

# Industrial Worker

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE  
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

October 2004

#1668 Vol. 101 No. 9

\$1.00 / 75 p

## Million Worker March: A beginning

Tens of thousands of U.S. workers will descend on Washington D.C. October 17 for the Million Worker March, originally called by West Coast longshore unionists and since embraced by scores of union locals across the country.

As the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions squander more than \$100 million of members' dues in a desperate attempt to elect a presidential candidate who has spent his entire political life in the service of the employing class, the Million Workers March is an opportunity for workers to make our voices heard, and to put the bosses and their politicians on notice that no matter who wins the elections, millions of workers are going to be organizing to demand a very different sort of politics.

While Bush and Kerry argue over how best to wage war, we march to demand an end to the occupation in Iraq. While Kerry and Bush squabble over who has the best plan to funnel tax dollars to the corporations, we march to demand an end to their tax breaks, free trade deals, and the privatization of practically the entire planet. They call for bigger hand-outs to the insurance companies; we demand free health care for all. Other demands raised by the MWM organizers include slashing the military budget, repealing Taft-Hartley, amnesty for undocumented workers, ending the poisoning of our environment, and extending democratic rights to the workplace. ([www.millionworkermarch.org](http://www.millionworkermarch.org))

Most importantly, by joining the Million Worker March we declare our refusal to put our trust in politicians, our refusal to accept politics as usual.

As a result the AFL-CIO has urged unions to avoid the march, fearing it might draw energy away from millionaire John Kerry's presidential campaign. Still, several unions have endorsed including the American Postal Workers Union, Farm Labor Organizing Committee, Industrial Workers of the World, National Education Association, and the longshore division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. Other endorsers include the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and several locals of AFSCME, Communications Workers, IBEW, Letter Carriers, Machinists, Musicians, Plumbers, SEIU, Steel Workers, Teamsters, Transportation Workers, United Electrical Workers and UAW.

IWW branches are organizing a Wobbly contingent, to raise the banner of direct action and industrial solidarity. Every worker who can make it should be in Washington, adding their voice and their presence to the throngs who refuse to stand idly by as working people the whole world over are ground underfoot in this one-sided class war.

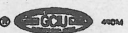
But we should be clear that this is only a beginning. If we are to win real democracy (on the job or elsewhere), protect our planet, end the capitalist war of each against all, and build a decent society, we will need to organize – to build our power on the job, and decide that henceforth we will use that power in our own interests.

The bosses are able to wage war in Iraq because we build the armaments, load the ships and planes, and provide the cannon fodder. They lock our undocumented fellow workers in prison camps built by our labor, and patrolled by workers desperate to get by. They rely on our labor as teachers and media workers to indoctrinate our youth and to suppress and distort the news of workers' struggles.

All this, and more, will change, but it will change only when we organize and use our power as workers to bring to birth the new world that lives in our hearts.

IWW General Assembly **3** Victory in Cambodia **4** Farewell, Fellow Workers **4**  
Mr. Block **6** Palestine **9** Vincent St. John **10** Iraqi Workers Seek Rights **12**

Industrial Worker  
PO Box 13476  
Philadelphia, PA 19101

ISSN 0019-8870   
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Periodicals Postage  
PAID  
Philadelphia, PA  
and additional  
mailing offices

## Wobs strike 'radical' boss

Café workers find  
'green' boss another  
lousy exploiter **3**

## IWW reviews a year of progress

Edmonton meeting  
discusses organizing,  
union administration **3**

## Health Care is a human right

Buying and selling  
our health, bosses  
profit off misery **6-7**

## Stockton truckers join IWW, win 2-day strike

More than 200 Stockton owner-operator truckers working out of the rail yards in California's Central Valley have joined the IWW since July and won several victories.

In the past few weeks the union has successfully worked to reverse two IWW members' life-time banishments from the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe rail yard and negotiated a favorable settlement of a strike at the 11-driver Patriot trucking company.

The truckers are now preparing to take on the issue of the wait times they are forced to endure without pay, which can run up to two hours for an increasing number of drivers, and also fighting against short paychecks. "The truckers are fighting every single day to get their money," said one trucker.

Some 250 truckers in Stockton work for the rail yards and are considered independent contractors who lease the trucks they own to the companies they work for. Nearly 85 percent are Sikh Indians from the Punjab region of India. The work force also includes a number of Latino and some Filipino, Cambodian, Middle Eastern, black and white drivers.

In early May a strike broke out among West Coast truckers over the increasingly high fuel prices that drivers are forced to pay out their own pockets. The Stockton truckers claim to have been the first group to strike. "Fuel was the main problem then. The companies were getting a fuel surcharge, but they weren't passing this along to the drivers," said

*continued on page 10*

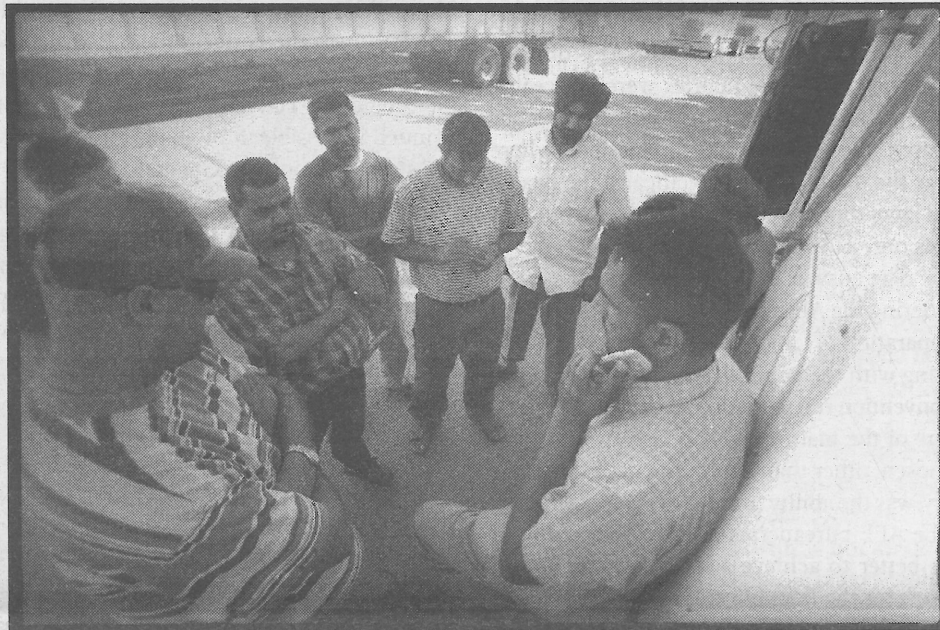


PHOTO: CHARISSE DOMINGO, SILICON VALLEY DEBUG

Truckers meet outside the yard, discussing their boss's demand for longer wait times.

## Oregon dairy farm workers fight for rights

BY JOHN E. PECK

Dozens of farm workers and their supporters formed a human billboard along Highway 395 in Oregon August 18 to protest the firing of union activist Daniel Sepulveda. Sepulveda was sacked for "insubordination" after a supervisor ran over his foot with a truck, sending him to the hospital.

Thanks to a backroom deal hatched between the American Federation of Labor, the Farm Bureau, southern white segregationists, and new deal Democrats, farm workers and domestic servants were specifically excluded from the right to engage in activities of mutual aid and collective bargaining under the 1935 National Labor Relations Act.

Starting in WWII and through the mid-1960s, the infamous "Bracero" program facilitated the importation of close to 4 million farm workers from Mexico as a cheap labor option for agribusiness. This easily exploited, throwaway labor force persists today under the federal H2-A Guest Worker program.

Today, U.S. farm workers remain among the most abused in the world, with no federal right to organize or earn overtime pay, and no protection against child exploitation, workplace injury and toxic exposure.

Thanks to the historic struggle of the United Farm Workers, California was forced to pass its own Agriculture Labor Relations Act in 1975. Similar farm worker organizing drives led by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste are winning victories in Florida, North Carolina and Oregon.

Many of these struggles are documented

in an Oxfam report titled *Like Machines in the Field – Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture* (available online at [www.maketrade.com](http://www.maketrade.com)). Just like the UFW's earlier grape boycott, these grassroots efforts are successfully bridging the economic and cultural divide that separates rural workers from urban consumers through popular education, corporate campaigns targeting the likes of Taco Bell and Mt. Olive, as well as pro-fair trade, anti-sweatshop, global justice activism.

In the rolling desert-like grasslands along the Columbia River in northeastern Oregon another epic labor battle is underway against one of the largest factory dairy farms in the Pacific Northwest. Threemile Canyon near Boardman, OR, employs 140 mostly Latino immigrants to manage its herd of 18,000 Holstein and Jersey cows (30,000 head including calves), as well as raise potatoes, corn, wheat and alfalfa. Threemile's daily output of 1.3 million pounds of milk finds its way to retail chains such as Safeway, as well as processors like Tillamook County Creamery Association, the famous co-op cheese maker.

This remote corner is home to half-mile-long barns, high-tech carousels milking 500 cows at once, and workers facing a grueling 60-hour work week in conditions reminiscent of a 19th century Dickens novel.

The 225 square miles on which Threemile Canyon sits was originally owned by aerospace giant, Boeing Corp. In early 2000, potato giant R.D. Offut bought out Boeing and launched a \$185 million joint venture with Bos Family Oregon Farms, a mega-dairy outfit based in Bakersfield, Calif. Threemile's

*continued on page 8*



## Calendula Café strike

BY DANNI CORRIDEAN

The Portland IWW is supporting four servers at Calendula Café, a small vegan eatery in Southeast Portland, who went on strike against their "radical" owner July 28.

When the servers notified the owner they were withholding their labor they were fired. Many of these workers had worked at Calendula since its inception, and had spent close to a year building what they hoped would be a new experience for all of them – something that lived up to its mission of being a socially responsible workplace.

Prior to the strike, these workers had repeatedly attempted to engage the owner in dialogue around what they considered to be a disrespectful and at times hostile work environment. Since opening, Calendula repeatedly fell back on promises made to these workers upon hiring, and they had already accepted one round of wage cuts. When Calendula notified the servers that their wages would be cut a second time, the workers protested. After months of hostility, threatening responses and even suspension of workers for bringing grievances individually, workers decided they could take no more.

The owner, Craig Rosebraugh, has become well known within the Pacific Northwest for the past five years or so for his involvement within the general activist milieu. About the same time the Portland police broke his arm during a rally to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, Rosebraugh was press spokesman for the ALF-ELF. His house was continually raided and surveilled by the FBI. He was eventually subpoenaed – first to a grand jury in Portland, and later to testify before Congress regarding 'ecoterrorism.'

Rosebraugh took a principled stand in the face of these attacks from the state, refusing to testify before the grand jury, even in the face of threatened imprisonment. His response to his workers' demand for greater control of their own working lives only further delineates the way in which class interests often overwhelm moral stances.

After being fired for striking, these workers came to the IWW looking for support. Although the IWW did not organize the strike, the union agreed to assist the workers in negotiations with the restaurant.

Three days after being fired, a delegation of striking workers and union negotiators came to the restaurant to set up a meeting with the owner. Rosebraugh's response was to notify them that he was not interested in hearing the workers' demands, and that if they did not leave he would call the police. Since then, Rosebraugh has refused to communicate with the strikers or the union other than through his lawyer and has refused to meet to discuss what could be done to resolve the dispute.

In close to \$3,000 worth of advertisements taken in local weeklies, the owner has cried financial hardship while crafting far-fetched tales of physical harassment and intimidation by the IWW, which he claims is attempting to close Portland's "Most Progressive Business." In the days after the advertisement, the phones at the hall in Portland rang repeatedly with new workers interested in joining.

At this time, the struggle is still unresolved. The IWW continues to organize around the strike. In his paid advertisements, Rosebraugh states, "Calendula was also started in part to fund certain social change venues of which I am a part."

The boss's expensive response has broadcast a need for clarify the distinction the IWW holds among groups committed to social change. Any vision of a new world must come from those truly disenfranchised within this system – the workers themselves – and not from fearless leaders or bosses. Any change that does not embrace the leadership of the workers themselves can at best only be a perverted twist on the same exploitive system that robs our lives, pollutes our planet, and fuels misery and war.

# Organizing highlights IWW Assembly

Delegates from across North America were in Edmonton, Canada, over Labor Day weekend for the IWW's annual General Assembly. Forty-five delegates registered for an Assembly somewhat smaller than has been typical in recent years. The Assembly opened with a Friday evening panel discussion on organizing strategies, in which delegates heard from Wobblies engaged in ongoing campaigns among courier, intermodal trucking, restaurant and retail workers.

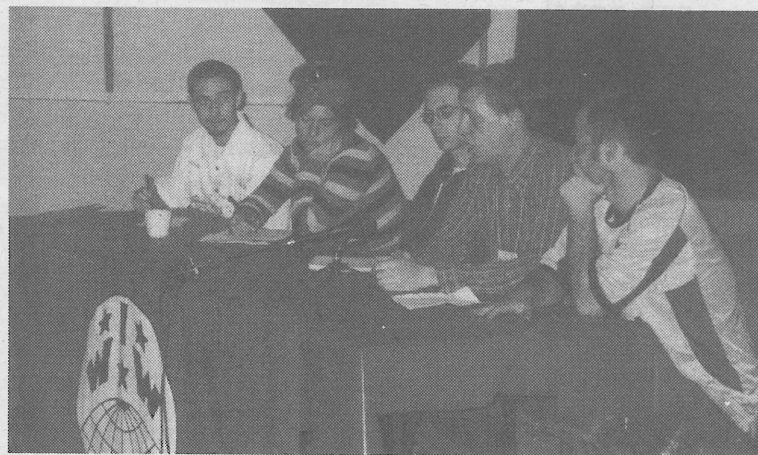
Andrew Rothman spoke on a campaign on Philadelphia's South Street retail district, which aims less to win a majority at particular workplaces than to build a strong base of union support across the entire district that can support workers' struggles. Over the last nine months, the IWW's South Street Workers Union has helped workers win several grievances, and developed contacts in more than a dozen shops.

Other reports on courier and retail workers drives noted the importance of direct action strategies that enable workers to see the benefits of unionism for themselves in their daily work lives, and discussed the reasons workers in these campaigns chose the IWW over more traditional unions.

Executive Board member Adam Welch brought the evening to a close with his account of organizing by intermodal truck drivers in Stockton, California; more than 150 of whom recently joined the IWW as part of an upsurge of workers' struggles among truckers up and down the West Coast which the union has been supporting.

Saturday night's entertainment featured performances by local musicians Robert Eyford, Marvin Matura, Bill Carley, Mike Amirault, Winnipeg's 1919 Revolutionary Ensemble (Pat McGuire, Garth Hardy and Ethan Osland), and headliner Maria Dunne, who sang several songs from her new CD featuring songs of workers' lives and struggle.

General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss reported that last year the IWW ran its first



A Friday evening panel discussion opened the 2004 Assembly with reports on four current IWW organizing drives practicing direct action unionism in which we build and exercise our power as workers on the job.

operating deficit since she took office, as a result of increased payroll expenses needed to meet demands for more rapid processing of delegate reports and other administrative tasks, as well as a dramatic expansion in literature inventory. The union presently relies too heavily on literature sales to cover its expenses, Buss noted, and while she will be fund-raising to support expenses associated with observances of our centenary next year, we need to put the union's finances on a more self-sufficient footing.

She also pointed to exciting new organizing initiatives across the union which show much more strategic thinking, and efforts to break out of the NLRB framework which has hampered organizing by the IWW and other unions for decades. The Organizer Training Committee is developing new curricula to support job branches and direct action approaches to resolving grievances.

Although IWW membership held steady last year (and added more than 150 members in the weeks between the end of the fiscal year and the Assembly, as a result of a success in organizing among truck drivers), General Executive Board chair Heather Hall reported, the difficult economy meant that total dues income fell slightly.

There have been a number of complaints that the IWW system of monthly dues is too

difficult to administer, and does not yield sufficient income to support union activities. The Board plans to lead a discussion of alternatives including a quarterly dues system or pegging dues more directly to income. The Board has also been working at codifying IWW procedures, in order to provide better guidance to new officers and make the union's practices more transparent.

Following FW Hall's report, the five other Board members present made brief comments before fielding questions. Board members pointed to increased efforts to coordinate organizing across the entire union, and said we were seeing more emphasis on solidarity unionism because "that's what's working," as GEB member Jim Crutchfield put it. While Board members agreed that Wobblies are setting (and meeting) higher expectations for ourselves than we have in many years, we still need many more members to step forward.

Some delegates called for more organizer training in Canada, and expanding the resources available to support local organizing initiatives across the union.

Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the IWW's founding, and Wayne State University archivist Bill Lefevre made a special report on the IWW archives (which have been at Wayne State since 1965) and plans

*continued on page 5*

### 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.



# Our sister has fallen...

## Sarah Bishop (1977-2004)

FW Sarah Bishop passed away Thursday, August 26. After a four-day, 42-mile hike around Mt. Hood, Sarah was caught in a flash flood and drowned in the Sandy River while crossing. A temporary bridge was washed out and her truck was on the other side of the swift moving river. Sarah was a dedicated IWW member and organizer.

Sarah worked at Harry's Mother, a homeless youth center in Portland, Oregon, for over four years. Unhappy with inadequate funding for basic social services and frustrated with the working conditions, she started talking with her co-workers. They contacted the Portland IWW and through many months successfully organized one of Portland's first IWW union shops in the Spring of 2000.

Sarah sat on the contract negotiation team and worked tirelessly to ensure all her co-workers' concerns and opinions were represented during the process. The workers saw the connection between more worker representation and the quality of care for the homeless youth. Sarah became an IWW delegate and shop steward because she wanted to take a leadership role in the union and she knew it needed to be done.

When it came time to renegotiate their contract, Sarah was ready and willing to help even though she was preparing to take another position elsewhere. When the Portland Women's Crisis Line workers began organizing, Sarah again stepped up to help. She met with workers and relayed her experiences with the IWW, and drafted a letter to the PWCL Board of Directors supporting their unionizing efforts.

Ironically, Sarah thought she was never doing enough. There was no ego involved in her organizing work. She remained motivated by her desire for quality and adequately funded services to our most vulnerable populations in society. True to her nature, her dedication to seeing things through to the end in a responsible, sustainable fashion, Sarah helped recruit and train another IWW co-worker to be the new delegate and shop steward in preparation for leaving Harry's Mother.

On August 30th, the Portland IWW hosted a memorial service for Sarah at the Red and Black Café. The café, a worker-run collective that Sarah was instrumental in starting, was packed with Wobblies, friends and Sarah's family. A table covered with loaves of bread and roses was in the entrance way. Stories of her work, energy, dedication and enthusiasm remind us that Sarah's fight is our fight, and our work must continue. Her family held a memorial service on Labor Day to honor Sarah's dedication to labor struggles. Representatives from the many organizing and community projects she was involved in, created, ran or changed shared what she brought to each of them.

She was an outspoken advocate for children and workers' rights, and worked as a youth counselor for many years at Camp Adams. She was passionate about the environment and the outdoors, and was an experienced backpacker. She always preferred to sleep under the stars.

Sarah balanced her commitment to the environment, politics and people by hosting potlucks at the home she shared in North East Portland with both strangers and close friends. Her doors were always open. She made time to share a bowl of popcorn, a bite of chocolate, or a mug of hot tea. She chose Portland and the Northwest as her home because both the city and the wilderness fed her soul. While striving to make everywhere she lived, worked and visited a better place, she enriched many lives. She left her mark when appropriate, and nothing but footprints in nature.

Sarah Bishop will be missed immensely by everyone who had the opportunity to work with her. She had an infectious laugh and smile. She reminded us to take care of ourselves and to bring fun into the important work that needed to be done. The week before she left on her hike, Janus workers were finalizing their new contract. In her last email to FW Steve Larson, Sarah wrote "You are all wonderful. Let's sign this damn contract and get back to what we're good at: looking out for one another and enjoying our work."



## Remembering a life well lived

BY HOLLIE HEFFERMAN

I worked with Sarah closely for the past year or so, but I knew her for almost three years. I first met her when I was a baby Wob with ACORN. Two years ago I began working at Janus Youth Programs. When our contract renegotiations came up last summer, Sarah and I began working together to rally our shops and get people involved.

We spent several meetings in one another's lone company, or with two or three other workers. Sarah's leadership qualities have always been apparent, and we would co-chair bargaining sessions, write speeches, type up articles and create arguments for one another. Her eloquence at the table balanced well with my abrasiveness, and we shared many opinions on unionization, the IWW, and our shops' participation.

If I was really frustrated with how things were going and started bitching, Sarah would chime in, but in such a rational and calm manner that it most likely prevented me from having an aneurysm on several occasions. I'm going to miss that. I honestly couldn't have asked for a more compatible, easy-going, yet hardcore comrade.

Last Friday, I woke up to an "urgent message" on my friend's cell phone and learned

of Sarah's death. ... It just doesn't seem fair that someone with such ambition to do good things, who was so genuine and logically persistent in her work to accomplish them, would only spend such a short time with us.

But death is also a chance of celebration and recognition. It's an opportunity to be thankful for the people you know, past and present, and it teaches you to live in that moment and not take each other for granted. It was a pleasure and an honor to work with Sarah's presence, and I'm going to miss her input and that ridiculous laugh immensely.

## Herbert Hill

Herbert Hill, who fought discrimination in unions as the NAACP's labor director in the 1950s and 1960s, died last month in Madison, Wisconsin. In addition to organizing pickets, lawsuits and other efforts to desegregate the business unions, Hill wrote several pioneering books including *Black Labor and the American Legal System* and *Race in America: The Struggle for Equality*, which are available from the IWW Literature Dept.

## New York police arrest two at IWW Starbucks protest

New York City police arrested two Starbucks workers August 28 during a rally by more than 100 IWW supporters confronting Starbucks' union-busting. The two were arrested after a plainclothes NYPD detective spoke with the store manager. IWW organizer Daniel Gross faces charges of resisting arrest, even though he has videotaped evidence that he complied with all police orders.

As demonstrators gathered on the sidewalk in front of and beside the Starbucks outlet at 36th and Madison, where workers have been attempting to secure union recognition, police called for backup in the form of riot police transported by van. Protestors then marched to Starbucks regional headquarters for a brief rally, before returning to the 36th and Madison store where police arrested Gross as he attempted to walk across the street away from the rally, on the crosswalk and at the "walk" signal. The second arrest followed shortly (charges are not being pressed), and police threatened to arrest the entire crowd if the picketing did not come to an end.

## How to win an online campaign

BY ERIC LEE

A couple of days ago, I got some great news. Raffles Hotel workers in Cambodia, who have been involved in a bitter dispute with their employers, had won a huge victory. Their union now recognized, and with the employer committed to an end to illegal union-busting, this was a clear victory.

An online campaign conducted on the websites of LabourStart and International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), resulted in over 3,000 messages being sent to the employer in support of the Cambodian Tourism and Service Workers Federation.

"Unions around the world showed their solidarity with the CTSWF by supporting the IUF's international campaign in many ways," wrote the IUF in a statement released in mid-September.

"IUF members demonstrated at Raffles properties around the world. Unions and national centers requested their embassies and diplomatic missions in Cambodia to avoid Raffles as a venue for official events. Unions gave financial, moral and political support to the CTSWF. Our sister organization, the International Transport Workers' Federation, informed ITF flight crews of the conflict and communicated their unions' concerns to Raffles headquarters in Singapore. Thousands of IUF members and supporters of labour rights sent protest messages to Raffles."

The online campaign was just one part of a much broader effort, but an important part. Clear evidence of this was the reaction of the Raffles management to the campaign.



They begin sending out email messages to some of those who sent off protests to them. In early May, one Raffles employee sent off a message to an Australian email protestor saying, "It amazes me that a fellow Australian would send out a chain email without even checking the facts ... The strike was neither peaceful or legal and if u want to check this give me a call. I had to evacuate my wife and 2 yr old from the country as the strikers would not allow the doctor in to see my very sick baby!!!! do u call that peaceful???? You should be ashamed of yourself."

Later messages from the hotel to those who sent off messages were somewhat less personal, were much longer, and had been proofread. These began, "Regrettably, some of the allegations circulated by the International Union Federation [sic] are not accurate, and we would like to provide you with the facts surrounding the current dispute..." This was followed by a half dozen "allegations" and rebuttals by the hotel management.

When managers start sending out long emails to protestors, it sends out a loud and clear message that our campaigns are having an effect. Our email messages are being received, counted and read.

And this for me raises the whole question of why some email campaigns work so well.

On the face of it, why should a hotel manager in Phnom Penh care about a bunch of emails from union members in Australia

or the USA? The likelihood of those individuals being customers of that particular hotel is nil. A cynical hotel manager might even believe that those protests are coming from the "usual suspects" – left-wing activists who will sign any petition put before them. And yet they react, and respond to emails, and in the end, relent and settle with the union.

The victory at the Raffles hotel chain in Cambodia came only eight weeks after a similar campaign run by LabourStart at the request of the Service and Food Workers Union in New Zealand secured the rehiring of a sacked union delegate, Andrew Bolesworth, an employee of the Dunedin casino.

It appears that certain employers are more vulnerable to this kind of pressure than others. And certain types of campaigns work better than others. After several years of experience with online campaigning, here's a tentative list of seven ways unions can win online campaigns.

1. Image matters. Companies with a high public profile – like hotels, or manufacturers of consumer products – are particularly sensitive to their image and brand. They do not want to be seen as brutal violators of human rights. Think Nike, which bends over backwards to at least create the impression that it doing good in the world.

2. Be reasonable. Demands have to be achievable. Asking Dunedin casino to rehire one worker, or Raffles Hotel to recognize its union, are not unreasonable demands. Companies can easily meet these demands without having to spend millions.

3. Involve unions. The best campaigns are the ones run with the full support both of the local union (such as the SFWU and CTSWF), sister unions in the same sector in different countries, as well as the global union

federation – which in these cases was the IUF and Union Network International.

4. Issues matter. The subjects raised (non-recognition of a union, the sacking of a union activist) have to be ones which would win broad support among union members, if not the general public. Campaigns which focus on things like opposing privatization or pay disputes will not get the same level of support. Workers' rights are human rights, and this will always make a campaign more successful in building wide support.

5. Numbers count. The Raffles campaign ran for more than four months and in terms of the number of email messages sent out was one of the largest online campaigns LabourStart ever waged. Campaigns that we have waged that got half that number of responses did not produce the desired result.

6. Reminders help. The Raffles campaign featured a constant stream of updates on a number of websites, including the regional website of the IUF (Asian Foodworker). A search on LabourStart would reveal dozens of articles about the struggle, with regular updates about court decisions, solidarity actions in other countries, and so on. Campaigns that are launched but feature no updates at all tend to languish and die.

7. Unplug yourself. The most successful online campaigns feature strong offline elements as well, including picket lines and other protests. They are not exclusively online.

There are probably many more lessons to be learned, but these are the ones that leap to mind. When planning other online campaigns, it's important to look back on the success of the Raffles and Dunedin casino efforts – both for inspiration and for clues on how we can win.

## IWW meets in Edmonton to map plans for coming year...

continued from page 3

to mark the centenary with an exhibit that will open in Detroit in October 2005 and then travel to Chicago and other cities. He also encouraged local branches to contribute materials to the archive.

A wide array of centenary activities are in the works, including a conference in Chicago marking the anniversary of the founding convention, a conference on radical economics to be held in Kansas City next October, and labor history conferences in Detroit and Vancouver with special focuses on the IWW. The IWW will also publish a new edition of the *Little Red Songbook* and of its official history, *The IWW: Its First 100 Years*.

A brief discussion of the sweatfree baseball campaign which Wobblies have been conducting in Pittsburgh and Upstate New York, with some activities in Arizona and Milwaukee, focussed on the need to build alliances with the workers who manufacture baseball paraphernalia, supporting them in their efforts to improve working conditions rather than succumbing to the narrow protectionism that characterizes too much of the labor movement's efforts in this area.

Delegates also observed a moment of silence for FW Sarah Bishop, a key activist in Portland's Public Service Workers Industrial Union 650 branch who was recently killed in a flash flood, and voted to send a message of condolence to a memorial meeting taking place in Portland that weekend.

### Constitutional amendments

Delegates sent two proposals to referendum: a constitutional amendment clarifying the General Executive Board's authority to remove members who fail to perform their duties, and a proposal to transform the union's Conflict Mediation Committee from a union-wide elected body to a panel of mediators who could be called upon as needed.

A set of proposals to overhaul the IWW's industrial union structure from the Committee on Industrial Classification received extensive debate, and were ultimately returned to committee in the hope that discussions on their ramifications can be organized throughout the union. (The full report can be found at [www.iww.org/cic/proposals](http://www.iww.org/cic/proposals))

Although Industrial Union Branches operate in some cities, there are presently no larger IU structures. But recent organizing among distribution, public service, and trucking workers is creating the possibility of re-establishing functioning industrial union administrations dormant since the 1940s.

Delegates agreed with the committee's finding that the union's present IU classifications no longer reflect current realities – in particular the explosion of service industries.

But there was concern that the proposal needed more education and discussion.

Several delegates raised concerns over a proposal to establish a new IWW affiliate grouping casual workers and the long-term unemployed. Most believed casual workers are increasingly central to the modern capitalist organization of work, and need to be organized as such. Creating an unemployed workers' organization within the IWW also raised some questions – although the IWW has helped to organize such bodies in the past,



they were never incorporated into the IWW as industrial unions in their own right.

Other issues included how to build industrial structures that can function across international boundaries, and how to approach the retail sector. The committee concluded that supermarket workers should be organized with the Foodstuffs Workers IU in order to increase their industrial power, while some argued that such stores offer a wide range of products including prepared foods, gasoline, clothing, small appliances, books, and even cafés and pharmacies. Meanwhile, many department and discount stores now offer grocery departments, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between a grocery store and a general distribution outlet.

This poses the question of whether such workers are best organized as foodstuffs or distribution workers. Similar difficulties are posed as cafés add Internet services, at least one bank sells coffee in its branches, and automakers operate banking and other auxiliary operations which may contribute more profit than their 'core' businesses.

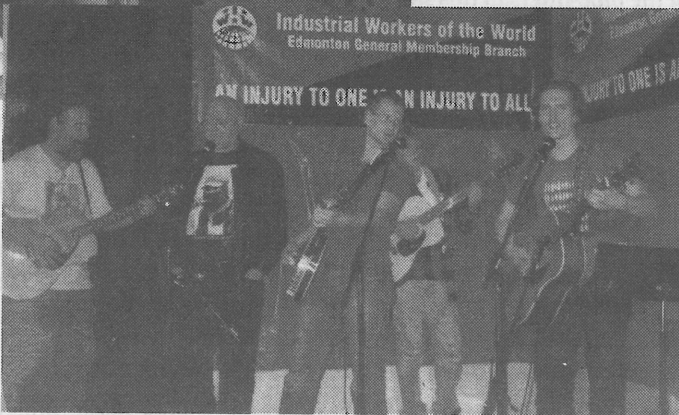
Also receiving extensive discussion were allegations of misconduct levelled against General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss by a former member of the General Executive Board in a letter of resignation from the Board.

At the GEB's request, the Assembly elected a charges committee to investigate the issue.

The committee conducted interviews and reviewed union financial records and other documents. It found that FW Buss had acted in good faith even though making some "regrettable" decisions, and stressed that the IWW administration was on a much sounder footing than when FW Buss first took office.

Accordingly, it recommended that the charges be dismissed. The Assembly endorsed the committee's report.

Left: Delegates listen as Archivist Bill LeFevre reports on plans to mark the IWW's 100th anniversary. Below: Several musicians took the stage for a lively sing-along set of Wobbly classics to close Saturday's concert.



### Argentina Autonomista tour

Neka Jara, of the unemployed workers (piqueteras) of MTD Solano, and Claudia Acuna of La Vaca will be touring the Eastern U.S. and Canada Oct. 26 - Nov. 21 with Graciela Monteagudo, coordinator of the Argentina Autonomista Project. A schedule is at [www.autonomista.org/2004falltour.htm](http://www.autonomista.org/2004falltour.htm). Some open slots remain, but additional venues need to be confirmed ASAP.

Neka Jara is a co-founder of the MTD Solano (<http://www.solano.mtd.org.ar>), an unemployed workers organization that has created through a direct democratic process an amazing array of microenterprises, producing goods ranging from sandals to fish.

Claudia is an independent journalist and co-founder of La Vaca, a web-based counter-information agency. The tour also includes a slide show and a full-length puppet show. It will conclude at the notorious School Of the Americas (<http://soaw.org>), Nov. 19-21. SOA graduates murdered two piqueteros in northern Argentina.

### IWW subway driver wins

New York City transit officials will now allow turbans, khimars [Muslim women's scarves] and Rastafarian head coverings as long as they are of the same color and fabric as the official uniform. IWW member Harry Harrington had been threatened with removal from passenger service for refusing to remove the turban he has worn as a Sikh for the 23 years he has worked for the MTA.

The Sept. 2 *Staten Island Advance* reports that the MTA will provide fabric for the turbans and khimars, and speculates that the agency's sudden interest in rigidly enforcing its uniform code was inspired by ethnic and religious bigotry. Although FW Harrington successfully resisted the crackdown, three Muslim women bus drivers were demoted from passenger service last year when they refused to remove their khimars. It appears

### Nominees for 2005

As always, the Assembly closed with nominations for officers to serve for 2005. The following list includes several who have not yet indicated whether they will accept nomination.

*General Secretary-Treasurer:* Alexis Buss (Philadelphia), Mark Damron (Cincinnati).

*General Executive Board:* Pat Brenner (Chicago), Jim Crutchfield (New York), Mark Damron (Cincinnati), Joshua Freeze (Austin), Ryan Gaughan (Portland), Heather Hall (Winnipeg), Tom Kappas (Cincinnati), Zach Lane (Colorado), Adam Lincoln (Sydney, Australia), Tristan Masat (Illinois), Morgan Miller (Portland), Samara Paysse (Santa Barbara), Bryan Roberts (Edmonton), Aaron Rothenberger (Phoenix), Rochelle Semel (Upstate New York), Richard Seymore (Portland), David Strano (Lawrence), Wesley Teal (Lawrence), Ian Wallace (Portland), Adam Welch (San Jose), Evan Wolfson (Pittsburgh).

*IW Editor:* Jon Bekken (Philadelphia).

*General Defense Committee Secretary-Treasurer:* Pat McGuire (Winnipeg), Braden Cannon (Ottawa), Harry Siitonen (Berkeley).

*International Solidarity Commission:* Jon Bekken (Philadelphia), Eric Chester (Western Massachusetts), Anne Eldred (Portland), Greg Georgio (Upstate New York), Tim Hill (Spokane), Meir Israelowitz (Toronto), Jim Maskew (Pittsburgh), Peter Moore (Ottawa), Eugene Plawiuk (Edmonton), Jenny Peshut (Milwaukee), Aaron Rothenberger (Phoenix), Matt White (New Jersey).

Austin, Chicago, Lawrence, Philadelphia and San Francisco were nominated as sites for the IWW's 2005 General Assembly.

that they will now be reinstated.

### Australian unionist jailed

Former Australian Manufacturing Workers Union Victorian secretary Craig Johnston has been sentenced to nine months imprisonment for taking part in brief occupations of the premises of Skilled Engineering and Johnson Tiles three years ago during a protest over job cuts.

No one was injured in the occupations. Yet you will be hard-pressed to find a single employer in jail for any of the thousands of workplace deaths and injuries inflicted upon Australian workers every year.

### Mexicans protest "free trade"

Tens of thousands of union members and small farmers marched August 31 to protest 20 years of unfair free-market policies. The demonstration, which saw farmers throw pig heads, manure and other animal parts at government offices, came on the eve of President Vicente Fox's state of the union address.

"We Mexicans have suffered from the great majority of the economic 'reforms' of the last 20 years," read leaflets passed out by marchers angry about issues ranging from pending free trade deals to a pension reform scheme that is costing workers dearly.

Since Fox took office Dec. 1, 2000, the stock market has risen by 80 percent. But unemployment is also up, and workers' living standards continue to suffer under the government's free market policies.

### 2nd Borders contract signed

Workers at the Uptown Minneapolis Borders Books gave reached a tentative agreement which includes a grievance procedure and seniority language, but few other gains. The 20 workers have been in negotiations for nearly two years. Workers at Borders' flagship store in Ann Arbor, Mich., ratified a contract in January after a seven-week strike.

## Unions oppose U.S. war and occupation

BY HARRY KELBER

The growing antiwar movement within the AFL-CIO took another leap forward recently when three major unions voted to oppose the U.S. war in Iraq and call for an end to the American occupation. They are Communications Workers of America (650,000 members), American Postal Workers Union (270,000), and Mail Handlers of the Laborers' International Union (50,000).

They join the Service Employees International Union (1.6 million), American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (1.2 million) and the International Longshore and Warehouse Workers (60,000), who have also denounced President Bush for his pre-emptive invasion of Iraq and declared they want the troops brought home, now.

The CWA resolution won the near-unanimous approval of the 1,400 convention delegates Aug. 31. "CWA demands that the president abandon his failed policy (of preventive war) ... and support our troops and their families by bringing our troops home safely now, by providing adequate veterans' benefits and promoting domestic policies that prioritize the needs of working people who make up

the bulk of the military."

Delegates at the APWU convention Aug. 23-27 sharply criticized the invasion of Iraq, approving a resolution calling for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

At the National Postal Mail Handlers convention, held Aug. 22-29 in Boston, an antiwar resolution was approved by the delegates despite its rejection by the Resolutions Committee. More than 40% of the delegates were veterans, due in large part to the hiring preferences given to veterans and disabled soldiers by the U.S. Postal Service.

The resolution reads: "While the National Postal Mail Handlers Union offers its full support for the American troops currently serving in Iraq, the NPMHU also calls for a rapid end to the war and occupation of Iraq. The war and occupation were undertaken based on false claims of the anti-worker Bush administration and have resulted in the death of over 900 American troops and over 10,000 Iraqi civilians. The war and occupation have caused U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars which could be redirected to pay for badly needed social needs, such as jobs, education, housing, and health."

# Health care should be a right, not a privilege

BY ARTHUR J. MILLER

Never mind the rights and laws of nations, the first fundamental right of all is survival: the right to exist. Food to feed ourselves, water to drink, shelter from the elements, to dwell upon the face of the earth and health care. These are not privileges of consumption, as the capitalists would have it, but rather the rights of survival.

In today's world the capitalists seek to consolidate the rights of survival under the control of multinational corporations. Food is controlled by the corporate agriculture cartels, water is becoming privatized, fewer and fewer people own their own homes as larger landlords rent out tenements to the people, almost all land upon the face of the earth is owned, mostly by the rich and governments, and health care has become a capitalist commodity that many are forced to do without.

This is the reality of the new world order. The first right under capitalist ownership is the right of the owner to decide how that which is owned is used or not used.

If the multinational corporations get control of food production, that means they not only control who gets food, but also who does not. If the multinational corporations get control of drinking water they control who gets water and who does not. If the large landlords control housing then they control who has housing. If land is owned mostly by the rich and governments, then they control what land we all can walk upon and what land we can not walk upon – think about that one, there is no right, because of capitalist ownership, for the people to dwell upon the face of Mother Earth! And if the large corporations control health care, then they control who gets health care and who does not.

Under this condition, we do not have the right of existence, rather our only right is to work so that a few profit off our existence.

Henry is a pipefitter in the shipyard where I work. He had been feeling rather ill for a while but had to put off seeing a doctor. When he finally was able to see a doctor he was told that he had cancer and that his odds of beating it would have been better if he had

come in sooner.

There was a reason why Henry waited; he had to wait until he had medical coverage. Even though in our last contract the amount we pay and the company pays for medical coverage went up, we were told that was not enough to pay for full-time coverage. Now the few who are able to work full time at the shipyard only have coverage every other month. Those of us who do not work all the time are only covered every once in a while. So Henry had to wait until a month where he had coverage.

Henry has three kids and is a good pipefitter who has worked many years at this shipyard. Our medical coverage is based upon how many hours we are able to work. First you have to work 40 hours a week for six months in order to be enrolled. Then, if you work 40 hours a week continuously, you are covered every other month (you'd have to work another 30 - 40 hours a week of overtime to 'earn' continuous benefits). Only three of the pipe-fitters in this shipyard work most of the time and get coverage every other month. Five other pipefitters are enrolled but only work, at best, eight months out of the year and so are covered only every once in a while. This arrangement also forces us to work all the overtime that we can get to increase the hours for our coverage.

At times there are up to 30 pipefitters working in the shipyard, but unless they can work 40 hour weeks for six months without a break they don't go on the seniority list and get enrolled in the medical coverage. You can work for five months, get laid off, and come back in a month and you have to start over again.

From the first hour you work to the last hour you work, you and the company are paying into the medical fund. Somebody down the line is making good money and is not providing anything for it. I had medical problems including a bleeding ulcer and heart problems that I could not get taken care of. The state of Washington cut back on its program for health care for the "working poor," so there was not a medical program I could

get into. All I could do when my health got bad enough was to go to the emergency room, which I did two times when I almost died.

At the hospital they stabilize your condition, and then kick you out the door. They set up an appointment at a clinic, but the clinic would not see me unless I could prove I could pay them up front or had medical coverage. I was able to see a socially conscious doctor once 'under the table,' in other words without official record at the clinic. Through him I was able to get some medicine, but he told me that I had to get regular medical care because I had some serious problems.

It took me two years to get the six months of continuous hours to get on the seniority list and get enrolled. You are not covered after six months; rather you then need to build up the hours to get coverage. Last year the shipyard had a few ships in and then had a six-month ferryboat overhaul. So there I was working in hot tanks, fitting large pipe, pulling large valves and trying not to strain my heart. I made my six months and got enrolled, but before I was covered I had a heart attack. The foreman was not a bad fellow – he let me take a two-week emergency leave of absence, and some friends took me away from my movement work for a month.

Since I had made the seniority list I did not lose my hours when I went back to work and as soon as I had the hours in for coverage I was able to see a doctor. I told him that we had a month to get done what had to be done. Winter was coming on and the ferryboat job was done and we don't get much work in the winter, so I asked the doctor to make sure that I had the prescriptions for medicine that would last until next spring when I would have coverage again and could come in and see him. Winter is hard enough as is, but our great Democratic governor made a deal with Boeing to open up a new plant with a thousand new jobs. That deal cut unemployment benefits for thousands of workers. And thus I had even less money to live on, and no extra money to pay a doctor.

One of the problems we have with the way our medical coverage works now is that

it is in the hands of bureaucrats who must send in the paperwork in time. Sometimes, although on paper we are covered for a month, the paper does not get through all the hands that it needs to so when we go to a doctor we get billed for it and it takes a few months to fix.

The U.S. likes to brag that it is number one, much like some high school football team. The greatest country in the world! It is true that the U.S. has the most powerful military killing machine in the world. The U.S. has the most billionaires and, among the so-called democratic industrialized nations, the U.S. is number one in income inequality, children living in poverty, infant mortality, death of children under 5, infants born at low birth weight, preschoolers not fully immunized and percentage of population without health care coverage.

There you have it, go team go! We're #1 in so many great categories. I wonder if having so many billionaires is what makes us number one in the other categories?

Let's take a look the reality behind U.S. health care. Over 44 million folks in the U.S. have no health care coverage. In the last year alone, 2.4 million folks lost their coverage. More than 74 million folks went without coverage

for part of the last two years. Nearly a million of those who lost their coverage last year had full-time jobs. 8.5 million children have no health care. 5.2 million folks between the ages 50 to 64 have no health care. Those who do not have health coverage have a 25 percent higher mortality rate, and are more likely to die at a younger age. Each 1 percent increase in unemployment increases the number of folks who have no coverage by 1.2 million people. Nearly 40 percent of Hispanics in the U.S. have no coverage. 100,000 or more folks die each year because of no health care coverage.

There is another large problem, and that is the millions of folks who are under-insured – people who have health benefits that are inadequate. Many folks find that when they are in need of some vital medical care, their insurance does not cover the medical problem they have. Or only a small part of their needs are covered, and tests, treatment and medication is not covered. A Hollywood movie was even made about this problem, called "John Q."

Millions of working people think they have health care but when they need it find themselves cut off by some damn insurance company saying that their medical needs are not covered.

There is a new name for murder these days; it is "utilization review." This is the practice of health plans trying to find ways to avoid payment for needed medical treatment. You see, the purpose of capitalist health care has nothing to do with healing the sick, but rather is to make a profit. The greatest profit comes from the highest costs to us folks for coverage and the lowest expense to the health care plan for treatment. This means that the patients are no longer human beings but rather bottom-line profit commodities.

As Dr. Linda Peeno, who had the job of utilization review, put it when writing about the death of one person: "The 'clinical goal' was to figure out a way to avoid payment. The 'diagnosis' was to 'DENY.' Once I stamped 'DENY' across his authorization form, his life's end was as certain as if I had pulled the plug on a ventilator. ... "Whether it was non-profit or for-profit (medical plans), whether it was a health plan or hospital, I had a common task: using my medical expertise for the financial benefit of the organization, often at great harm and potentially death to some patients."

The following comes from a "Call To Action" signed by 2,300 Massachusetts doctors: "The time we are allowed to spend with the sick shrinks under the pressure to increase throughput, as though we were dealing with industrial commodities rather than human beings... Doctors and nurses are being prodded by threats and bribes to abdicate allegiance to patients, and to shun the sickest, who may be unprofitable. Some of us risk being fired or 'delisted' for giving, or even discussing, expensive services, and many are offered bonuses for minimizing care."

Health insurance premiums increased an average of 12.7 percent from 2001 to 2002, and to pay for that the employers raised workers' copays and cut benefits. Reasons for the increased costs include the ineffective way hospitals are run. Medical errors are responsible for preventable injury in as many as 1 in 25 hospital patients. Every year, 48,000 to 98,000 folks die unnecessarily due to medical errors.

The cost of medicine, and the incredible greed of the drug companies is another reason for high costs. People in the U.S. alone spend over \$200 billion a year for medications directly at the store, which does not include the drugs that hospitals, nursing homes and doctor offices use.

Of the money the drug companies take in only 11 percent is used for research and development (and part of that is developing "me-too drugs") and 36 percent is used for marketing and administration – in other words trying to convince you that you need





as many of their drugs as possible, counting their profits and buying off politicians. And that gives the drug companies a lot of money to buy off politicians with. 18.6% is pure pocketed profit for the owners, the largest percentage of profit among all major industries.

In the last few years the cost of drugs has increased over 12 percent a year. One drug, the top-selling allergy pill Claritin, increased in price 13 times over five years. More than a third of elderly folks cut back on food purchases so that they can pay for medication. Those who need medications for different problems find that each drug can cost around \$1,500 a year, and many pay \$9,000 or more out of their own pocket because Medicare will not pay it. And they pay a higher price for the drugs than do the HMOs or the V.A.

This was just a brief look at one capitalist industry that has gone insane with greed. There needs to be far deeper investigations into the health care industry, not only by those on the inside who understand what is really going on, but also by those who understand the capitalist system. There have been grand theoretical books written about capitalism, but what we need is books that tell the people's story – and people's stories about the health care industry clearly shows that capitalism is an inhuman system that is even willing to profit off mass deaths.

At lunch or break we often talk about the situation down at the shipyard, and there are many stories about having to deal with medical problems only on the months we are covered. One pipefitter talked about going deep in debt because of a medical problem with his daughter that could not wait until his coverage month. Or you go in to get tests, but can not get the results for a month or more until you have coverage again. Then there is the problem of on-the-job injuries. If it's something like a broken bone there is no problem. But we have three people who have carpal tunnel. One went to the clinic the company uses and they said he only had a strain and did nothing for him.

Yes, we have the right to go to the doctor of our own choosing, but until it is ruled that we have an industrial injury we have to pay that doctor either through our medical coverage or out of our own pocket. So two of them are waiting until the last month they have coverage before work goes slow this winter. If you are out even with an industrial injury, you are not getting hours in for your coverage so folks try to get their medical needs dealt with right before they are laid off.

So there you have it folks, a view from a shipyard. A bunch of old men and women doing work that younger folks would find hard; every year we seem to make less money because of the cost of living and how much we have taken out of our checks for medical coverage that only some of us get from time to time. Going to the union is not the answer because the union runs the medical trust fund that is screwing us. Going to the government is a waste of time because the government and both political parties work in the interests of the corporations. We are in the same boat as are working people all over the world.

Doctors take a pledge called the Hippocratic Oath that they pledge themselves to a high standard of medical ethics. Though there are some doctors who do follow their oath, most do not. In today's world it should be called the Hypocrite's Oath. Health care has become a very profitable industry that large corporations increasingly control. Often it is not your doctor who decides what medical care you get, but rather someone from the corporation.

Medical care has become too expensive for many, and the medicine we may need are out of the reach of millions because of the drug companies' huge profits. One good example is the AIDS drug Norvir; its discovery and the tests were partially funded by the government. Last year Abbott Laboratories raised the price of the drug from \$1.71 to \$8.57 a day, although the cost of making the drug has not gone up. These scumbags believe that they have a dependent market of people who must take the drug in order to live. The government backed the drug company in its price increase. Such a thing should be seen as a crime against humanity.

More and more workers are losing their medical coverage, and the corporations become richer by the day. Medical coverage is a major issue in most union strikes nowadays. Many have to do with the bosses wanting to cut coverage. The bosses whine that they cannot afford the increased cost. One of the answers the bosses have come up with to lower health care costs is to fire workers with disabilities. I say that the bosses are part of the capitalist class and it is the capitalist class that is causing the problem, and so the bosses should be forced to confront the rest of their class and find a solution among themselves. We need to force this to happen by making health care a right, and not a consumer privilege. But this may take a while to happen.

The business unions have been a part of the problem. One solution for union workers is to go back to the days when the union ran the hospitals like they did in a number of mining camps. How this could work with construction workers is that all Building Trades and Metal Trades workers who are working under union contracts or are on the work lists, retirees and families would be covered by union-run hospitals and clinics. In order to pay for this, all companies under union contract would pay into a fund and a portion of all union dues would go into that fund. All hospital workers would be union workers. The hospital would be run by elected representatives from all the Building Trades and Metal Trades unions.

Other unions could join together and do the same. This would give union workers good medical coverage and help break some of the control over health care by the corporations. The problem is that some of the business union bosses are sold out to the corporations and would resist such a move.

As to health care for the poor working people who are not yet organized and thus the solution above could not help, first the damn unions need to either get off their asses and organize the unorganized workers and

the unemployed workers or they should get their asses out of the way for a new labor movement to come into existence.

We need to look upon our needs of survival as rights, and not as consumption privileges, and realize that we are under attack by corporate fascism that seeks to own and control the world and everything in it. We are fighting for our right to live, and this is a real class war where there is no possibility of a truce. There is no middle ground in this war. No fences to sit on. Either we organize our class power and struggle to dethrone corporate fascism or we are faced with a future of increased suffering and the total control by the corporations of everything.

People say that the 9-11 attack on the World Trade Center was a terrible thing, and it was. They say it was a case of mass murder, and it was. Murder is doing something that you know will cause the deaths of others for reasons beyond self-defense. The corporations that own and control the health care system are killing people, murdering people, at a rate that makes 9-11 look like a Sunday school picnic.

The government now has a system of alerts of possible terrorist attacks. If we had the same system for corporate mass murder then we would always be at the highest level. For corporate murder is not a threat of something possibly going to happen, it is a continuous, never-ending occurrence. The capitalist culture seems to convince us that our health is a personal issue that we just don't talk about in polite society. Rather we go off in some hidden place and suffer with at most a few of our family to help or often all alone.

Our health and the care we seek is no longer a personal issue, it has become one of the most politically important issues in this modern world and we need to take direct action through a universal bonding of solidarity of all oppressed and exploited people.

There is the issue of health care that I have written about here, and there is the fact that a lot of the health problems that folks suffer come directly from capitalist industry – the pollution, the crap they put in our food and things like asbestos that the government has just recently admitted that the deaths caused by it are still increasing.

The issue, folks, is that capitalism is harmful to the health of the people and the earth, not just in abstract ways but in real direct ways it is killing us daily. And that is what we must change! We must once again become communities of the caring. When someone in our community is suffering, we no longer think, "They have our pity, now let me watch my football game!" We need to be there for the suffering and help ease their pain and look after their needs. I remember once when I had an industrial injury and was on

### Haymarket statue in Chicago

The City of Chicago has erected a sculpture near the site where in 1886 police attacking a protest against the police shooting of striking workers were met with a bomb thrown by an unknown demonstrator. Police used the incident as a pretext to attack the anarchist-led labor movement; eight of whom were convicted on trumped-up charges.

Now, a sculpture of a wagon (symbolizing the wagon which served as a speakers' platform) has been dedicated, with a text acknowledging that Haymarket "touches on the issues of free speech, the right of public assembly, organized labor, the fight for the eight-hour workday, law enforcement, justice, anarchy and the right of every human being to pursue an equitable and prosperous life."

The language and design were hashed out by city officials, police and AFL representatives. Anarchists were excluded, and protested the dedication ceremony.

### Disney fined for killing Pluto

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration has fined Walt Disney Entertainment \$6,300 for the death of a worker dressed as Pluto who was run over and killed by a float at Disney's Orlando park last February.

crutches with a bag of food trying to get up the stairs to my apartment. No one would stop and help, it was thought that it was not their responsibility. I could have called one of my family members and asked for help, but I struggled up those stairs as an act of defiance to the culture that expects us to beg our families or go begging the government. I do not beg for anything, I demand it!

You want to hear of a truly radical act? When I had my heart attack, friends took me away from my house to get me away from my computer and phone. They had gotten pissed off at one of my phone messages from a person who knew I had a heart attack but was still asking me to do some work. They took care of me for a month so that I could have time to heal.

Why was that radical? Because it was a direct action of solidarity that went against everything the capitalist culture teaches us. In all of our communities there are people who are suffering and in my view, one of the first steps in creating communities of resistance is learning to care for the suffering as direct acts of working-class solidarity.

We all have times of suffering and we should not look upon helping as charity to the less fortunate, but rather as direct action of working-class solidarity. Those in the medical professions who do care about people, though they may have to work for some boss, can also work for the people. Labor struggles in the medical workplaces have to be as much about resisting the capitalist harm to the sick as about higher wages.

This we could call working-class social responsibility, and it is not limited to health care workers. All working people need to view themselves as part of a class with common class interests, and a part of those class interests is how the jobs we work affect people and the environment and doing something about it.

Look into the faces of the children, your own and others – we hand them this world to continue on with, but our lack of direct action causes them to suffer even before they can understand why. Think of the sick children and those who have died because of this dirty rotten system, then ask yourself: if it is not you who acts then who will it be? Surely not that mythical someone else folks always talk about and expect to come to the rescue. It is you and I who must stand up and take action now! There is no one to do it for us.

Capitalism is the Grim Reaper that plagues our world and feeds upon our blood and misery. It is like a cancer upon the body of Mother Earth. It cannot be reformed, for no matter how many changes you make to it, the basic nature of capitalism will always be the same. It must be removed from the host body of society and completely destroyed.

### Machinists may quit AFL

International Association of Machinists President R. Thomas Buffenbarger says he will withdraw his union from the American Federation of Labor unless it changes course. The AFL is too heavily dominated by the SEIU, Buffenbarger told *Business Week*, and pays too much attention to immigrant workers. He wants more emphasis on political action.

"The AFL-CIO ... no longer serves the interest of the IAM. It's so screwed up, we're thinking of getting out regardless of what happens," he added. "Maybe the AFL-CIO's time has come and gone."

### Carpenters sue Laborers

The Carpenters union has stepped up its long-running jurisdictional war with other construction craft unions, filing a federal lawsuit against Chicago Laborers local 4, demanding damages for wages lost when the Laborers picketed a construction site where UBC members were doing clean-up work the Laborers believed belonged to them.

Picketing was halted after five days when the NLRB threatened an injunction. "The point is to send a message," said Carpenters attorney Travis Ketterman. "From now on, illegal strikes will be met with lawsuits."

## A Labor Day lament for retail workers

BY DANIEL GROSS

Today is Labor Day in the United States (of course the authentic workers' holiday is May 1). What does "labor" mean, though, to most Americans? Perhaps images of factory workers, construction workers, or even teachers and nurses come to mind. Indeed, workers in these occupations and others traditionally associated with organized labor will be out in force at marches, rallies and those ubiquitous Labor Day picnics. However, a whole new set of workers has begun to organize to rise out of poverty, gain access to health care, and make their workplaces safe.

As jobs are outsourced en masse, these workers may represent the final hope of reviving the labor movement in the United States. They are the working people we interact with every day of the week, and many are employed by the most well-known brands in the world.

As you may have guessed, I'm referring to retail workers. You know them: the "associates" at Wal-Mart, the "team members" at Kinko's, and the "partners" at Starbucks (where I work), just to name a few.

The corporations we work for don't like us speaking out about our jobs. But consumers have a right to know the harsh reality for those of us smiling at you from behind the counter, and how our employment conditions affect society as a whole.

The overwhelming majority of the millions of retail workers in this country — including myself — earn wages that leave us well below the poverty line. Some of us need food



Milwaukee Wobblies debut the One Big Union boxcar in the Milwaukee Labor Day parade.

stamps to survive. Even if health care is offered, it's unaffordable. Respect and dignity are often nonexistent in retail settings where abusive managers, surveillance and arbitrary disciplinary policies are the norm.

The work can even be harmful to one's health. For example, based on conversations with Starbucks workers around the country, it appears that repetitive strain injuries are systemic and widespread. No surprise, when one considers the number of repeated motions involved in shooting espresso, steaming milk, and serving beverages by the hundreds at lightning speeds.

To make matters worse, under the law almost every retail worker is an at-will employee, meaning we can be fired with no notice at any time for almost any reason.

More and more retail workers are forming unions as a solution to the exploitative

employment conditions we endure. Booksellers at Borders recently formed a union at the company's flagship store, winning improvements in wages and working conditions. At the Starbucks where I work in New York City, an IWW union drive has sparked a national campaign to organize the chain.

Unfortunately, Starbucks, a company that pays so much lip service to respecting employees, is engaging in a strenuous campaign to crush our union. This is the typical response of multinational corporations when workers attempt to exercise their rights.

Years ago, miners, garment workers and loggers struggled for the dignity of labor, securing many of the rights we enjoy today. So on this Labor Day keep your supermarket cashier, your video store clerk, and your barista in mind as they join in to make history all over again.

## Oregon farm workers...

continued from page 1

new management team quickly addressed a backlog of environmental lawsuits due to massive water withdrawals from the Columbia River, cutting its water demand in half.

Since then, the Nature Conservancy and the *Wall Street Journal* have pointed to Threemile as a model of ecological stewardship and responsible business. Former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber is quoted on Threemile's website describing the farm as "a superb example of sustainable agriculture."

Part of this sustainability involves recycling potato skins and other pesticide-laden crop waste as feed to the locked-up dairy cows. Oregon taxpayers forked over \$20 million in low interest loans and tax credits to get the mega dairy off the ground, while the residents of Portland are paying Threemile another \$500,000 a year in exchange for taking their food waste for its composting operation. Without the guaranteed milk market offered by Tillamook, massive taxpayer subsidies, and a \$100 million line of credit from the Bank of the West, Threemile would probably not be solvent today.

Conditions for workers on such factory farms are dangerous, exhausting, and ill paid. Workers are sometimes forced to work in manure up to their waist, and end up with open festering sores that in turn contaminate their families. Workers frequently break bones from being kicked by cows and from slipping on manure-drenched concrete floors, which explains why the rate of injury on dairy farms is the highest in all of agriculture.

One worker quoted by Salon.com in an Aug. 27 article said, "I worry every day that I will break my hand or get hurt, but I never say anything for fear I'll lose my job. No American would do this job. This is a shit job, for shit money."

Oregon dairy farm workers earn as little as \$5.15 per hour and are forced to work 12-16 hour days with no overtime. Until February, they did not even have the legal right to a lunch break or rest periods.

Seventeen workers who sued Threemile for minimum wage violations and illegal payroll deductions accepted an out-of-court settlement for \$70,000 in June 2004.

In February 2003 the United Farm Workers launched an organizing drive at Threemile Canyon after 100 workers walked off the job following a pay cut. Union activists soon encountered harassment, intimidation, and in some cases physical assault and illegal firing.

In response, the UFW has mounted a grassroots campaign against Threemile's major milk buyers and financial creditors.

In April 2003, Tillamook Creamery sent a letter to Threemile Canyon, suggesting it offer workers a decent wage, the right to organize, and safe working conditions. Informational picketing outside Safeway stores forced the supermarket giant to write Threemile in June 2004, urging negotiations with the UFW. Similar campaigns are under way against Bank of the West, Sorrento Lactalis (maker of "Precious" and "Sorrento" cheese products), and Dairy Farmers of America, owner of the "Borden/Elsie the Cow" label.

Threemile Canyons has made some concessions on wages, health care and safety to undercut the UFW, but they still refuse to recognize the union and are lobbying for new state laws allowing indefinite farm worker contracts and outlawing harvest strikes.

Letters supporting the UFW drive at Threemile can be directed to: Bank of the West, 1450 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek CA 94597; Sorrento Lactalis, 2376 S. Park Ave., Buffalo NY 14220; and DFA, 10220 N. Ambassador Dr., Kansas City MO 64153.

## Workers wildcat vs. firing

The Port of Halifax came to a standstill August 20 as a result of a wildcat strike by 140 longshoremen protesting the firing of a co-worker sacked for joining two earlier wildcat strikes. The strike quickly spread from the Halifax container terminal to the entire port, backing up cargo, ships and trucks.

## No Sweatshops Bucco! 2004 playoffs report

BY KENNETH MILLER, PITTSBURGH

August 24 was Dollar Dog Night at PNC Park and we focused our press release and signs on the Gildan Activewear factory in Honduras. This factory has well-documented sweatshop abuses and is scheduled to be closed by the end of the year.

The closing is either a direct response to the international criticism and union organizing or a response to the expiration of the Multi-Fiber Agreement, probably some combination of the two. We talked with thousands

of Pittsburgh Pirate baseball fans and had some impressive press coverage. The next day the Pittsburgh Pirates and the credit card company (MBNA) that has been giving away free Gildan T-shirts dumped Gildan as a supplier. This is a victory that could be repeated at baseball stadiums everywhere.

The National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh is touring the United States this fall with the National Labor Committee and we've helped arranged for them to stop in Pittsburgh on October 16. NGWF will face

a wave of plant closings when the tax-free import/and export quotas of the Multi Fiber Agreement expire at the end of this year.

The National Labor Committee has mobilized unions to support legislation extending the quotas and attaching worker rights to copyright enforcement. This is, of course, dependent on a sweep in the November elections, and very different from the direct action and worker solidarity model of Sweat-Free Baseball.

The third edition of Major League Sweatshop Cards has been an incredible success. The 4th edition should go to press in time for our ML Sweatshop Action on Sept. 23 and several of them will focus on Gildan Activewear. Become a Major League Sweatshop Educator yourself by taking some sweatshop baseball cards to your next group meeting. Request a few packs by emailing nosweatshopsbucco@yahoo.com.

SweatFree Baseball and No Sweatshops Bucco! will continue to develop our baseball model for sweatshop education and direct action around the baseball strait through the off-season. The Gildan workers need our solidarity to organize and save their plant.

The power of SweatFree Baseball is going to be further explicated through a New Years Eve 2004 game of baseball in downtown Pittsburgh between the Sweatshop Workers and the Sweatshop Bosses. The workers are playing for equal education in the global economy and at the end of the game their supporters in Pittsburgh are going to float their civil rights (on a homemade Pirate Ship) down the Ohio River and onto the floor of the global sweatshop. During spring training our outreach will attempt to run parallel to Pittsburgh Pirate marketing initiatives.

This election season has been a tough period for the anti-sweatshop movement in the United States. Many of the traditional allies are focused on the election. Imperialism and protectionism are the wrong answers for workers, and these are what the two presidential candidates have to offer. The IWW has an internationalist perspective to bring to the table of the North American anti-sweatshop movement and that is what SweatFree Baseball is all about. As the small Gildan Activewear victory here in Pittsburgh demonstrates, direct action gets the goods!

### Take Back Your Time Day 10/24

The 2nd Annual Take Back Your Time Day falls on Sunday, Oct. 24. The Time Day website at [www.timeday.org](http://www.timeday.org) contains suggestions (including 50 "pretty quick things" to build the movement) for organizing local events, as well as event and contact information for many parts of the United States.

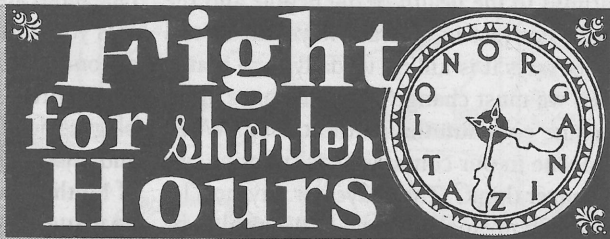
### Working overtime for free

As new U.S. overtime regulations took effect August 23, unions finally began mobilizing their members in protests in St. Louis, Washington, DC, and other cities. Nineteen workers were arrested Sept. 16 in St. Louis after hundreds of unionists marched through the downtown district.

And as the elections approach, politicians are beginning to go on record opposing the rules, which strip millions of workers of even the limited protections against overtime work available under U.S. law.

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have now approved proposals to block the new regulations, in the form of amendments to spending bills which will be extensively rewritten in joint committees controlled by party bosses who blocked challenges to the new rules for months. If the legislation survives in the final bill, President Bush has said he would veto it.

Under the new rules, nearly all workers earning less than \$11 an hour (\$23,660 a year) are entitled to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 hours a week, whether they are paid on an hourly or sal-



ary basis. (Teachers, farm and domestic workers, "independent contractors," and some other workers are not protected regardless of pay.)

Hourly employees generally retain overtime coverage, but the new regulations make it easier to exclude workers with specialized training or academic degrees, or who have even limited managerial duties. A study by three former top Labor Department officials found that the new regulations would increase these exclusions from the previous 15 percent to 40 percent of all U.S. workers.

The Bush administration is also pressing for new legislation which would permit employers to compensate workers for forced overtime with "comp time" instead of premium pay, in essence allowing bosses to pressure workers to forego overtime pay during busy periods in exchange for a few hours off when the boss doesn't need them.

### Buying time off

Salaried workers at General Motors Corp. can now buy up to five extra unpaid vacation days for \$175 a day, a plan the automaker says is designed to save millions of dollars and boost morale. Last year, 27,500 employees, or 68 percent of GM's 40,529 salaried U.S. workers, bought five extra days of vacation.



# Witnessing lives under occupation

BY ETHAN OSLAND, WINNIPEG GENERAL MEMBERSHIP BRANCH

This past July and August, myself and FW Maeghan Dewar went on a delegation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories as part of the International Solidarity Movement's "Freedom Summer Campaign 2004." The International Solidarity Movement is a Palestinian-led organization focused on coordinating nonviolent actions to resist the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Activists from all over the world travelled to participate in the summer campaign.

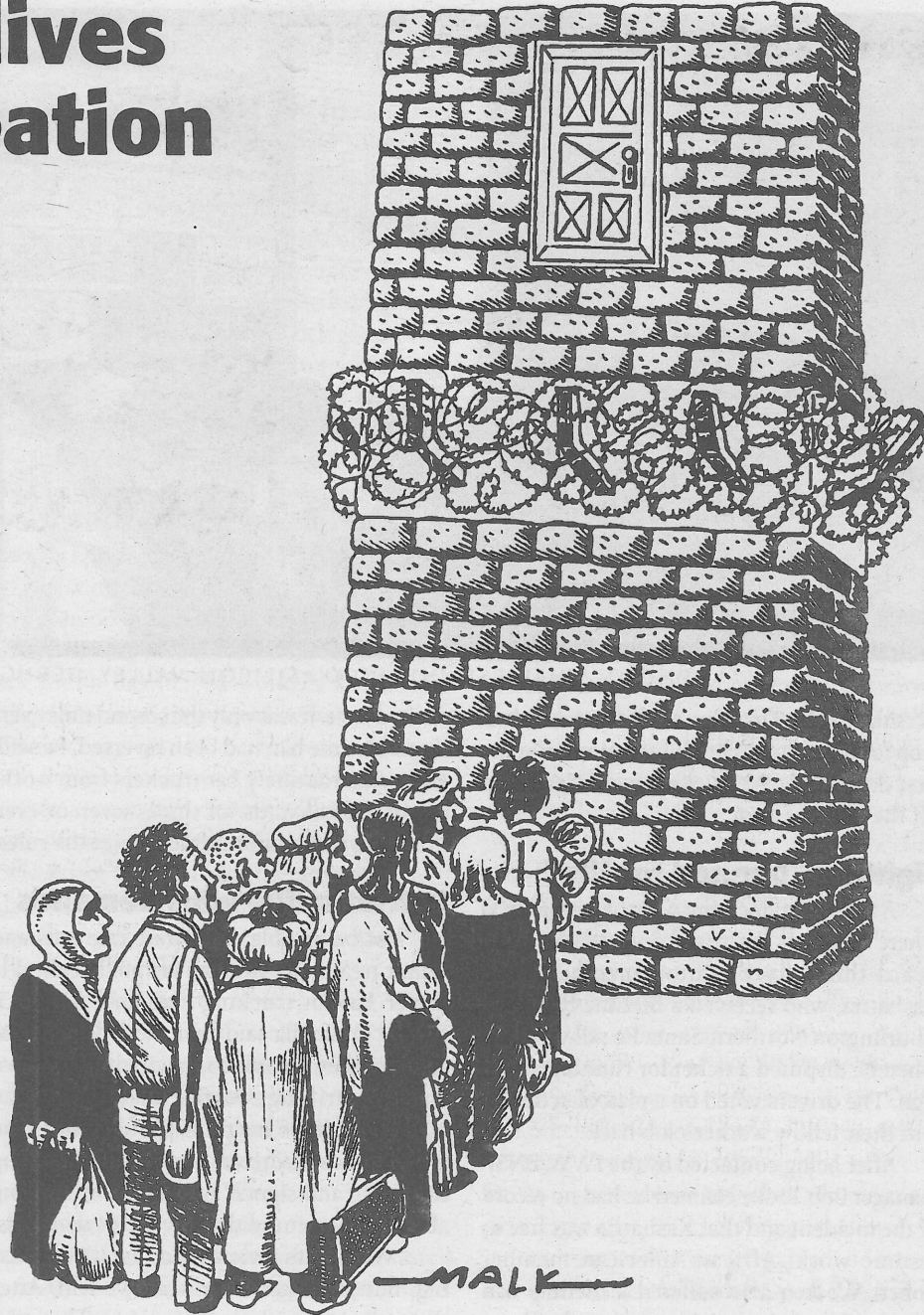
After receiving our training in Ramallah, we went to our placement in Tulkarm, a town northwest of Ramallah in the West Bank. Maeghan spent 10 days in the West Bank before heading back to Canada and I spent the better part of a month. The majority of the work we did in the communities surrounding Tulkarm involved organizing for nonviolent action, working with children in summer camps and meeting families and hearing of their hardships due to the Occupation.

We also observed the level of violence that Palestinians experience at the hands of the Israeli military. This violence manifests itself in many ways: home invasions, home destruction, crop obliteration, assassination of political representatives, shootings of young men who respond to Israeli military presence by throwing rocks, arrests and imprisonment for organizing resistance (this list of violent acts could continue for a full page).

On July 18th, we were called by our connections in the town of Seida requesting an ISM presence during an invasion of that town. We mobilized 12 people and headed for Seida, which was a 45-minute drive north. When the Israeli Army [IA (I refuse to call them the Israeli Defence Force)] invades a Palestinian village or town, they most commonly do so at 3 a.m. and install curfew, which completely restricts all movement of the town's residents until they leave. The IA usually conducts these sieges when they are hunting for people associated with "terrorist" organizations.

On this particular day, they were hunting two men wanted for "terrorist activities" and succeeded in assassinating both. While it took most of the day to learn when the men were killed, between 5 a.m. and 5:30 a.m., we did see the military conduct other operations. We witnessed arrests, home and business invasions, property destruction, and the use of human shields, an illegal act under international law. Ultimately, the dead bodies of the two Palestinian men were brought out onto the street by relatives of one of the men from the home in which they were killed. One man, Bassel, was blown in half by an Israeli hand grenade; Saher, was shot in the head by an IA sniper while jumping a wall. This was the most shocking situation that I have experienced in my life. I still cannot find words to describe seeing the dead bodies lying on the street wrapped in blankets.

Shortly after this, the soldiers began to pull out of Seida, leaving the community to grieve. One of the men, Saher, was from Seida and he and Bassel were hiding from the IA in his family's home. We were invited to view the home where the attacks on the two men



occurred. We were shown the balcony where Bassel had been blown apart by a grenade, it also was here that Saher tried to escape by jumping a wall on the balcony. We saw in vivid and agonizing detail the results of the explosion: bloodspray and singed bits of flesh and clothing seared into walls and black streaks on the floor from the exploded grenade. During the funeral procession, five ISMs, including myself, decided to stay overnight to gather more information about the men and meet with Saher's family.

The following day we learned that Saher had been a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Bassel had belonged to the Azzedine Martyrs Brigade. We spent hours with family and friends asking why they joined the Brigades and received answers that families all over the Occupied Territories have to learn to live with: that enduring the occupation is so agonizing that violent resistance is the only remaining option.

To see the pain in the eyes of Saher's father explains the tragedy his decision inflicts on his family. The future loses Saher in exchange for what he hoped would be the eventual liberation of his people. His father did not want him to join Al-Aqsa because he knew it meant certain death. Did Saher succeed? Time will tell.

The closing action of the summer campaign this year involved a march from the north of the West Bank, starting in Zububa and ending in Jerusalem. The march was to follow the path of the so-called "separation barrier" commonly called the Wall.

This barrier is in fact a series of fences that carves a huge path through the countryside. From the Palestinian side it begins with a 2 metre high stack of coiled razorwire, then a 3 metre deep trench, next a gravel road for Israeli Army use, followed by an actual 3 metre high fence equipped with motion sensors, and sometimes video cameras or it is electrified. On the other side of this fence is a two lane highway used by the Israelis only, then another trench and again, razorwire stacks. The width of this "barrier" is approximately 11 metres. The fence becomes a concrete wall 10 metres high when it crosses between a Palestinian town and an expanding Israeli community. These large concrete forms

deliver a very specific message to Palestinians: You are a prisoner! Homes are destroyed if they fall under the path of the Wall or even come within a few hundred metres of it.

We followed this fence for many days, with increasing interaction with the IA to get us to leave the area of the fence, arriving in towns to meet with their people and hear of the difficulties this fence brings to them. Most communities experience increased difficulties in transportation to and from their workplaces or fields. Isolation from families that might be in other towns is very common, sometimes villages are cut in half by the fence or even absorbed into Israel.

The fence does not follow the path of the Green Line, the boundary established in 1949 after the 7 Day War. Recently, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that the "separation barrier" is illegal and called for it to be dismantled. Following the decision, the United Nations General Assembly followed with its own resolution. This means very little to the Palestinians that I encountered on the march, seeing as how the international community, by and large, has stood by and watched as the state of Israel established its occupation. There seemed to

## AFT study finds charter schools underperform

A new national study analyzing as yet unpublished test scores found that charter school students score well below their public school counterparts in reading and math.

Charter schools receive public funding but are operated by private corporations. The U.S. Department of Education has suggested that failing public schools reincorporate as charter schools.

But when the American Federation of Teachers got its hands on unpublished government data about charter school performance, it found that charter school students in grades 4 and 8 scored significantly lower in reading and math than their counterparts in public schools.

Earlier, a study by a consortium of California universities found that 48 percent of teachers in charter schools are uncertified, compared to 9 percent in public schools.

be very little optimism in the political processes available to Palestinians.

The government claims the "barrier" not only protects Israelis from acts of terrorism, but also protects those who live in the government-created settlements within the West Bank. It is a reality that this fence dives into the Occupied Territories, in some instances over 20 kilometres. This creates a sizable loss of land for Palestinians, which translates into lost income due to less land available for agricultural work, thus less money to house, feed and clothe a family.

In some instances, towns like Jbarra experience an unemployment rate of 95 percent due to the restrictions created by the fence and other methods of control, such as checkpoints which control the movement of Palestinians. When we marched to Jbarra we were the first people in four years, Palestinian or otherwise, to cross into the town's limits without permission from the Israeli government. Jbarra has to apply for permits to leave the town, return, or even to have a truck come and pick up their garbage, which sometimes involves waiting for months before the permits are granted, if at all.

After spending only 10 days on the march, roughly half the total length, I can report that it did successfully reach the border between Ramallah and Jerusalem at Kalandiya. My flight back to Canada left Ben-Gurion Airport on August 12; I returned to Jerusalem to mail off my videotape, film and writings back to Winnipeg and prepare for the dreaded "security check" at the airport.

Throughout my six weeks in the West Bank, I was continually amazed at the incredible strength Palestinians show in resisting the many types of oppression at the hands of the Israeli government and the ruling class that profits from the occupation. Read what you will about the conflict and believe what you like, but nothing prepares you for the everyday trauma that Palestinians, children, women and men have to endure.

Imagine a country where unemployment reaches 65 percent. Imagine not being allowed to travel outside of it without official permission. Imagine being a farmer who cannot grow crops due to not having access to water because a fence keeps you from getting to your well. Imagine farming land for many generations only to have it taken away. Imagine your children being too scared to go to school because they don't want to get shot. If you spend time with any Palestinian you will learn that they have experienced arrests, being shot at, injury, harassment, loss of land, homes being damaged or destroyed, family or friends being killed. And for what?

The only thing asked of me while there was to tell the truth about what I saw and experienced and relay it to as many people as I can. I thank you for taking the time to read this. If you any questions please contact me through the Winnipeg General Membership Branch. For more information on the International Solidarity Movement please visit [www.palsolidarity.org](http://www.palsolidarity.org).

## UFCW undermines grocery worker solidarity

The United Food & Commercial Workers announced it was forming an alliance between California, Colorado and Ohio locals as northern California contract talks with the major grocery chains began Sept. 8.

But when the California and Colorado contracts expired Sept. 11, the UFCW local representing 17,000 Colorado grocery workers agreed to a five-week contract extension. The chains are demanding that workers accept health care cuts similar to those forced on 70,000 Southern California workers earlier this year.

The UFCW's experiment with industrial solidarity thus ended before it began, ensuring that the grocery chains could continue to rely on profits from "unionized" stores across the U.S. to finance its attacks on workers.

The UFCW had earlier agreed to give the bosses five days' notice before calling a strike.

### Subscribe to the Industrial Worker today

Subscriptions are \$15 per year.

Enclosed:  \$15 for 1 year  
 \$ donation to IWW Sustaining Fund  
 \$15, bundle of 5 for 6 issues  
 (ask about special IWW member rates)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

send to: Industrial Worker Distribution  
 PO Box 13476, Philadelphia PA 19101 USA

## Stockton truckers organize with IWW

continued from page 1

trucker Gurb Singh, 25, who has been driving for four years and came to the U.S. from India when he was 16 years old.

The strike lasted for two weeks and made significant gains, including 20 to 25 percent increases in the rates paid per load delivered and a reduction of unpaid wait times to a maximum of one hour. "When everyone stands together they pretty much have no choice. What are they going to do?" says Singh, recalling the May strike. However, nearly 30 companies in Stockton compete with each other for the business of the rail yards, and this competition has slowly eroded some of the gains of the May strike.

### Joining the union

A month after the May strike, Stockton truckers contacted the Industrial Workers of the World, and Bay Area organizers Bruce Valde, Adam Welch and Harjit Gill met with 45 drivers in the library of the Stockton Sikh temple. After an intense discussion entirely in Punjabi, the drivers voted to go with the union. All those attending the meeting immediately joined, and the truckers began working to sign up their co-workers.

Deciding factors in the decision were the IWWs previous experience organizing with independent contractors, that the union would address drivers' individual as well as collective grievances, and the presence of a native Punjabi speaker, IWW organizer Harjit Gill. "It felt good to be helping two communities at the same time – the IWW and people who are from the same country and ethnicity my family is from," said Gill.

Bay Area organizers were then invited to spend two days under a tree near a Highway 5 off ramp to sign members up. Local leaders of the truckers got on their CB radios, Nextel phones and even created a home-made sign with a piece of cardboard and sharpie marker that they waved on the side of the road, flagging drivers down to stop and take out mem-

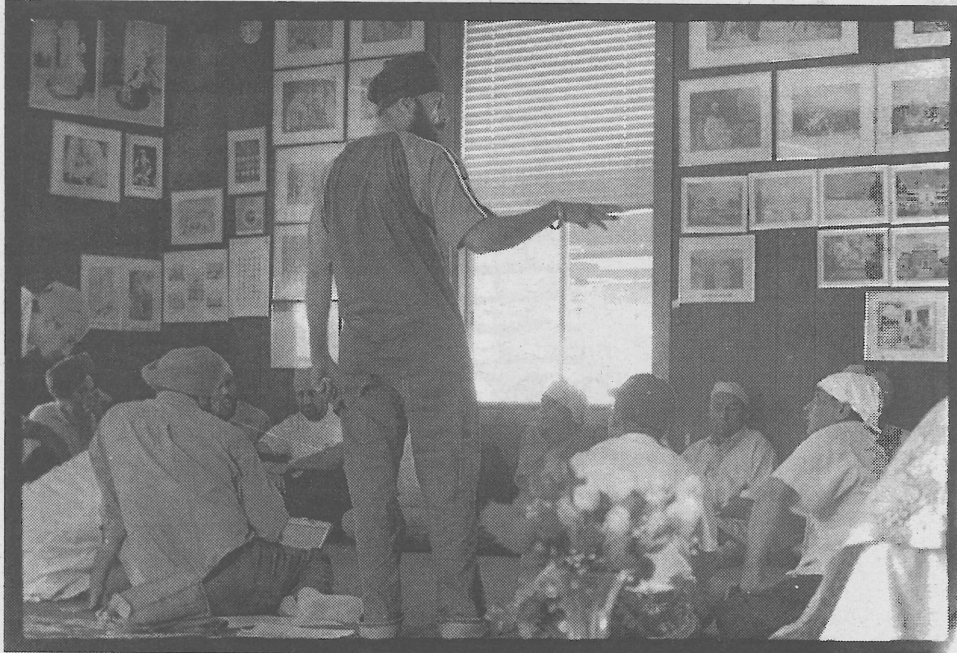


PHOTO: CHARISSE DOMINGO. SILICON VALLEY DEBUG

bership cards. The sign read, "Truck driver stop for fill up application for union." On the first day, nearly 90 truckers were signed up off the hood of a car.

### Fighting "banned for life"

A follow-up meeting was then organized where members discussed several issues and heard the story of union member Vijay Kashatria, who received a lifetime ban from a Burlington Northern-Santa Fe rail yard cop when he disputed a ticket for running a stop sign. The drivers voted on a plan of action to win their fellow worker's job back.

After being contacted by the IWW, BNSF manager Bob Tooke claimed he had no record of the incident and that Kashatria was free to resume work. African-American member Robert Wooten also suffered a lifetime ban shortly after this when he attempted to have BNSF document pre-existing damage to a container load he was about to haul. Unhappy to see him speaking up, a rail cop asked to see his ID and Wooten refused. That ban, too, was quickly reversed.

Singh says after the incident he and other drivers made phone calls to spread the news of the victories. "Everyone was pretty much

excited by it. It was only the second time ever" that a lifetime ban had been reversed, he said. Rail yards routinely bar truckers from working in the rail yards for three, seven or even thirty days for minor infractions of the rules.

### Patriot strike wins demands

Not being able to tolerate rate cuts and unfair treatment, a strike erupted at the 11-driver Patriot trucking company Sept. 13. Dewey Obtinalla said that these conditions, "ignited these people to go with it." After two days of striking, Patriot manager Casey Stevenson drove his pickup truck out to the field where the drivers had gathered during the strike and signed an agreement meeting about 70 percent of the drivers' 14 demands.

"We feel it's a victory for us. It's not that big, but it's better than what we had. After they talk nice with the [truckers]. That's the real victory for us, that we're treated properly," Obtinalla said.

Patriot workers also recalled an incident where the manager had told the Indian drivers that they could not speak their own language in the company office. "The drivers didn't believe it was devoid of racism and neither did I," said Gill.

### Waiting without pay

Now the drivers are preparing to demand all companies return to the one-hour wait time they agreed to during the May strike. After delivering a load to a customer, drivers are forced to wait between one and two hours without pay during the unloading process. After the period of unpaid wait time, drivers receive \$35 to \$45 for each additional hour that is charged directly to the customer.

"They are being lazy, that's part of it. But they are used to having that power over the drivers. They go treating you like some kind of animal. ... They want you to do the work for free, and if you refuse they tell you to go home," Singh says on the wait times.

Companies are constantly in competition with each other to be awarded work from the brokers, who make commission acting as middlemen between the companies and the rail yard and their customers. Companies that still have the one hour wait time are losing business to companies with two-hour waits, putting them under pressure to increase their unpaid wait time.

"A few truckers can stop working and the boss is ready to negotiate. Truckers have a lot of power in the industry they are in," says organizer Valde, "and the IWW is behind these workers using that."

Support the fight of the Stockton truckers. Organizers are asking for donations toward organizing expenses and to create a hardship fund. Make checks or money orders out to "Bay Area IWW," PO Box 11412, Berkeley CA 94712.

### Aussie owner-drivers demand employee rights

After years of exploitation, low wages, and no sick leave or vacations, the Transport Workers' Union in Queensland has turned to the Arbitration Commission demanding that owner-drivers be recognized as employees. The union launched its case against DX Couriers in December, arguing that the firm's poorly paid subcontractors are actually employees improperly classed in order to avoid paying arbitrated award rates and conditions.

## Review: Vincent St. John and the Colorado miners

REVIEW BY JON BEKKEN

Maryjoy Martin, *The Corpse on Boomerang Road: Telluride's War on Labor 1899-1908*. Western Reflections Publishing (Montrose CO), 2004, 377 pp., \$29.95 hardcover. Available from the IWW Lit Dept.

The Western Federation of Miners was regularly denounced by newspapers, politicians (including, most notoriously, "progressive" Teddy Roosevelt), and courts, which consistently ruled that the miners had no rights which the employers, their goons or the police were obliged to respect. The WFM – one of the unions that, in 1905, came together to form the IWW – waged a desperate battle in the mining districts and the courts for its survival, with its officers ultimately choosing accommodation over militancy and withdrawing from the Wobblies.

The WFM's bloody reputation was forged, in large part, in Telluride, Colorado, where mine owners, newspaper editors and Pinkerton detectives claimed the union had waged a reign of terror, brutalizing and even murdering several non-union miners and mine bosses. Baseless though the charges were, they served as the pretext for the bosses' very real reign of terror, which saw hundreds of union miners (and their families and supporters) deported and jailed, and several killed, in order to protect the mine operators from a union determined to win a basic wage, the 8-hour day and safer working conditions.

In many ways, the IWW emerged out of these struggles, which forged the consciousness of a generation of labor militants including Big Bill Haywood and Vincent St. John, both of whom learned their unionism (and their radicalism) in the WFM's bloody war to unionize the Western hard rock miners.

Martin tells this story much in the fash-

ion of a true-crime novel, with her narrative beginning with the "murder" of Will Barney (she later establishes that he was very much alive), one of four "deaths" (there is no evidence that any of the four died, though a mining executive was indeed shot dead by parties unknown – a WFM member was acquitted after it was proved that the Pinkertons had manufactured the case against him) that the press used to establish the reign of terror.

Her sympathies with the miners are clear from the outset, and she pokes holes in the "reign of terror" evidence as she presents it. And after 15 pages presenting the case the Pinkertons built, she concludes: "Only one slight annoying inconsistency muddled their absolutely established facts: William Julius Barney was not dead." She then steps back to explain who Barney was, and proceeds to unfold the story of the Telluride mining war. A hundred pages later, when we have returned to the proper time, she presents conclusive evidence that Barney was alive, and that that was known to many of those claiming he had been murdered.

It is a fascinating tale, and while it does not add all that much to historians' overall understanding of the WFM (aside from establishing the wholly fictive basis of the Telluride frame-ups; historians have tended to assume that the deaths actually happened while challenging the way authorities tried to pin them on the union), Martin provides a rich context of the rhetorical and physical battles in Telluride. In this, she draws extensively on local newspapers (the daily was a fierce enemy of the union, the weekly usually called for moderation on all sides), as well as surviving court and union records. She portrays the vacillations of local authorities (those not firmly in the pockets of the min-

ing companies) as they unfold, and the union's often successful efforts to win support from local businessmen (many of whom put up the frequent property bonds needed to free union activists from jail). And she presents a chilling picture of the months in which the militia and the owners' thugs unleashed their brutal reign of terror in Telluride – crushing the union by brute force. Some judges actively participated in the terror, others attempted to rein it in, only to find that they had no means to enforce their orders.

The operators deposed politicians who stood in their way, and had their minions bring phony indictments simply to harass unionists and provide ammunition for their propaganda campaign. While the narrative sometimes drags a bit, on the whole it is a devastating indictment of a corrupt conspiracy between the capitalists and the politicians to crush the Western Federation.

I do have some reservations. The author is at some pains to defend the WFM from the charge of anarchy and lawlessness, going so far as to claim there were no anarchists in the union (which is hardly likely). She is on much firmer ground when she points out that the mine owners and their allies were far more violent and lawless, using their own goons and the state militia to terrorize union supporters and hound the union from the mining districts. She also recreates dialogue and characters' thoughts without adequately identifying her sources. While her footnotes make it clear that she has spent much time in the archives and old newspapers, they are sometimes too general.

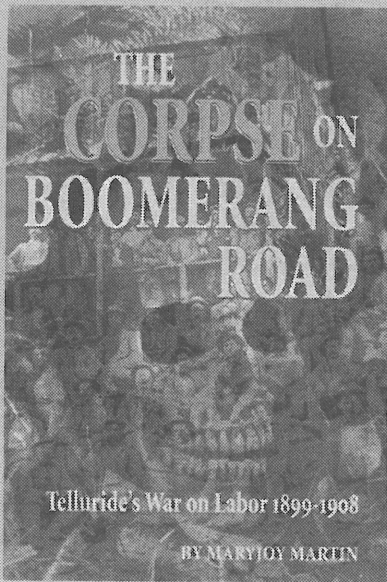
There is not enough information on the lives and thoughts of the rank-and-file miners – particularly the many immigrant miners for whom the English-language newspa-

pers she relies on for her understanding of public consciousness were quite inaccessible. And she occasionally oversteps her data – for example, pointing to the fact that the mining companies negotiated a contract with St. John (even while vilifying him in the press) as evidence that they trusted and respected him. Of course, it proves nothing of the kind – one need only to turn the statement on its head to see its absurdity. St. John negotiated with the companies not because he trusted them, but because (short of seizing the mines, which the union was not in a position to do) there was no alternative.

But this is an extremely readable (if not well produced) book, and it provides the best available portrait of Vincent St. John – who played a key role in setting the IWW firmly on its course. When the Western Federation withdrew from the IWW, St. John stayed with the Wobblies, serving as General Organizer (surviving an attempted assassination in 1907), and then as General Secretary-Treasurer from 1908 to 1914, stepping down to return to the mountains a few months after his wife died.

While the book is not about St. John, Telluride was where he first became active in the union, and Martin – clearly impressed by the man his fellow workers called "The Saint" – returns to him again and again, following his story through to his death from tuberculosis in 1929, six years after his release from federal prison. (St. John was convicted in the infamous Chicago trial of 101 IWW leaders, even though he had not been active in the union during the period the indictment covered.) St. John has not received the attention he deserves, and Martin has done a real service in telling his story, and placing it in the company of the Telluride miners with whom he fought so valiantly.

# BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



## The Corpse on Boomerang Road Telluride's War on Labor 1899-1908

by MaryJoy Martin *Also see review page 10*  
On August 8, 1907, newspapers in Telluride, Colorado, declared that the bones of William J. Barney had been recovered from a shallow grave on Boomerang Hill, thus proving the Telluride Miners' Union had butchered him in 1901. Many mine owners, newspaper editors, and Pinkerton detectives claimed the union had inaugurated a reign of terror with Barney's slaying, a nightmare of brutality that would end only when the union men and their families were driven from the region.

The belief that the Miners' Union was a pack of assassins and its victims were numerous has endured for more than a hundred years. Yet meticulous research has revealed no reign actually existed, and the alleged victims were, in fact, alive long after their alleged murders. *The Corpse on Boomerang Road* not only shatters long-held convictions, it also unravels several murder cases and exonerates those unjustly accused. 392 pages, hardcover, \$29.95



## Green Bans, Red Union, Environmental Activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation

by Meredith and Verity Burgmann

At the height of the Australian building industry boom in the 1970s a remarkable union campaign stopped billions of dollars worth of indiscriminate development that was turning Australian cities into concrete

jungles. Enraging employers and politicians but delighting many in the wider community, the members of the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation risked their jobs in order to preserve buildings, bush and parkland. The direct impact of this "green bans" movement can be seen all over Sydney.

*Green Bans, Red Union* documents the development of a union that took direct action on a number of social issues. Apart from the green bans movement, union members also used their industrial power to support the rights of oppressed groups, such as Aborigines, women and homosexuals. In telling the colorful story that inspired many environmentalists and ordinary citizens, Meredith and Verity Burgmann open a window on a period when Australian workers led the world in innovative and stunningly effective forms of environmental protest. 352 pages, paperback, \$20.00

## Black Labor and the American Legal System: Race, Work and the Law and Race in America: The Struggle for Equality

In memory of Herbert Hill (see obituary on page 4), we are offering two of his best-regarded works. *Black Labor* is a fascinating and infuriating legal history which follows black labor from slavery to the present set of labor laws that govern workplace discrimination. (455 pages). *Race in America*, which Hill co-edited with James E. Jones, Jr., is a collection of essays studying the victories and defeats of the civil rights movement. (465 pages) \$15.00 for both; \$10.00 each



**IWW Baseball Cap.** A beautiful black cap with red under the visor. Embroidered logo in white and red, and "Solidarity Forever" embroidered on the back of the cap. Union made & embroidered, one size fits all. \$16.00

**Strobing Bike Lights** Two-inch red reflectors printed with the IWW's logo. Clips onto the belt or pocket of runners & riders. Battery included. \$4.50



**The Rambling Kid: A Novel About the IWW** by Charles Ashleigh, intro by Steve Kellerman  
Hobo novel now back in print 302 pages, \$14.00



**Pyramid of the Capitalist System** poster. 17"x22" full color reproduction of the classic graphic \$7.50

**Solidarity Unionism: Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below** by Staughton Lynd

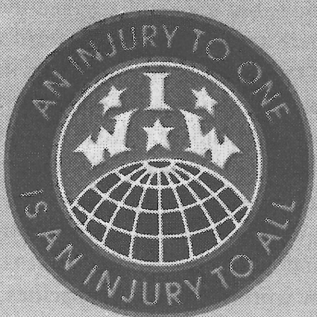
Staughton Lynd discusses how small groups of workers have created new forms of democratic organization, and argues that building a revolutionary labor movement today means nurturing such experiments in the face of corporate power. A modest, but deeply optimistic, search for possibilities. 63 pages, \$15.00

**Punching Out & Other Writings** by Martin Glaberman, edited & introduced by Staughton Lynd  
A collection of writings by autoworker, historian and poet Marty Glaberman. This collection reprints Glaberman's classic writings on the union movement, Marxism, the challenges facing radical movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, and a selection of labor poetry. Among the gems to be found are Egghead comics, an appreciation of C.L.R. James, and of course a reprint of the classic pamphlet on business unionism, *Punching Out*. Glaberman celebrated the possibilities of informal work groups both to resist capitalism and to run industry once we've dumped the bosses off our backs. 2 31 pages, \$14.00



**IWW Bumperstickers.** Stylish red & black vinyl stickers: "Solidarity Forever" or "Don't Mourn, Organize" \$1.50

## Embroidered Patches



3" circle with IWW logo and "An injury to one is an injury to all" embroidered in black, red, white and golden \$3.50 each  
\$2.50 each for five or more

# ORDER FORM

MAIL TO: IWW LITERATURE, PO BOX 42777, PHILA, PA 19101

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

QUANTITY	ITEM	PRICE

**\*Shipping/Handling**  
In the U.S., please add \$2.00 for first item and 50¢ for each additional item  
Canada: Add \$3.00 for the first item 50¢ for each additional item  
Overseas: Add \$4.00 for the first item \$1.00 for each additional item

SUB-TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

SHIPPING\*: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZING FUND DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

## Book Review:

# Farm workers

REVIEW BY ANDREW LINKE

Philip L. Martin, *Promise Unfulfilled: Unions, Immigration, and the Farm Workers*. Cornell University Press, 2003, 196 pages.

*Promise Unfulfilled* is not a light week-end read or an introduction to farm workers' struggles. Martin does review the fundamentals of agricultural labor law, immigration policy, and the patterns of migrant workers, but once this is laid out he really dives in to the specifics – including more than a dozen very intricate graphs or charts.

Martin makes very clear how hard the primarily immigrant farm worker community has fought for the rights they gained under California's 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act, but makes it equally clear that these workers have a long way to go. Mentioning old IWW organizing efforts numerous times, he outlines the harsh conditions and low pay farm workers endured from the start. The history of immigrant farm labor is covered from the slave trade, to guest worker programs of the past, to today's newcomers.

The book demonstrates that farm workers and their organizations have long faced the big farm industry's relentless lobbying and anti-union shop floor tactics. Claiming that, "agriculture is different," and that they need flexibility in a seasonal market, owners ensured that farm workers were excluded from the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, the Social Security Act of 1935, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1963. With these setbacks and the changes made under today's regime it's no surprise that migrant farm workers are hardly, if at all, better off than they were decades ago.

Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers are without a doubt key players among farm unions, and are rightfully covered in detail. While Martin is not afraid to criticize UFW and Chavez, he makes it obvious that without them farm workers would not be where they are today. He points out that in the '80s the UFW squandered funds on political parties and candidates, but praises them for maintaining strong demands on pesticide control, safety equipment and the like, while Teamsters locals were settling for pay hikes alone.

Martin is thorough in explaining the Agricultural Labor Relations Board and its operation, pointing out that Board decisions change over the years according to the governor's appointees. While *Promise Unfulfilled* centers primarily on the ALRA and California workers, it mentions other geographic regions and similar dilemmas there. Such coverage includes the Farm Labor Organizing Committee in Ohio, and struggles in Washington state, Oregon and Arizona.

*Promise Unfulfilled* is extremely precise and thorough in backing up its assertions. It outlines how the ALRB and other federal or state aid programs have failed workers. This is important, but again, because of this the book will not be a quick read unless you're already familiar with ALRB cases outlining every variety of Unfair Labor Practice claims, or if you know how the specifics of a good's elasticity of demand will strengthen or weaken a strike, boycott and picket.

Economic data ties worker struggles to the food market as a whole, while Martin describes the unique nature of immigrant farm workers, and the failure of state-sponsored remedies to their plight.

Interrupting the dates, statistics, graphs and endless acronyms are solid farm labor fundamentals. *Promise Unfulfilled* covers how the burden of proof shifts from employer to employee as ULP cases develop, the changes in policy for punishing, hiring or re-hiring illegal residents, and the reason farm workers traditionally have relied on boycotts and pickets rather than strikes. And Martin has not forgotten direct action, including 'dirty picking' (harvesting the worst of a crop or just steams, leaves and roots to jam the works), scab confrontations and wildcats.

## Collapsing wall saves worker's life

BY WORKERS ONLINE, AUSTRALIA

A worker at Energy Resources Australia's Ranger uranium mine survived a life-threatening accident only because the mine was in such poor shape that a wall gave way when an ore hopper hatch crushed him.

Northwest Territory unions have been campaigning against the mine's reliance on individual contracts, saying it has created dangerous conditions including the uranium poisoning of some 120 mineworkers who drank and showered in water containing 400 times the legal limit of uranium in March.

Only a handful of workers at the Rio Tinto-owned firm work under union contract, as a result of company pressure to instead accept the individual contracts.

## Chinese police force end to factory occupation

BY JOHN KALWAIC

Workers were ousted from Factory 3403, in Chongqing, China, August 30, after they had barricaded themselves in the factory. The workers took matters in their own hands when they learned that their corrupt boss, Zhang Ermao, was involved in a secret deal, illegally selling their factory (previously owned by the "People's Liberation Army") to the Chongqing Endurance Industrial Stock Company.

Factory 3403 had become bankrupt due to Zhang Ermao's secret dealings with the Endurance Corporation. Endurance used the factory for production, but all the profits went into Zhang's hands. As a result, the factory went bankrupt and Zhang made a secret deal with Endurance to sell them the factory for \$22 million instead of having it go up for auction for the \$200 million it was worth. Zhang would then have become the general manager for Endurance.

After the workers discovered this illegal deal they barricaded themselves in the factory to prevent Endurance from taking the plant. The work force of 3,000 workers decided to contribute 10,000 each in Chinese currency to buy the factory for themselves. This amounted to much more than the factory had been sold for.

The response to the workers' barricade was swift. On August 20 Endurance organized an array of private security guards. The guards told the workers to leave but met with no success. They even offered to pay workers 400,000 each in Chinese currency, but workers refused. Then the company lobbied the government and the police to remove these "rioting workers" from the factory. On August 25 the police "explained" that the sale of the factory was legitimate and the factory occupation was illegal. Talks between the police and the workers soon broke down, and police evicted the workers August 30.

China has been experiencing massive corruption as well as abuse of its workers since the government was bitten by the capitalist bug. It will be interesting to see whether large-scale worker resistance will force changes or not. This incident should serve as a warning to Chinese leaders that their people will stand together in solidarity against a government that would sell their livelihood to corrupt bosses and business profiteers.



## Spanish workers defend jobs

Workers from state-owned shipbuilder Izar set up a burning barricade of tires and a boat in Gijon Sept. 17 after police attacked a march by thousands of workers, injuring 23.

Workers have protested across Spain since the company announced plans to separate the lucrative military naval construction sector from the civilian shipyards, which would be partly privatized.

## New Brunswick paper workers briefly seize plant

Thirty workers surrendered control of the St. Anne-Nackawic pulp mill Sept. 15, a day after seizing the plant when management shut down operations without warning, throwing 400 workers on the streets.

The mill, which produces high-quality paper for photography, is owned by Parsons and Whittemore of New York. It dominates employment in the town of 1,000.

Blaming rising timber costs and the stronger Canadian dollar, managers announced they were closing the plant after provincial authorities refused to give it C\$50 million to keep it open.

## German workers protest attack on unemployed

Hundreds of demonstrations have swept Germany since Chancellor Gerhard Schröder announced plans to slash benefits to the long-term jobless. Unemployment reached 10.6 percent in August.

The "reforms" would also require unemployed workers to take any job offered to them, even if it pays well below industry standards or does not utilize their skills.

Outraged at the ruling Social-Democratic Party's anti-labor turn, several unions have suggested breaking the traditional ties between unions and the SPD.

## VW blackmailing workers

Volkswagen AG is threatening to slash 30,000 jobs to force some 176,000 German workers to accept a two-year pay freeze. The IG Metall union is seeking 4 percent annual raises, and has thus far rejected VW's attempts to blackmail workers with the threat to relocate production to plants in other countries — such as Argentina, the Czech Republic, and the United States — where wages are lower.

DaimlerChrysler already won 500 million euros in concessions after threatening to cut 6,000 jobs. GM-owned Opel is seeking an increase in the work week to 40 hours, elimination of annual bonuses, and the closure of one of its two German assembly plants.

The number of German workers covered by union contracts dropped to 68 percent in 2000 from more than 80 percent a decade ago.

## Diamond miners defeated

Diamond mining firm Debswana has reached a wage settlement with the Botswana Mine Workers' Union in the aftermath of a two-week wildcat strike that disrupted some of the world's biggest gem mines.

Returning workers will receive a 10% pay hike and a one-time bonus equal to 10% of annual salary. But 318 workers fired for striking will not be reinstated unless an appeals court rules the strike was legal. Some 450 workers, out of 2,400 strikers, were originally fired in an attempt to break the strike.

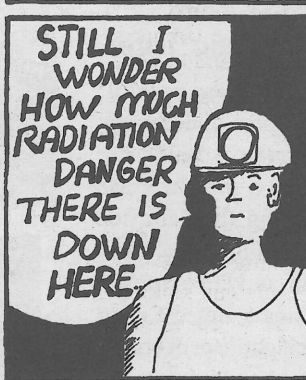
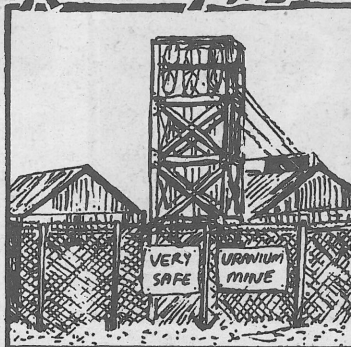
## Philippines no-strike pledge

The Kilusang Mayo Uno (May 1st Movement) union federation has denounced the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines' offer of a strike moratorium as an "anti-worker" scheme that would deprive workers of their most effective weapon against employers.

"Workers' rights to substantial wages and democratic rights are under attack. Wages are being frozen. There are job losses. ... Harassment and campaigns of suppression against organized and unorganized ranks of workers are on the rise. With these circumstances, workers have more justified reasons to launch strikes," said KMU chairman Elmer Labog.

The TUCP made its offer after the government said the country was in the midst of a financial crisis. It asked for employers to agree not to lay-off workers in exchange.

## RANKIN FILE



WAL LARKIN

## Iraqi workers fight anti-union regimes

BY HARRY KELBER

Press coverage of Iraq has been devoted almost exclusively to reports of battles between American troops and insurgents. Very little has been written about Iraqi workers fighting against sweatshop wages and a denial of basic worker rights by the American occupation authority and the "sovereign" interim government.

From the moment the American-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority took power in Baghdad, it began enforcing a 1987 Saddam Hussein law banning unions in public enterprises, where most Iraqis worked.

Despite threats of repression, labor activists have been organizing unions not only in Baghdad, but in the oil and electrical enterprises around Basra and the southern port of Um Qasr. The new unions have won several strikes for increased pay.

Low wages and heavy unemployment are two major issues accounting for the upsurge in labor activity, according to David Bacon, one of the few reporters covering the Iraqi labor scene. After U.S. troops arrived in Baghdad, workers were given "emergency" salaries of \$60 to \$120 a month. Several months later, the base pay was cut to \$40 and housing and food subsidies were eliminated.

Longshoremen at the port of Um Qasr were blocked from voting in an election for officers of their new union, and three workers were fired for trying to organize. They struck briefly because of the low wage rates, and staged another job action when managers decided to pay them in old bank notes, worth only 75% of the new ones.

Bacon says the U.S. is keeping wages low

## The legacy of Aristide

The Ouanaminthe Free Trade Zone straddles the Massacre River marking Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic. *Le Monde Diplomatique* reports that to build the zone Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ousted government brutally crushed resistance by tenant farmers and agricultural laborers who were promised compensation that never arrived.

Instead, clothing subcontractor Grupo M, the largest Dominican employer with a reputation for brutality, got \$20 million from the World Bank to set up shop in Ouanaminthe. Aristide snuck into town April 8, 2003, to lay the foundation stone for the new factory. Haitians only heard about it the day after, in the Dominican press.

Grupo M's Haitian employees worked at high speed for long hours in terrible conditions for a pittance. On October 13 they organized the Codevi Workers Union; Grupo M has reinstated the 34 union members it fired in a bid to crush the union, but refused to negotiate over working conditions. When workers briefly struck in June, Dominican soldiers attacked them and 370 workers were laid off and work quotas increased. But workers continue their fight for better conditions.

to attract foreign investors. "The Bush administration sees Iraq as a free-market beachhead into the Middle East and South Asia."

Last September, the CPA published Order 39, permitting foreign ownership of business, except for the oil industry. State enterprises listed to be sold off included cement and fertilizer plants, phosphate and sulphur mines, pharmaceutical factories and the country's airline.

The threat of privatization and the influx of U.S. contractors has stirred more labor unrest. Workers fear that new owners will cut costs by laying off workers.

A recent study by the economic faculty of Baghdad University shows that unemployment has reached 70%. Few Iraqis have been hired by companies doing reconstruction work, and when they do get hired they have to pay a fee of as much as a month's wages.

The government doesn't provide unemployment benefits, nor does it have a welfare system, so the loss of a steady job at a state enterprise condemns a family to misery.

Samir Hanoon of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions in Basra warns that if the ban on unions isn't lifted, "we will take other actions — protests, demonstrations and total shutdowns."

Installation of Prime Minister Allawi's interim administration has not improved salaries or respect for labor rights. Hanoon's warning seems as unheeded by Baghdad's new authorities as it was by the CPA.

## No rights for guest workers in Russia

BY JOHN KALWAIC

A Russian court in the city of Omsk, located in Western Siberia, has ruled to completely shut down a labor union of mostly Chinese guest workers. The court ruled that the workers were not Russian citizens and so were not entitled to union rights. Russian nationals in the union tried to make a deal that would have allowed the union to continue to legally function, but restricted membership to citizens, but the court rejected the offer.

There are about 17,800 foreign workers in the Omsk region and employers there will probably hire as many as 3,000 next year. The majority are Chinese. Russia now has over 800,000 Chinese guest workers among its population of 145 million. They started as a trickle of farm workers, but over the years more and more guest workers have come and are now working in other capacities.

Hopefully, both the native Russian workers and Chinese guest workers will realize that they have more to gain if they stick together rather than picking fights about who is a citizen and who is not. If this ruling goes unchallenged it will be a major blow to the guest worker movement and the working class of Russia. Only worker solidarity can bring down the bosses of Omsk.