheduling individual meetings with management. One union member was watched and then followed into the bathroom to catch him talking union on the job. The manager questioned the worker (who happened to be wearing an IWW button) about employee solicitation and told him that employees and non-employees were no longer allowed to solicit union literature on the property.

Two days later Wild Oats wasted more money on its effort to break the union by hav-

ing a no solicitation or distribution of literature sign painted on the front doors under the times the store was open. One week later a massage therapist was distributing leaflets about massage in the store's café area, and following that an animal rescue group handed out pamphlets and asked for donations.

Other members report that management is not giving them the same treatment as their co-workers who are not in the union. Although a few members have seen management behave better, others have seen hours cut, nasty remarks, and been denied vacation time.

We in the IWW understand that an injury to one is an injury to all and will stand in solidarity with them against these attacks. Members of the IWW at the store are organizing an alternative union for all workers in the general distribution of goods industry under the name of the Ohio River Valley Industrial Organizing Committee I.U. 660 of the IWW. Our union will include workers in retail, grocery and warehouses.

The IWW seeks to unite all workers across shop lines into One Big Union of working people. Members at Wild Oats are organizing with the IWW because of the solidarity the union provides, democratic bottom-up style of organizing, and to improve working conditions, pay and general treatment of employees by management at the store. Some members had worked at other union grocery stores as well.

Members of the Ohio Valley General Organizing Committee organized a meeting a couple of days after the anti-union campaign began, in which over 20 people attended to discuss the current climate at the store. We signed up three new members to I.U. 660 that night. Indeed, the more Wild Oats tries to suppress our organizing the more our union grows.

— Mark Damron

## 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.





And I thought American bosses were bad... News has it that a German man, who had been caught in a snowstorm while hiking in the Alps, losing six toes to frostbite, will also be losing his job. His bosses at Schroeder and Uhlken engineers decided to fire the gent for missing work and being "behind deadline."

★ ★ ★

Q: How many economists does it take to change a light bulb?

A. None, because, look! It's getting brighter! It's definitely getting brighter!!!

★ ★ ★

The local paper says it says it's getting brighter out, but it's still too dark out here in real life to be sure of what I'm reading...

★ ★ ★

How is it that the bosses are always so concerned about us workers losing our "private property" to wobblyism, socialism, communism, anarchism, etc. But when we lose everything when they restructure capitalism, our loss is merely a regrettable side effect to a long-term readjustment?

Is it because economists do it with models? Or because the capitalist class are hypocrites? A smart person will organize and fight against the clear and present danger...

★ ★ ★

While I was writing the above the Nick Lowe forgotten gem of sarcasm "Cruel to be Kind" came across the radio, adding a certain surreal movie soundtrack meaning to this economic meandering keyboarding.

★ ★ ★

Man walking along a road in the countryside comes across a shepherd and a huge flock of sheep. Tells the shepherd, "I will bet you \$100 against one of your sheep that I can tell you the exact number in this flock." The shepherd thinks it over; it's a big flock so he takes the bet. "973," says the man. The shepherd is astonished, because that is exactly right. Says "OK, I'm a man of my word, take an animal." Man picks one up and begins to walk away.

"Wait," cries the shepherd, "Let me have a chance to get even. Double or nothing that I can guess your exact occupation." Man says sure. "You are an economist for a government think tank," says the shepherd. "Amazing!" responds the man, "You are exactly right! But tell me, how did you deduce that?"

"Well," says the shepherd, "put down my dog and I will tell you."

★ ★ ★

Following Nick Lowe comes Husker D, singing "Walking around with your head in the clouds, it makes no sense at all." It's too scary, I'm quitting thinking about economics...

★ ★ ★

On Halloween night my head decided it needed to hook up with a cellar beam while I was visiting some fellow workers' house-warming party. While it was fortunate at the time I was sufficiently anesthetized to get home, I awoke in the middle of the night with the worst headache, totally out of proportion to sundry liquids consumed. The problem is that the headache, staggering and lack of short-term memory continued for several days. While my legendary drinking bouts are not mythical, this short-duration life-style wasn't one of those title matches.

No, this little ramble regards what life is like for one of the working poor, a guy who works hard to support his family. As I am uninsured for health care in this most free of all nations I got to spend a number of days weighing if endangering my family's economic state by going into massive debt by visiting an emergency hospital is a better choice than lack of care for possible brain damage.

Since most Americans are two pay checks away from living on the street, including my children's, I chose to gamble on my long term health. And again, KAACHING!, I came up a winner! Proving why I'm lucky to be living in the best nation on earth. 'Cause if I had died I wouldn't be living in the best nation on earth.

★ ★ ★

Strange facts, more Americans use outhouses as their "sanitary facilities" than own TiVo television recording systems. But why then to we read so much tripe in the boss press about TiVo, but none about the lack running water in American households? Perhaps it's because it's hard to sell ads for outhouses. Or maybe it's because the boss newspapers lack the space to do so because they are running so much in-depth reporting about the real reasons behind the war in Iraq.

★ ★ ★

My good Fellow Worker self has to admit he has found someone almost as blackly cynical (and clear sighted) as his own self, in reading the *Socialist Standard's* "The Voice from the Back" column. Being that plagiarism is the sincerest form of flattery, I'll freely admit stealing the following from [worldsocialism.org/spgb/nov03/voicenov.html](http://worldsocialism.org/spgb/nov03/voicenov.html):

"Everything inside capitalism takes the form of a commodity, so it should come as no surprise to learn that there is a brisk trade in desperately poor people selling their kidneys.

"The going price paid to young people in eastern Europe for one kidney is \$2,500 to \$3,000 and patients receiving the kidneys have paid between \$100,000 and \$200,000 for a transplant.

"John Dark, a transplant surgeon at the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle, said it was difficult to draw a moral difference between the physical harm inflicted on someone paid for a kidney or paid to work in a Third World sweat shop... 'An impoverished man trying to support his family by selling his kidney is no different to putting in shifts down a diamond mine. Society has moved on from where paying for harm was unthinkable. We do it every day when we buy a pair of trainers' (*Independent*, 30 September)."

★ ★ ★

I want all of you to remember that FN. Brill loves you and wants you to make lots of \$\$\$\$. You ask how? Well I'll tell you how I made lots of \$\$\$\$. First of all fire up your computer or dust off the typewriter. When you have your word processor up, hold down the shift key and hit the "4" key four times.

It's simple, and it's the only way for working folks to make lots of \$\$\$ in capitalism. But a better bet is to quit hunting and pecking and join the OBU...

FN Brill can be reached c/o IWW, 616 E. Burnside, Portland OR 97214, or [fnbrill@yahoo.com](mailto:fnbrill@yahoo.com)

## Borders workers strike

Workers at Borders Books store #1 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, struck Nov. 8 after nearly a year of trying to negotiate a first contract. The workers, represented by the UFCW, are calling on supporters to boycott Borders, Waldenbooks (owned by Borders) and Amazon.com (which operates [borders.com](http://borders.com)), organize solidarity pickets at Borders stores, and sign an online support petition at <http://BordersReadersUnited.2ya.com>.

Workers at several Borders stores have tried to organize in recent years, only to face firings and harassment of union supporters and management stonewalling when workers won union representation elections. Ann Arbor workers voted 51 to 4 for union recognition in December 2002.

In Ann Arbor, Borders refused to negotiate issues such as full-time status, overtime, vacation and scheduling; outsourced its cleaning staff in order to reduce the number of workers covered by the union; and contracted with the notorious union-busting law firm Jackson Lewis. Its only substantive offer at the bargaining table was to deduct workers' union dues from their pay checks.

Borders has been staffing the struck store with managers and employees from nearby

nonunion stores. While telling the press that it was eager to negotiate, the company has refused to schedule negotiations since the strike began.

The UFCW won recognition at several stores, but was unable to win agreements to improve conditions. Today only two Borders outlets are unionized, and both are fighting for a first contract.

Workers at the Uptown (Minneapolis) Borders store unanimously rejected Borders' contract proposal Sept. 24th, after the company refused to start workers at a living wage, guarantee hours for full time workers, establish a joint health care fund, or recognize an in-store committee designed to address workers' grievances. However, the Minneapolis workers did not vote to strike. Instead, they have been leafleting Twin Cities area stores in support of the Ann Arbor workers.

Borders says the strikers average about \$8.25 an hour, though the company starts workers at \$6.50 to \$7.00 an hour. Workers become eligible for Borders' health care plan only after six months on the job, and premiums have been skyrocketing. Meanwhile, Borders executives receive millions of dollars in corporate stock options.

## California grocery workers undermined

The United Food and Commercial Workers' feints and jabs in the Southern California grocery workers' dispute have some observers wondering whether the UFCW is revisiting the strategy under which they deliberately drove down wages in the meatpacking industry in the 1980s. That strategy, aimed at reducing employers' incentive to go non-union by bringing down wages in union plants, led to the P-9 tragedy, where Hormel workers in Austin, Minnesota, saw the UFCW actively undermine their strike.

Days after the UFCW pulled picket lines from Ralphs stores (where its members continue to be locked out), and stopped picketing grocers' distribution centers so that Teamsters could engage in union scabbing without having to cross picket lines, the union dispatched leafleters to a handful of San Francisco Bay Area Safeway stores, where contract negotiations are set to begin this summer.

The California Labor Federation called on union members to boycott all Safeway stores until the dispute is settled (no such action was taken against Ralphs or Kroger, which locked out workers in solidarity with the Safeway bosses), but the UFCW continues to confine the strike to Southern California.

After settling a strike in St. Louis two weeks into the California strike, the UFCW international has agreed to an "indefinite extension" of Kroger's contract covering 4,000 Central Indiana workers, rather than have them join California workers on picket lines.

Local 700 had rejected the contract extension hours before UFCW officials agreed to it, claiming there had been "minimal progress" in the negotiations. The union says it is still ready to strike if Kroger's continues to demand massive concessions, but has agreed to give the company 72 hours' notice of any such action.

## When democracies clash, sparks fly

BY PETER S. MOORE

Before Premier McGuinty "changes" Ontario, he had best remember that his representative government isn't the only democracy around. I'm not talking about representative legislative democracy – in cities and townships and provinces – but about union democracy, on the factory floor and in office towers across industries.

Workplace democracy is a relatively recent form of democracy in Canada today. Unions fight for the economic and social needs of people. Pay equity, affirmative action, dignity on the job – unions are champions in these struggles. For this reason and because of its physical ability to challenge representative democracy's monopoly on legitimate authority, the last two governments in Ontario – New Democrat and Progressive Conservative – have sought to restrict or diminish their power. Workers make the wheels of government go around and they can stop them, too.

When democracies clash, sparks fly. Industrial democracy or syndicalism becomes a check on the abuse of power by government. A common accusation is that unions' opposition to legislators is anti-democratic because they represent only a special interest group. People forget that more people are members of unions than members of political parties in this province. If political parties can seize state power, it follows that workers have an equal claim over economic power. That is the goal of syndicalism. The independence of unions from political parties and other groups is critical to ensuring that this power is not

turned against workers or others.

Unions in Ontario should cooperate to fulfill their democratic potential in the province. Unions can form a powerful, accountable and independent coalition of democratic organizations to challenge the new Liberal government and ensure they address the needs of Ontarians who were attacked or shunned by its predecessor.

Rather than waste its resources and its credibility on the New Democratic Party, the Ontario Federation of Labour and non-affiliated unions should strike an independent course. Unions should build and strengthen their internal democracy to increase participation and thus enhance the impact of their work. They should focus on organizing the service and technology industries, where so many young workers have found work, but no solidarity. They should focus on supporting social movements such as the women's movement and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, who address the issues of gender equality, racism, homelessness, and unemployment.

By building democratic social power and shunning the siren call of state power, industrial democracy can challenge governments who abuse power.

### Taco Bell unChristian?

The National Council of Churches officially endorsed the Taco Bell boycott called by Florida tomato pickers at its Nov. 4-6 annual meeting. The NCC's 36 member churches include 50 million Christians in 140,000 local congregations across the U.S.



# NAFTA at 10

BY DAVID BACON

Thousands of demonstrators filled Miami streets in November, in a show of opposition to “free trade” unseen (at least in this country) since the battles in Seattle four years ago. Opponents are trying to hit the proposal for a Free Trade Area of the Americas with the same one-two punch that forced trade ministers to end talks in Cancun in October with no new agreement. While a sea of grassroots opponents lay siege in the streets to the Miami hall where ministers meet, inside the meeting the new leftwing governments of Latin America – Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina and Venezuela – have already formed an implacable opposition.

As demonstration and debate unfold, in the eye of the storm is the one free trade agreement that already provides an idea of what the Americas can expect from the Bush free trade plan. In just a few short weeks, the North American Free Trade Agreement will be ten years old. And for FTAA's opponents, that ten-year history of devastation, wreaked in Mexico and the US both, will be the key argument in stopping its extension to the rest of Latin America.

The communities of working people and the poor, on both sides of the border, have paid the price for trade liberalization, while the benefits have been reaped by the tiny clique who promoted NAFTA ten years ago.

In one of life's ironies, successive secretaries of the U.S. Department of Labor – among NAFTA's most ardent supporters – have kept close track of the treaty's high cost in U.S. jobs. By 2002, the department had cer-

tified that 408,000 workers qualified for extensions of unemployment benefits because their employers had moved their jobs south of the border.

Most observers believe this is a vast undercount. According to NAFTA At Seven, a report by the Economic Policy Institute, “NAFTA eliminated 766,030 actual and potential U.S. jobs between 1994 and 2000 because of the rapid growth in the net U.S. export deficit with Mexico and Canada.”

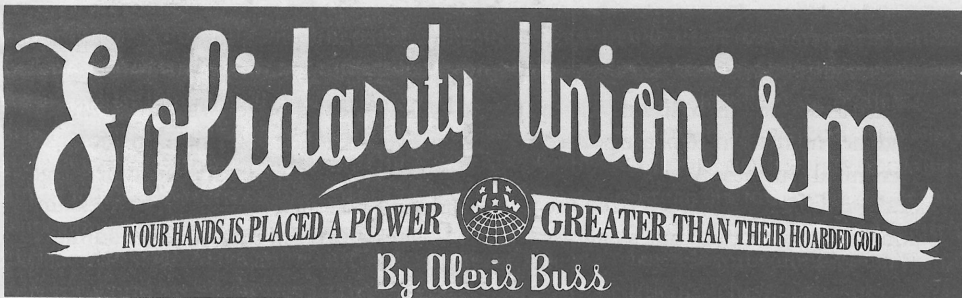
While the job picture for U.S. workers was grim, NAFTA's impact on Mexican jobs was devastating. Before leaving office (and Mexico itself, pursued by charges of corruption), President Carlos Salinas de Gortari promised Mexicans they would gain the jobs the U.S. lost. And on tours to the U.S. to promote the treaty, he promised that this job gain, although painful for U.S. workers, would halt the northward flow of Mexican job seekers.

NAFTA's first year saw instead the loss of over a million jobs all across Mexico, in the wake of economic crisis. To attract investment, NAFTA-related reforms required the

privatization of factories, railroads, airlines and other large enterprises. This led to further huge waves of layoffs. And because unemployment and economic desperation in Mexico increased, immigration to the U.S. has been the only hope for survival for millions of Mexicans.

For a while, however, it seemed that the growth of maquiladora factories along the border would make up for at least part of the job loss. By 2001, over 1,300,000 workers were employed in over 2,000 border plants, according to the Maquiladora Industry Association. But tying the jobs of so many

*Throughout NAFTA's ten-year history, workers have sought to break free in a long labor war waged from plant to plant along the border. They have organized independent unions, willing to fight for a larger share of the enormous wealth the factories produce.*



In the past month, important developments occurred in two union struggles that I have been paying particularly close attention to. I'm talking about the contract campaigns at Borders Books store 001 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Whole Foods in Madison, Wisconsin.

Workers in both stores voted in a union, in both cases the AFL-CIO-affiliated UFCW (different locals, of course), in 2002. At Borders, the Dec. 6 election was decisive: 51 to 4. At Whole Foods, it was a much closer call, the July 12 vote went for the union 65 to 54.

Now it appears both campaigns are in a crisis. Borders workers in Ann Arbor, who rejected a crummy contract offer from management in October, have been on strike since November 10th. I think it's telling that the only concession management would offer to the union during the span of negotiations was for dues checkoff – the direct deduction of union dues from worker's paychecks, the money in turn forwarded by management to the union.

Borders pushed stand-still contracts in every store to vote in a union. In every single one of the stores that accepted such a contract, workers gave up on the union when the contract expired, resulting in decertification. Store 001, the first ever Borders store, is also the first Borders store to go on strike, and it's because they refused to accept a stand-still, go-nowhere contract. Thank you, fellow workers, for your dignity.

But what's on my mind is how will a strike in a single store be enough to change the way a 1,200+ store chain negotiates with its workers? Not to take anything away from these excellent booksellers, but we need to think of what else can be done in such a situation. This single-store strike tactic has been antici-

pated for quite a while from the chain.

In Madison, there has again been no significant progress towards a contract, and it appears the union presence in the store has fallen off. A decertification election that was scheduled for Nov. 17 has been put off because of Unfair Labor Practice charges filed by the union. But the writing is on the wall: two petitions for a decert have been circulated: the first with enough signatures to get an election; the second with a majority of workers in the shop signing saying they no longer want representation. Management isn't negotiating anymore.

Is the fate of Whole Foods workers in Madison going to be reduced to a legal fight over whether or not management followed laws already slanted in the bosses' favor?

Both of these struggles, I think, articulate a need for organizing strategies that do not rely on legal certification before the union's work can be done. Surely the grievances that inspired these drives could be worked on by organized groups of workers in the shops regardless of recognition. That's what a union does anyhow, why wait for the law?

I think we need to ask ourselves, and our fellow workers around us, what legal union recognition has to offer workers who can “whomp” management in an election, those who have enough support for a slim majority, and those who have tight-knit networks of solidarity but do not yet have a convinced majority of co-workers ready for action. Legal recognition is supposed to give us the right to bargain with the bosses, but is that the only way it can happen? And what kind of bargaining does the legal approach mandate? Can we bring it back around so the bosses are indeed going to negotiate with us on our terms?



Mexicans to the U.S. market, for which the plants were producing, proved a disaster as well. When U.S. consumers stopped buying as the recession hit in 2001, maquiladoras also began shedding workers.

The Mexican government estimates that over 400,000 jobs disappeared in the process – as the saying goes on the border, when the U.S. economy catches cold, Mexico gets pneumonia. A two-year public relations campaign by the association and the Mexican government to blame the loss in border jobs on Chinese competition then sought to obscure the obvious fact that the plants produced far more goods than a recession-plagued market in the U.S. could absorb.

But the most serious consequence of NAFTA has been its failure to protect the rights of workers as promised by its supporters. To attract investment to the maquiladoras, Mexican government authorities cooperated with investors and compliant official unions in maintaining a low-wage economy, reinforced with a system of labor control.

According to Martha Ojeda, director of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, the government-mandated minimum wage for workers on the border is about \$4.20. She estimates that a majority of maquiladora workers earn close to this wage.

A study by the Center for Reflection, Education and Action, a religious research group, found that at the minimum wage, it took a maquiladora worker in Juarez almost an hour to earn enough money to buy a kilo (2.2 pounds) of rice, and a worker in Tijuana an hour and a half. And yet another study by the Economics Faculty of the National Autonomous University in Mexico City says Mexican wages have lost 81 percent of their buying power in the last two decades.

To enforce this system, maquiladora workers are required to belong to unions that have no intention of raising those low wages or helping them end exhausting and dangerous working conditions. Throughout NAFTA's ten-year history, workers have sought to break free in a long labor war waged from plant to plant along the border. They have organized independent unions, willing to fight for a larger share of the enormous wealth the factories produce. But these efforts have been met with firings, plant closures, and even physical violence.

Ten years of hearings held under NAFTA's labor side agreement have documented extensive violations of labor rights. In those few instances in which workers have successfully formed independent unions, as they did at Tijuana's Han Young plant in 1998-99, their strikes were broken despite guarantees under Mexico's constitution and federal labor law.

NAFTA's sponsors promised that the treaty's labor side agreement would protect workers, even though the treaty itself was intended to demolish all barriers to foreign investment. The side agreement proved toothless. In ten years not one fired worker has been returned to his or her job, and not one independent union has gained legal status and a contract as a result of the NAFTA

process.

Instead, the labor protections built into Mexico's legal system have been systematically undermined and eliminated as obstacles to investment. Even when Mexican judges held that strikes were legal, as did Maria Lourdes Villagomez Guillon of the Federal 5th District in 1998, and Pedro Fernandez Reyes Colin of the First Collegial Court of the Fifteenth District (Baja California's highest judicial authority) in 1999, their decisions were defied with impunity by government authorities. Under NAFTA, breaking strikes and unions on the border has become an integral part of economic development, and legal protections for workers have been swept away.

Four years ago, at the height of the protests against the World Trade Organization, Zwelenzima Vavi, head of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, described the alternative to NAFTA and the free trade philosophy underpinning it. “In the pursuit of profit,” he said, “governments are told to remove worker protections, and then use that as an inducement for investment. But development is a wider concept. It includes social development, and the living conditions of the people. Development can't exist with mass unemployment and poverty.”

As the opposition gathers in Miami, these are the words that critics of NAFTA and FTAA will put before the world.

## California UFCW official tied to Wal-Mart stock

While the United Food and Commercial Workers union points to unfair competition from Wal-Mart stores as a significant factor prolonging the California grocery workers' strike and lock-out, and campaigns against expansion of the discount retail empire, UFCW Vice President Sean Harrigan is managing over a billion dollars worth of Wal-Mart stock. Harrigan moonlights as president of the California Public Employees Retirement System, which holds the stock as part of its \$150 billion investment portfolio.

## Police 'oppressive' with Quebec City protesters

The RCMP used “oppressive” force against protesters at the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, violating Canada's Criminal Code and Charter of Rights, according to the RCMP public complaints commission. The report concludes that the Mounties had the right to disperse protesters, but that riot police gave inadequate warning and used excessive force, and calls for disciplinary action against senior officials.

“Removing the protesters without adequate warning and sufficient time to disperse circumvented the group's right to assemble and protest peacefully,” the draft report concludes. “Therefore, not only were the members' actions contrary to policy, they were also inconsistent with the protesters' Charter rights.” The report says the use of tear gas was counterproductive, “add[ing] to the danger of the situation, caus[ing] mass confusion and result[ing] in unnecessary injury.”



# Review: Newswriters Unite

*Newswriters Unite: Labor, Convergence, and North American Newspapers*, by Catherine McKercher. Rowman & Littlefield, 200 pages.

REVIEW BY PETER S. MOORE

Catherine McKercher tells the story of how trade and craft unions in the newspaper business saw the twin threats of media mergers and new technology, identified industrial unionism as the solution, and then squandered its potential for unity with internal bickering and rivalry.

The resurrected idea of "one big union" in the printing trades emerged from a November 1959 newspaper strike in Portland, Oregon, according to McKercher. Picket line solidarity led to merger discussions on an international scale between eight unions, including the American Newspaper Guild and the International Typographical Union.

"The United Front of Capital must be met with the United Action of Labour," said Francis Barrett, president of the New York ITU local. However, Barrett's spirited words fell swiftly enough as the craft and trade union bureaucrats chose narrow, short-term interests over the long-term vision of workers who control their work and have a strong voice in their industry. Workers in the newspaper industry today are paying the price of this reluctance to act in the profitable, computerizing, ever-converging business labelled monolithically by activists as

The Media.

McKercher, who I came to know as one of my journalism professors at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, saw first hand the impact of managerial and technological change on her first newswriter job at *The Ottawa Journal*. "When the rival *Ottawa Citizen* moved to the suburbs a few years later and invested in video display terminals and hot lead, some of my *Journal* colleagues predicted smugly that this would be the end of the *Citizen*. How wrong they were." *The Journal* closed and McKercher had moved on, eventually switching careers to become a journalism professor and raising her family. At the Ottawa book launch, she said that her daughter had suggested the book's catchy title, *Newswriters Unite*.

The crisply written accounts in this book do provide a detailed description of the "era of unprecedented change" that merged, replaced or eliminated the steps – and the jobs – in what McKercher described as the "daily miracle" of newspaper publishing.

*Newswriters Unite* reveals the weaknesses of dividing the workforce into narrowly-defined craft or trade unions. To defend their turf, some of these unions, such as the ITU, fought the introduction of new technology and contested other unions' claim over who did what in the new production processes, stoking inter-union rivalries and eroding union solidarity. Meanwhile, media merg-

ers and the "digitalization" of the trade strengthened the hand of employers, eager to reduce operating costs and increase control over how the work gets done. As a result, media workers are seeing technology and more aggressive bosses backed by conglomerates reduce the number of workers who produce the news.

The worst contemporary examples of the bosses' new power are the Detroit newspaper strike of 1995-2000 in the United States and the *Calgary Herald* strike of 1999-2000 in Canada. Rather than negotiate with the five unions on the picket lines in Detroit, the two news chains Knight-Ridder and Gannett hired scabs and took the losses necessary to crush them. In Canada, media boss Conrad Black defied the newly-certified Communication, Electrical and Paperworkers union by doing the same thing in November 1999 – hiring newsroom scabs and leaving the picketers to the Canadian winter. All three chains – Knight-Ridder, Gannett and Southam – had the resources, technology and the will to crush the unions.

In response to this growing threat, workers in the communication industry have turned to the industrial union model, such as the Communication Workers of America and the Communication, Electrical and

Paperworkers (CEP) of Canada. The dwindling International Typographical Union joined the Communications Workers of America in 1993, followed in 1995 by The Newspaper Guild.

McKercher also tells two stories, one of which highlight the impact of nationalism as a driving force for Ontario newswriters to leave the U.S.-based Newspaper Guild and join the CEP Ontario and the other which highlights how Pacific Press in British Columbia forced a union merger and may live to regret it.

"The record of the last 40 years shows that it is far easier for capital to consolidate than labor," said McKercher. She attributes the slowness of the unions to act sooner to the threats facing labour to three key factors: that corporations are not democracies like unions, union mergers are complicated and that union leaders felt the pinch of change less than their members.

Newswriters are not alone in facing the challenges of fewer and more powerful employers wielding technologies to strip workers of their job control and skills. As members of the IWW, we must continue to advocate for industrial unions which are democratic and willing to fight smart for more than the status quo.

## Defend the Oakland 25

BY HOWARD KEYLOR

Nearly 200 people rallied in front of the California Superior Court in Oakland Nov. 7 to demand that charges be dropped against 24 antiwar protesters and longshore union official Jack Heyman. The 25 defendants were arrested after police attacked antiwar protesters and longshoremen in the port on April 7. Several demonstrators and longshoremen, who work at the terminals that were being picketed by the protesters, were shot in the back as they fled the riot police.

ILWU Local 10 Business Agent Trent Willis said as a black man driving his car in Oakland, he's more terrified of the police than of any criminal. Business Agent Jack Heyman, one of the defendants, characterized the police attack not as a "riot" but as an assault planned at a secret meeting between maritime employers, members of the Port Commission and the Oakland Police Department.

The courtroom was filled with an overflow crowd of supporters. While the judge had earlier dismissed the charge of "disturbing the peace" as being too general, he allowed the District Attorney's office to add a new charge of "creating a public nuisance." Other charges remaining against the defendants are:

disrupting a business, failure to obey a police officer, resisting arrest and trespassing on private (i.e. port) property.

There is nothing in the charges about "disrupting the war machine" or the protesters chanting, "This war is for profit, workers can stop it." That would be too blatant an attack on free speech.

The key courtroom fight took place over the DA's continued refusal to comply with an order to turn over to the defense documents and police records which will show that the Oakland 25 are innocent and that once again it is the Oakland police who are guilty of an unprovoked attack – this time on demonstrators expressing their First Amendment rights and longshoremen observing the picketing.

The courtroom charade will continue on January 9, the date for the next pre-trial hearing. Clearly, the scales of justice are tilted toward those with wealth, the international corporations who profited from the Iraq war. As the ILWU learned long ago, defense of democratic and trade union rights will be won by mobilizing on the streets and on the docks not in the courtroom.

For up-to-date information on the defense campaign, log on to [www.defendilwuba.com](http://www.defendilwuba.com)

## Sweeney wants third term at AFL

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has announced he will seek re-election in 2005. Sweeney, 69 years old, will have served ten years when his current term ends. On taking office in a 1995 palace coup, the former SEIU president promised to serve either ten years (until '05) or until he is 70 ('04).

During Sweeney's tenure private-sector unionization has fallen to 9 percent. The Federation, which has had five presidents and two contested elections in its 117-year history, may be in for its third contested election.

Leaders of five unions – Carpenters, UNITE, SEIU, HERE and the Laborers – have joined together to form the New Unity Partnership. The NUP is intended to be a top-down structure dedicated to organizing new members while dumping the departments – civil rights, safety & health, education – dealing with uniquely union concerns.

An odd amalgamation of "progressive" leaders (SEIU's Andy Stern, UNITE's Bruce Raynor, former AFL organizing director Richard Bensinger) and conservatives (the Carpenters' Doug McCarron and heavy courtship of James Hoffa of the Teamsters) NUP offers valid criticisms but no new answers.

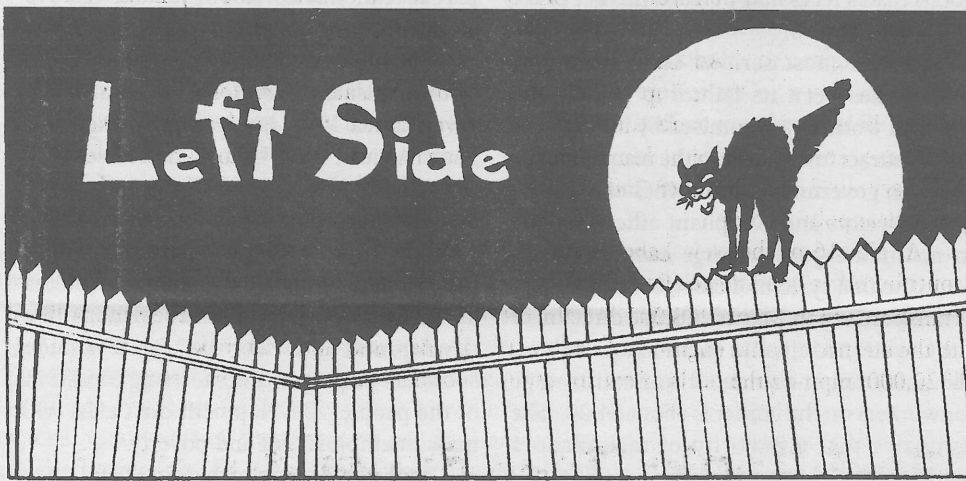
The Federation is tradition-bound, bureaucratic, slow and difficult to change. These

things are no secret. NUP proposes combining the AFL's five dozen unions into one dozen, stripping the state and local federations of what little power they have, and removing democracy as an impediment to efficiency. This centralization of power sounds a lot like the changes McCarron has made in the Carpenters, where locals have been weakened and regional councils – beholden to the national – strengthened.

The plans that are leaking out sound like warmed-over business unionism and have little new to offer other than a promise of improved efficiency. NUP says that the growth of unions in the 1930s was the result of "bold leaders" offering a more adequate "structure." A more complete understanding of union history suggests that workers themselves were more important to the upsurge than John L. Lewis and a few others making structural plans in a union boardroom.

### Prison labor to expand?

The U.S. House of Representatives has overwhelmingly voted to allow furniture makers to hire federal prisoners to manufacture furniture to be sold to the federal government, in an expansion of the government's slave labor program.



As we approach the time of year that was an erstwhile folk holiday, since perverted into a consumerist orgy, we seem to be further away from the bright future that we radicals envision. However, we take comfort in the old saw that things get worse before they get better.

Those who don't share our optimism, who refer to themselves as realists (read pessimists) say that realists live longer than us starry-eyed idealists. Your scribe's retort is that it only seems longer.

Yes, on the surface things seem mighty bleak, what with the looming of more world wars popping up in various parts of our planet, not to mention deteriorating economic conditions as a result of the employing class exporting jobs to areas of sweatshop wages and the union struggles that have given a little improvement being driven back to ground zero.

Toynbee, just one of those who have been credited with saying that those who ignore history are condemned to repeat – and indeed, the dawn of the 21st century looks more and more like the beginning of the 20th.

However, your scribe maintains that there is no such critter as a radical pessimist! I am no longer a starry-eyed youth, in as far as I now need thicker glasses to see the stars. Strange as it may seem, there is a bit of justification for my optimism. Where World War II had an immense spurt of patriotism, and the Vietnam War took a long time to become unpopular, the current war in Iraq and environs was unpopular before it even started. Bushytail has also been recognized as a bald-faced liar from the start, as are most politicians, and people are beginning to realize that such is the nature of those who pursue that ignoble profession. However, we still have a long way to go before we are free of the burden of a class society.

I have been asked by those "realists" how I can expect any good from the human race, what with the constant history of wars upon wars. Our present historians seem to dwell upon wars as turning points in history, emphasizing the formation of regimes and empires. Some years back, our late fellow worker Jack Sheridan wrote an excellent series of articles entitled "Breakfast With Destiny," where he maintains that the true focal points of human history were when important food products were introduced to the rest of the world. Many of these important food products, had they remained isolated in their locale of origin, might have long since disappeared through the process of natural disaster, but they have become known throughout the world through the economic necessity of people communicating with each other despite any differences in color, language or culture.

Thus certain products are known world wide by their original names: Cha or te from the Chinese; patata from the Quechua; chocolatl from the Nahuatl; tabako from the Taino; and so weider. We two-legged humans are unique among creatures in as far as our vulnerability has compelled us to be more creatively inventive than our less-endowed fellow creatures we share this planet with. However, we have become alienated from the basic instincts of the so-called lesser creatures, who have never let any of their own kind do their thinking for them.

It is said that there is no Santa Claus, but yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus – within every one of us; once we realize our own potential, we will be our greatest gift to the rest of the world, and mainly to ourselves.

Draftees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals (who, with the politicians, are miserable pimps for the master class).

— C.C. Redcloud



# Teacher pensions raided to bail out Edison

The Florida Board of Administration, which manages public workers' retirement funds, bought Edison Schools for \$182 million Nov. 12. Edison CEO Chris Whittle will continue to run the nearly bankrupt company, and will be paid as much as \$28.6 million over the next five years in pay and bonuses. Shareholders will receive \$1.76 a share for stock that traded for as much as \$36 two years ago — and as little as 14 cents last year.

Edison is the largest private operator of public schools in the United States, running 130 schools in 20 states. Edison also sells computer testing systems, and has established a foothold in England, where it operates programs at Colbayns High School in Essex and

is negotiating deals with four other schools.

Although Edison's promise to run public schools like private businesses won the politically connected firm several contracts to run public and publicly funded charter schools, the firm has lost more than \$340 million over 11 years of operations.

Its record in the classroom has been little better, and several school systems have booted the company after suffering declining test scores, high staff turnover, and expenses that typically run much higher than those in the

public system. A national study of Edison schools conducted by Western Michigan University researchers found that students' performance was about the same as that of comparable students in conventional public schools, and far weaker than the company claims in its annual reports.

Disappointed with Edison's results, at least 17 school districts cancelled contracts with the company last year.

The Florida pension system controls more than \$95 billion in workers' pension

funds, most of it paid in on behalf of public school teachers. Workers have no say over the system, which lost hundreds of millions on investments in Enron and WorldCom. Instead, Florida hires politically connected investment firms to run the system.

Many teachers are outraged that their pension funds are being put at risk to prop up a failing business dedicated to eliminating their jobs. Several rallied outside Edison's shareholder meeting to protest the bail-out. "Why is Chris Whittle getting such generous compensation, when it's the Florida workers who pay for his mistakes?" asked Miami teacher Christina Brownlow. "It's a little hard to stomach."



*Teachers are outraged that their pension funds are being put at risk to prop up a failing business dedicated to eliminating their jobs.*

## Fight for shorter Hours



### Computer firm hit for overtime violations

Workers have filed a class action suit charging Computer Sciences Corporation with forcing thousands of workers to put in long hours of unpaid overtime. The company has 92,000 employees.

Although U.S. law exempts software developers from overtime protection, the suit charges that workers who install software and field service calls are being forced to work up to 20 hours a week of unpaid overtime.

### Overtime rules move ahead

Despite votes in Congress to block regulations that would strip millions of workers of their limited legal protections against overtime, Congressional leaders are refusing to reconcile conflicting versions of the legislation and send it on to the White

## Where did all the jobs go?

BY CHARLES WALKER

No one has done more to publicize the exodus of jobs to overseas labor markets, than U.S. organized labor. For many years now, the AFL-CIO has campaigned for what it terms "fair trade not unregulated trade." Labor's message may not have kept corporations from moving manufacturing and service jobs abroad, but probably it did much to convince many Americans that their job security was threatened by cheaper labor. No wonder then, according to AFL-CIO head John J. Sweeney, 54 percent of Americans believe that the United States needs to focus on keeping American jobs for American workers...

Yes, it's true that jobs have been lost to overseas labor markets. But far fewer jobs than most Americans might think. Louis Uchitelle, economics writer for the *New York Times* (Oct. 5), says that although the Labor Department doesn't compile statistics on jobs lost to other nations, experts in the private sector have been measuring the job losses. What they have found is likely to astonish many workers: a whopping 85 percent of the missing jobs have been lost right here in the home labor market.

What happened to those jobs is easily explained. Bosses have been able to increase workers' productivity, and thereby meet their production goals with fewer workers. "Productivity improvements at home-sustaining output with fewer workers-account for the great bulk of the job loss," Uchitelle writes. Even if it turns out that the experts' numbers are on the low side, and the jobs lost to overseas workers amount to 20 percent or so, clearly workers' jobs are more threatened by rising productivity at home than by underpaid workers abroad.

To date, the AFL-CIO has had little to say about the job losses accounted for by improving productivity. Certainly, the labor federation hasn't attempted to raise work-

House (which has pledged to veto it).

The Labor Department could put the rules into effect as early as January. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO continues to undermine the struggle to preserve the 8-hour day by framing it as an issue of "overtime pay cuts," rather than a battle for control over our time.

### Australia: 'Flex time' leads to longer hours

A study by Queensland's Griffith University says economic "reforms" such as flexible schedules have made work longer and harder.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show about 24 percent of full-time employees work 49 hours or more a week. Those who worked longer hours reported higher work-related injury and illness rates.

Griffith University researcher David Peetz said those who worked the longest hours had "the greatest say" over how many hours they worked and their start and finishing times, but were under pressure to "get the job done."

ers consciousness about productivity gains as a threat to their job security as it has done with what it calls the "export of jobs." John J. Sweeney and Richard Trumka, who took up their high labor offices in 1995, have not provided answers to the heavy job losses due to productivity gains brought about by rationalization, mechanization, or more speed, sweat and toil from the workforce.

And Sweeney and Trumka are not alone. Many labor officials have failed to address workers' job security issues stemming from inexhaustible corporate demands for more productivity. For example, the recently negotiated contracts in the auto industry will cost 50,000 jobs, the kind of well-paying jobs that organized labor has typically cited to induce workers to join up. Recent contracts with Verizon, Goodyear and various steel corporations will also cost jobs, as those pacts explicitly provide contractual language permitting further productivity growth.

The AFL-CIO's Sweeney almost routinely assures Corporate America that the labor movement wants to help it be competitive. When Sweeney took office he made it clear that labor and capital need not be foes. A year later he was quoted in the *New York Times* (Oct. 27, 1996) telling business leaders, "We want to work with you to bake a larger pie which all Americans can share and not just argue with you about how to divide the existing pie. It is time for business and labor to see each other as natural allies, not natural enemies."

Sweeney and the AFL-CIO tops have yet to change their minds about "labor-management cooperation," even though, as the pie got larger, the share going to workers has gotten smaller. If workers received the same share of the gross national product they once did, today's paychecks would be several hundreds of billions of dollars larger annually than they are.

## Do you pay the devil his due?

*Fed up with workers footing the bill for an anti-labor bunch of political fakers, the Edinburgh IWW Branch offers this reaction:*

"The reason the Tories are in such a mess is because there's a much better Tory party already in power." — Tony Benn

What do you have in common with billionaire Lord Sainsbury, porn baron 'Dirty Des' Desmond, and union-bashing steel magnate Lakshi "the Asian Carnegie" Mittal?

Answer: if you're a member of a trade union, you give money to the Labour Party, just like them. Called "the political levy," your donation is deducted from your wages along with your union dues. It isn't part of your dues — it's an extra payment. Added up it all comes to a small fortune. Of the Top 20 contributors to New Labour, 11 are trade unions. Here's the run-down of union donations from February 2001 to November 2003 (source: www.cleanpolitix.com):

At No. 16 of the New Labour's Top 20 contributors is Bob Crowe's Rail & Maritime Transport union with £248,000. At No. 14 it's the electricians and engineers AEEU with £320,000, nipping the heels of construction

workers' UCATT at No. 13 with £354,000.

At No. 9 it's print union GPMU with £544,000 in donations. Shopworkers' USDAW is at No. 7 with £2.1 million just behind the posties' CWU at No. 6 with £2.3 million, Transport & General Workers at No. 5 with £2.5 million, general workers union GMB at No. 4 with £3.5 million and at No. 3, despite massive spending cuts and privatisation, it's public service workers' UNISON with £3.6 million of their low-paid members' money.

Lord Sainsbury holds on to the top spot but at No. 2, with a whopping £3.8 million taken from its members wages, it's financial and manufacturing workers' union Amicus. Now that Amicus and the AEEU have merged we can no doubt look forward to even vaster donations to the Labour Party's coffers.

That's nearly £20,000,000 taken from trades unionists' wages and gifted by just 11 unions to New Labour. Many more unions also donate to the Labour Party.

The IWW is not affiliated to any political parties, and does not make contributions to political parties or candidates.

## West Bank: 'Tear down the wall'

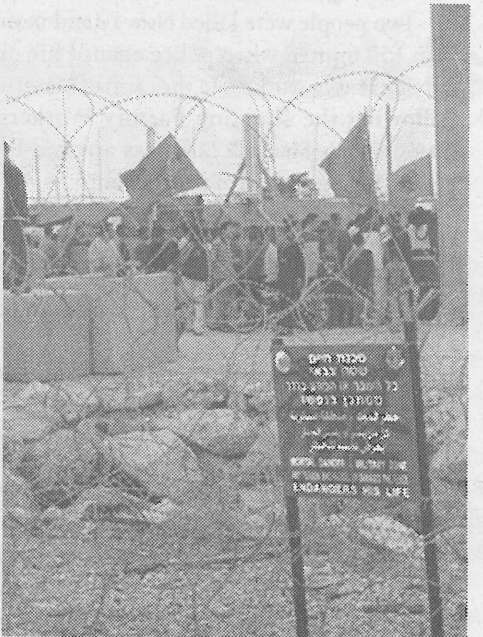
Demonstrations were held around the world Nov. 9 as part of an "International Day Against the Apartheid Wall in Palestine."

Israeli authorities are building the 400-mile-long electric fence and concrete wall along the West Bank border. But a United Nations report says nearly 15 percent of West Bank land will fall on the Israeli side of the wall and the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians will be disrupted. Palestinians say the wall would make them prisoners in their own country, and separate many villages from their agricultural fields. A fourth of the wall has already been built, mostly in the northern West Bank and near Jerusalem.

Twenty meters of fence were removed in a joint Israeli-Palestinian action in the northern village of Zububa. Thirty-five Israelis joined 200 Palestinians, marching on the fence with bolt cutters and other tools in hand. Marchers swarmed past Israeli soldiers, cutting through a barbed wire fence to begin dismantling the interior electronic fence. Demolition continued for more than half an hour despite tear gas and concussion grenade attacks, until the army was able to push protesters away from the wall.

Demonstrations throughout the occupied territories shut down cities. In Jenin, the army fired bullets and tear gas at hundreds of demonstrators who were tearing down a section of the wall. More than a thousand Palestinians marched from Tulkarem toward the gate of Ras Rummana, demanding the wall's demolition. When protesters began removing razor wire, police fired explosive devices at them to break up the crowd.

Protests took place in several European cities beginning on the eve of the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. "That shameful symbol of division in the 20th century was torn down, and the same should be done with



Qalqiliya city demonstration

this new wall," said the groups Plataforma 2015 and the Madrid Social Forum, in a statement convening a protest in the central plaza of Madrid.

Several unions backed demonstrations in Spanish cities, including Barcelona, Bilbao, Gijón, Oviedo, Valencia and Zaragoza.

In England, members of the Oxford Palestine Solidarity Campaign created a human wall that snaked along the central shopping district to draw attention to the unjust treatment of Palestinians living in the West Bank. As part of the protest, members of the public were "interviewed" at a "security checkpoint" and asked for their permits.

There were also protests throughout the U.S., often in conjunction with conferences and teach-ins to educate people about the wall and the growing grassroots mobilization against it.





60,000 workers rallied in front of Seoul's City Hall Nov. 9. Riot police prevented a planned march and beat protestors, touching off a battle in which unionists defended themselves with molotov cocktails. 111 workers were arrested.

PHOTO: LEE JEONGWON

## Korean strikers demand labor rights

As many as 60,000 workers took part in a Nov. 9 protest against South Korean labor laws under which union leaders can be sued for lost production during strikes. Some marched with pictures of unionists who have recently killed themselves to protest this policy.

Masked workers shouting "Revenge for the deaths of our colleagues" brandished steel pipes and threw fire bombs at police, according to the BBC. Riot police charged and fought back with clubs in what became running battles through the streets of central Seoul.

The protests were part of a series of strikes aimed at forcing the government to reform its labor laws and economic policies, and to abandon plans to send troops to Iraq.

"We will stage a stronger struggle if the Roh government sticks to its current policy," warned KCTU head Dan Byung-Ho.

More than 150,000 workers struck for eight hours Nov. 12 to demand that the government change laws which allow management to sue union members for damages from illegal industrial action. Instead, the govern-

ment — headed by a former labor lawyer — is proposing legislation that would further weaken union rights.

"Six union leaders have died so far this year because the government has been reluctant to take any measures. Allowing employers to seek compensation from union activists is to say they will not allow any union activities," the KCTU said.

Strike rallies were held in 20 cities across the country, and hundreds of workplaces were affected. However, unions asked railway and subway workers to work as usual, so as to not inconvenience commuters. The government says it may bring criminal charges against union leaders if the protests continue.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of immigrants are defying a government crackdown targeting undocumented workers. Workers from across Asia have flocked to South Korea since 1987, fleeing desperate poverty to take low-wage jobs in the service industry and as casual labor. Unions and civil rights groups have condemned the deportations.

### Lesotho police kill 2

Two people were killed Nov. 10 and more than 150 injured when police opened fire on rallying textile workers in the capital, Maseru. Following the shooting Factory Workers' Union leader Macaefa Billy was arrested for organizing an unlawful procession.

FAWU members were intercepted by the Lesotho Mounted Police Service as they marched on the offices of the Employers' Association to deliver a petition demanding a 15 percent pay hike.

Lesotho's largely foreign-owned textile industry, geared to export to the U.S., employs some 30,000 people. Textile exports drive the tiny landlocked country's economy.

### Southern African unions meet

Unionists from 11 countries held the ninth meeting of the Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council Nov. 6 and 7 in Harare, Zimbabwe, to discuss the current global socio-economic and political order, the World Bank, the IMF and the multilateral trading system under the WTO.

The Council also adopted a statement criticizing the Zimbabwe and Swaziland governments' political repression including brutal attacks, arbitrary arrests and general use of force to silence unions.

### Education strike in Kenya

Workers at six public universities in Kenya struck Nov. 10 after months of waiting for a response to requests for wage increases. Salaries at public colleges have stagnated for years, and are now at levels so low that it is not possible to live on them.

Rather than respond to the problems, the government has created task forces to investigate the problem. However, the government did increase the salaries of MPs to levels far higher than the faculty are demanding.

### Lay-offs lead to slow-down

Ford is facing serious production problems after deciding to cut 3,000 jobs in Belgium. Workers have responded with quickie strikes and less hurried production, disrupting parts supplies across Europe.

### Austrian rail strike ends

Austrian railway workers protesting plans to privatize the state-run rail services ended a three-day strike in mid-November, after the government agreed to negotiate over the terms of the sale. The government plans to break the Austrian Federal Railways into nine private companies, laying off 12,000 of the company's 48,000 workers and gutting the remaining workers' rights.

Under the settlement, the union would be allowed to keep collective bargaining rights for the surviving workers, and can negotiate over employment conditions.

### Serbian workers fight US Steel

Every tenth citizen of the Serbian city of Smederevo has a job in the Sartid steel works. U.S. Steel bought the works in September, and forced its 8,500 workers into a strike a month later. Workers are paid less than 50 cents (U.S.) an hour, and consequently must depend on long overtime hours to make ends meet.

In the Slowakischen steel plant in Kosice, also owned by U.S. Steel, the hourly wages are US\$3.74 an hour, seven times higher. Smederevo workers are demanding the equivalent of a dollar an hour, and full disclosure of the terms under which their factory was sold.

Smederevo is one of 842 factories privatized in the last three years, most for a pittance not adequate even to cover severance payments to the thousands of workers who have lost their jobs as a result.

## Italian workers protest plan to raise retirement age

BY HARRY KELBER

Hundreds of thousands of workers stayed away from their jobs Oct. 24 to express their opposition to a government proposal to raise the retirement age from 57 to a possible level of 65 years for men and 60 years for women.

The one-day general strike, called by Italy's three labor federations, disrupted economic life in Rome and other major cities. Many planes were grounded, trains stopped running, teachers skipped classes and museums closed their doors, causing confusion and disappointment to vacationing tourists.

Many Italians now retire with full pension benefits from the government at age 57 or younger if they have paid into the state pension system for 37 years. If they are over 57, they can retire after 35 years of payments to the pension fund.

The workers' anger flared up last month when Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, in a television address, proposed that workers who wanted to retire before age 65 would have to pay into the state pension fund for 40 years instead of 37 years.

French and German unions have also fiercely resisted government efforts to reduce pension benefits or raise the retirement age.

Western European unions have a lot to defend, since their members enjoy from four to six weeks of annual vacations and full health coverage. Women workers receive a extensive maternity benefits and the right to reclaim their jobs up to three years after giv-

ing birth. Employers face legal restrictions before they can lay off workers.

American unions, too, are engaged in a battle to preserve the benefits of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and premium pay for overtime. In virtually every contract negotiations, unions are trying to hold on to job-based pension and health insurance benefits.

Globalization has enabled multinational corporations and compliant governments to put pressure on unions everywhere to grant concessions on the grounds that if they don't, they'll be priced out of the global job market.

In Europe, employers are aggressively striving to reduce wages and benefits to "stay competitive" with the United States. And here in the U.S., manufacturing and telecommunications unions are threatened with the exodus of more jobs abroad unless they yield to employer demands.

Multinational corporations are playing the heartless, profit-ridden game of forcing workers in every country to compete with each other for jobs in a "race to the bottom."

The need for international solidarity has never been greater than now, but despite much talk about it in the United States and Europe, it has not materialized.

The best practical response is for unions in each country to continue their militant resistance to downgrading their wage and benefit standards and keep each other informed of their problems and progress.

## 7 killed in Dominican general strike

At least seven people were killed in a 24-hour general strike Nov. 12, as police and soldiers in the Dominican Republic fired on protesters demanding lower gasoline prices, better state hospitals, and an end to foreign debt payments and IMF agreements. Dozens more were injured, and an unknown number of arrests were made.

The strike was a major success, with most businesses closed. Roads were empty except for demonstrators and army vehicles.

The price of everyday consumer goods has been soaring, and frequent power blackouts can last up to 12 hours. Gasoline prices have increased 150 percent in three years. The government says inflation will hit 35 percent this year.

More than 100 unionists were arrested Nov. 11 in an attempt to break the strike, on subversion and weapons charges. Most of the weapons were tires, which are traditionally set ablaze to form barricades during protests.

## Bangladesh: Garment workers win shorter work day, festival bonus

The BGMEA manufacturers association has reached an agreement with Bangladeshi garment workers unions to institute the 8-hour day (with double pay for overtime), press employers to pay the traditional EID festival bonus (see article last issue), and compensate the family of a worker killed Nov. 3 when police attacked a union protest in a Narayangoang industrial park.

Several workers arrested in that clash have also been released and all charges dropped. The employers will pay medical bills for workers injured in the attack.

On Nov. 14, 19 garment workers organizations jointly celebrated the victory with a meeting and march in central Dhaka. Among those participating was the National Gar-

ments Workers Federation.

"This is a good agreement, if we can ensure that the employers implement all the different sections," says Amirul Haque Amin, General Secretary of the National Garments Workers Federation.

Thousands of textile workers, mostly female, took part in protests seeking the festival bonus and protesting repression against garment unions.

International outrage over the murder helped the garment unions get significant support from solidarity activists across the world. In response, employers have been trying to portray unions as part of an international conspiracy aimed at destroying Bangladesh's garment industry.

## Indian unions say no to sexual harassment

BY PETER S. MOORE

A fired editor at *Amar Asom* daily newspaper in the Indian state of Assam is alleging her boss sexually harassed her for nearly three years and is seeking redress for wrongful dismissal. Sabita Lahkar, who held the post of chief sub-editor, was fired in September.

The Journalists Union of Assam organized a protest meeting at the state's press club in September which condemned the editor's reported behaviour and sent a letter to the Press Council of India, the Editors Guild (India) and the Indian Newspaper Society.

The Network of Media-India urged media organizations to enforce the 1997 Indian Supreme Court decision on sexual harassment in the workplace. The decision on the case of a social worker who was sexually harassed and then gang raped for her role in opposing child marriages, set clear guidelines putting the onus on the employer to provide

safe working conditions.

"It is disturbing, distressing and unacceptable that such offensive and illegal behaviour continues to occur in media organisations in the new millennium. The media, which often report on cases of sexual and other forms of violence against women in society at large, must surely recognise that sexual harassment is tantamount to violence, and that sexual harassment at the workplace is not only a gross violation of women's right to a safe and supportive work environment but also, more fundamentally, of their basic right to livelihood."

The Assam Human Rights Commission asked the media firm concerned to investigate the case and file a report with the commission. To date, it has not received any report. Women's groups, unions and professional media associations continue to pressure the newspaper for action.