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The war on terror

BY ADAM LINCOLN, AUSTRALIA

The second Gulf War fought in Iraq by the United States and allies – Australia and the United Kingdom – represents the coherent progression of a number of short- and long-term objectives of the current Bush administration and their clients in the context of the 'War on Terror.'

The first Gulf War provided the U.S. cover for its continued expansion and development of conventional, chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction. In a country with no universal health care system, 52 percent of the federal budget is spent on defense.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Communist Bloc, whilst allowing the unparalleled (in human history) expansion of global capital, has created domestic risks. Citizens might actually demand social services. Workers might attempt to organise against the ruthless exploitation occurring as capital increases levels of exploitation in the developing world and reverses social gains made in first world countries such as Australia. People might actually believe the hype and start thinking we are all many people/one planet, like the TV commercials say, and assume that matters like third world poverty and authoritarian political rule in the bulk of the world would be eradicated as promised.

Saddam Hussein served a useful role as the strongman attacking the defenceless, with the U.S. to somberly step in as global cop and put things right. The spin-off for the arms industry and defence contractors came through the ability to use newly developed military technologies on the streets of Baghdad, instead of in the lab; on the fleeing Iraqi conscripts in the southern desert, instead of the testing range.

The two Gulf Wars and the War on Terror are part of the war on the working class. The unchecked expansion of capital occurring under globalisation has truly internationalised the exploitation and repression of the world's people. The second Gulf War must be seen in the context of the War on Terror – a cynical move to capitalise on the 9/11 terrorist attack and impose a post-Cold War security doctrine for the foreseeable future which will reverse the remaining social gains made in the 20th century in the United States and of course around the world.

The ongoing support by the UN Security Council for reconstruction in Iraq will depend on many geo-political factors, but cannot provide justification for the war. The UN Security Council stance will reflect the benefits Council members obtain in exercising greater political and economic control over further regions of Central Asia and the Middle East, consistent with the political annexation of Afghanistan by the U.S. and U.K. The maintenance of brutal, undemocratic, puppet states in the region is vital for Western economic supremacy and maintenance of existing *continued on page 10*



BIG BUSINESS (to Labor, generously): "My good fellow, you'll be well paid for your patriotic action in tending this glorious plant; you shall have all the fruit above the ground – I'll take ONLY the roots!"

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NLRB attacks rights of non-union workers

BY ALEXIS BUSS

The National Labor Relations Board voted 3-2 June 9 to overturn a recent decision applying the *Weingarten* right to the 92% of private-sector American workers who do not work under a union contract.

The *Weingarten* right is named for a 1975 case allowing unionized workers to insist that a union representative be present during "investigatory interviews," which are meetings with management that a worker believes could result in discipline.

The decision is particularly ironic because of the relative insignificance of the underlying charge. Born from an allegation of harassment – no details on the harassment charge are available – the actual firings which precipitated this case were never up for legal review.

Onto the facts: In October 2001, an attorney representing a former temporary worker wrote a letter to IBM alleging harassment by two men who worked in a North Carolina facility. IBM assigned the investigation of the harassment to e-business Solutions Manager Nels Maine, based in Raleigh, NC.

Maine began a series of interviews with supervisors and employees. Two men who were alleged to be engaged in harassment, Kenneth Schult and Steven Parsley, were interviewed individually Oct. 15. Contrary to IBM guidelines for conducting investigations of workplace harassment, after both interviews the men were told they could not discuss the meeting with coworkers.

Robert Bannon, who wasn't accused of harassment, but was mentioned in the complaint letter, was also interviewed Oct. 15.

Parsley then sought out Schult in his office and spoke about the interviews with Schult, Bannon, who shared Schult's office, and supervisor Mary Geerdes.

Parsley, Schult and Bannon were all placed on "management directed time off" Oct. 19. Parsley's project manager, Kenneth Jones, called him two days later to discuss details of a project Parsley was working on. The conversation turned to Parsley's suspension, and Jones, a former lieutenant colonel in the Army, advised him that "if something is adverse, be sure that you either record the conversation or have a witness."

The three suspended coworkers spoke with one another on the phone and later met and agreed that each would ask to have one of the others present at their next interview. However, when they made this request, Maine refused to allow any coworker to attend the interviews.

About a month later, all three men were fired. They filed internal company appeals mentioning that they were refused the right to have a coworker present at the meetings.

Schult, Parsley and Bannon filed charges with the NLRB in January 2002. The NLRB regional director decided to pursue the case in April 2002, and Administrative Law Judge George Carson II tried the case August 9, 2002. His decision directed IBM to cease and desist from refusing witnesses to workers in investigatory interview situations, and to not violate Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act. IBM was ordered to post a notice to employees that, among the ordinary instructions, said, "We will not deny a witness to any of you who request a witness during *continued on page 4*

New York Wob fights for right to wear turban

BY KEVIN "HARRY" HARRINGTON

All over the United States, Sikhs are being attacked. Members of a religion that originated in India, Sikhs have been shot, some killed and otherwise abused in the post-9/11 reaction. Sikh temples have been burned and shot at as well. Sikhs who wear turbans and beards are often mistaken for Muslims and are taking some of the worst brunt of the anti-Muslim attacks taking place in this country.

This pernicious reaction is affecting Sikhs even on their jobs. Despite the Sikh community having nothing to do with Islam or terrorism, some people just can't but vent their anti-Islamic hatred at this obvious and vulnerable group. I have worked in the New York City subway system for some 23 years and am now fighting to save my rights and job.

I work as a subway train operator and was recently told by Metropolitan Transit Authority superintendent T. Bohanan that I will no longer be able to work in passenger service and will instead be relegated to the underground's gulag by being involuntarily transferred to working in train yards. This is the result of wearing the Sikh religion's turban, something I have done every day for the last 23 years of work. This is in violation of my seniority rights.

After being "re-assigned," I went to the newspapers and was soon in many of the city's dailies as a featured story. Quickly the networks and cable stations interviewed me. This exposure of the MTA's categorical unfairness resulted in the end of my involuntary transfer, and MTA President L. Reuter returned me to my old job.

About a week later, the MTA president rescinded his "reinstatement" in a letter to Transport Workers Union President Roger Toussaint indicating that I would have to pick a job not in passenger service or I would be disciplined and not allowed to work. He just could not bear the elation my victory inspired among my fellow workers.

I was outraged and insisted that I would not be bullied or cajoled into allowing management to "pick" my job. The MTA president said in quite Orwellian language that I should "avail myself of the 'opportunity.'" Such an abrogation of my hard-won seniority and autonomy just ain't gonna happen with my cooperation. I told my fellow workers. This "opportunity" would result in a loss of about twenty percent of my wages by being demoted to yard conditions of pay as well as losing holidays off and weekends free.

The Transport Workers Union has also taken up my cause. This solidarity put my resistance on a firmer basis.

In my struggle I first went to get the message out to my fellow workers through the media, which was very receptive. Many passengers have indicated to me by signs and gestures that they support me. The support of the community, my co-workers and the press were crucial in the MTA president initially rescinding the transfer order.

This is all a great contradiction. The USA is calling for India's army to serve in Iraq (Sikhs are an important element in India's armed forces) while Sikhs are being attacked daily in every aspect of their lives in the USA. *continued on page 10*

Remembering Frank Girard

I received the June IW. It is an excellent paper and I want to continue receiving it. I was a member of BRAC (railway & airline clerks), when they still had some nuts. I was one of their last key operators, which by the 1970s only existed on the U.S.-Mexico border. When they gave away my railway retirement, I left. (They gave away everyone's retirement to Social Security who did not have in 10 full years.)

I was very glad to see the small tribute to Frank Girard. What a wonderful human being, patient and understanding. No one can replace him, but I would join the IWW if I could afford it. Last I looked, I was about \$40 billion short of Warren Buffet.

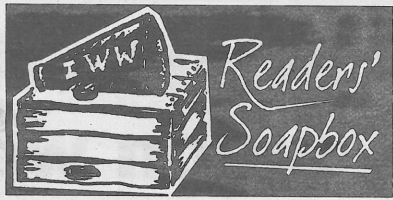
Robert Zuni, Texas

Note: The IWW provides free subscriptions to prisoners such as FW Zuni. We welcome contributions to help defray the expense.

George Orwell, George Bush and the Spanish CNT

In Volume Four of the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus record that "In 1945 both Orwell and [Arthur] Koestler felt the decline of democratic feeling throughout the world called for an international organization [whose] aims were to protect the individual, in no matter what country, against arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without trial," among other rights.

In Iraq, the current prisoner scandal shows that the U.S. was arresting people without cause and terrorizing, torturing and sexually abusing many of them. It goes beyond seven "bad apples." The administration and military brass are trying to make them the fall guys. *Newsweek* reported that Bush ordered the creation of secret CIA detention centers. We don't know the extent. And we don't know what else is around. Thus, the United States Government may be creating its own Gulag Archipelago.



What else do we not know? If Bush's policy of fighting terrorism is working, why did we have the atrocity in Madrid? I am proud of the CNT (National Confederation of Labor) statement after the Madrid atrocity. Yes, as they point out, working people are the biggest victims of these atrocities. So, as the CNT said, we must build a new world without violence, built without violence.

Anyone wanting a free copy of my article, "George Orwell: The Revolutionary," should send me a number 10 envelope, stamped and self-addressed to the following address:

Raymond Solomon
Free Voices
c/o The Solomon Press
98-12 66th Ave. Suite 2
Forest Hills, NY 11374

Grassroots workers' history

The histories of working people are rich and powerful. Looking back on these histories allows time for reflection, which inherently leads to the romanticism of labor's legacy of struggle, strife and resilience.

Today, many of us forget that our history continues. To ensure an accurate depiction of who we are, it is up to us to record our history. So often overlooked are the simple moments deemed insignificant or portrayed inaccurately by mainstream media and other history recording institutions.

Some of us are compiling "Cultures of The Modern Workplace," an annual collection of stories, poems and artwork related to the place in which we spend the majority of our time - work. The project will be published online in pdf format, and archived in print format in libraries.

We are looking for submissions of up to 1,000 words, as well as artwork, about work and workplace resistance. For more information email workhistory2002@yahoo.com.

— X351273

Farewell, Fellow Workers

I met Dave Dellinger at a small student conference in NYC. Only 10 of us showed up and I heard him speak and got to ask him questions for hours. He changed my life.

I got his autobiography that day, *From Yale to Jail*. In it he writes of leaving Yale, riding the rails and meeting Wobblies in train yards. When he was printing his own peace magazine on a small press, he joined the IWW, using the IWW bug on some of the best radical publishing of the anti-war movement.

— Kenneth Miller

Rick Fielding

Toronto musician Rick Fielding died March 20, after a long battle with cancer. He toured extensively throughout North America performing folk and blues music, did custom leather work, and hosted a radio show.

Utah Phillips recently gave the IWW a handsomely crafted leather wallet hand-tooled by FW Fielding while he was in the IWW, profusely decorated with IWW graphics and the perfect size for carrying a *Little Red Songbook* and a red card.

Attention, Wobbly women!

A Women's Caucus was formed at the General Assembly last year and we decided to create a Listserve. The Listserve will provide a forum for women members of the IWW to discuss issues regarding building the involvement, empowerment and greater visibility of women in the One Big Union. We need more Wobbly women to join and participate on the Listserve, we need your voices, energy and ideas if this project is going to work. To join, e-mail: laura.price@earthlink.net

2004 IWW Assembly

The 2004 IWW General Assembly will be held in Edmonton, Canada, Sept. 3 - 6. The Edmonton Branch has added a General Assembly page to its web site, <http://edmonton.iww.ca/ga.html>, which will be updated regularly as details firm up.

Starbucks workers turn to IWW

Workers at a Starbucks outlet at 36th and Madison streets in midtown Manhattan (New York City) filed for a NLRB election May 19, seeking to certify the Industrial Workers of the World as their union. If successful, they would become the first unionized Starbucks workers in the United States.

Several Canadian outlets are represented by the Canadian Auto Workers union; workers staffing Starbucks-branded kiosks in some U.S. grocery stores are UFCW members.

"Behind the green aprons and smiles are individuals living in serious poverty," said IWW member Daniel Gross, who works at the store. "Starbucks cashes in on a community friendly image but it certainly doesn't extend to their workers or coffee farmers. That's why we went union."

Starbucks is a \$15 billion company with over 7,500 locations around the world. In New York City, with one of the highest costs of living in the world, Starbucks workers start at \$7.75 an hour. Most work on a part-time basis, not knowing from week to week how many hours they will be assigned. Even workers who put in enough hours to be eligible for Starbucks' health care and retirement plans rarely can afford to participate.

Workers also complain that chronic understaffing and poor store design has created unsafe working conditions.

Starbucks has asked the NLRB to reject the union election, arguing that several supervisors should be included in the bargaining unit and that workers should not be allowed to organize store by store. Instead, Starbucks is pressing for a unit that would include some three dozen Manhattan outlets. A decision on the bargaining unit is expected from the Board by July 2.

New York City Wobs are distributing a Starbucks fact sheet to customers (available at www.iww.org), and reaching out to workers at other Starbucks outlets throughout the city to encourage them to organize.

Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ EMANCIPATION

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The "independent contractor" racket

BY X351277, CHICAGO GMB

It seems that more and more businesses are being considered "non-employers." A non-employer business is one that does not officially have paid employees. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "most non-employers are self-employed individuals operating very small unincorporated businesses, which may or may not be the owner's principal source of income." But not all.

A growing number of these firms hire workers, who are considered "independent contractors" instead of "employees." Not all companies using independent contractors are non-employers, many also have official employees on payroll. Independent contractors are considered individual businesses for the purposes of federal income tax.

"Independent contractors" often rent necessary equipment from the non-employer business in order to perform the work and earn income. This rental arrangement is one of the factors identifying the non-employer as a separate business and not an employer.

Examples of independent contractor relationships in business include taxi drivers, owner-operator truckers, bike couriers, and ice cream truck vendors, among others. The following describes how this increasingly common independent contractor association functions in the mobile food vending company I work for.

There are twelve functioning trucks at this business with a workforce of 20-25. The job is full-time and seasonal. The boss owns all the trucks and rents the garage from which

they are dispatched and repaired.

At the start of each season, the truck vendors must fill out a form that legally declares the vendors as "lessees" of the trucks and sets the rental fee at 70% of the vendors' daily sales. The contract also holds the "lessee" responsible for his/her own taxes and fuel.

This "business-to-business" relationship should give the company owner no reason to treat the "renters" as employees, though that is exactly what happens.

The "non-employer" often harasses the workers, telling them they are lazy and that the job is easy. If a worker makes a mistake or does not show up to work one day, the leaser will publicly scold the individual. Some workers believe that he purposely waits for them to be talking to other workers in order to humiliate the vendor in front of the most people possible.

In addition, the training process is somewhat discouraging. There is no set schedule for training. Some people train for two days, and some train for up to nine days. The trainee is not paid during this time.

The boss can refuse work to someone on any given day, for no reason. In fact, the contract guarantees his freedom to refuse work. One worker had a breakdown last summer after working four weeks straight, out of fear that his truck would be given to another worker. He quit and never came back. With a long supply of backup drivers and no set schedules, the workers are in daily competition with each other for work.

The business grosses several hundred thousand dollars per year. The workers are paid on commission (30% of daily sales) and can not set their own prices for the products. On days when sales are low, workers can make less than \$20, for ten hours of work.

Average take-home income is \$50-\$70 per day. The average day is nine hours long. The contract says that the "lessee" must pay for his/her own gas. With gas prices at their current rate, this means a daily gas expense



of \$12-\$15. So in effect, workers are only taking home \$35-\$58 for nine hours work.

Many workers who are legally considered independent contractors say they feel more like mistreated employees. Even if they wanted a formal organization, like a labor union, to represent them, they may not be able to organize since U.S. labor law does not recognize them as workers. (Of course, workers are often illegally misclassified as independent contractors in order to avoid payroll taxes and liability; if the boss retains control over the work, the government may determine that the workers are actually employees despite the IC contract. But this can involve a prolonged legal process.) Because of this, many labor unions will not attempt to help these workers.

One of the few unions that does offer support is the Industrial Workers of the World. This is because the IWW does not rely on legal recognition, but rather on solidarity and creative use of direct action on the job, to win the demands of workers. Our long history has shown that workers are capable of when they act as a democratic union and not as a bureaucratic legal machine.

If these "independent contractor" workers are to ever have a chance to escape the injustices of the non-employer relationship, they must be imaginative in their tactics.

U. Utah Phillips received the Labor Heritage Foundation's Joe Hill Award June 21, at the AFL-CIO's George Meany Center. "I always thought someone who told me not to live in the past was trying to get me to forget something important," Phillips told the crowd. Pictured (L-R) are presenters Joe Glazer, Utah Phillips, AFM Local 1000 President John McCutcheon, IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss, and Faith Petric.



Building defense infrastructure: Portland GDC's jail support

BY HENRY LAMBERT

At a recent Saturday night forum, members of the General Defense Committee of the IWW presented the case for a standing defense committee for the working class. GDC presenters combined historical examples and on-the-ground organizing in Portland, Oregon, to argue that providing jail support for demonstrations fosters militancy and encourages participation in direct action tactics.

Portland's GDC provided critical jail support last year for hundreds of demonstrators nabbed at the WTO agricultural meeting in Sacramento. One such demonstrator, organizer Hannah Leah, decided to join the GDC after finding herself arrested and shipped out of town in the middle of the night. "It was comforting having jail support there to back me up," Leah said.

Leah and GDC member Ian Wallace presented historical background on working class defense and labor struggles. In summarizing the 1917 origins of the GDC, Wallace reminded the audience of the tension between methods to free prisoners that rely on the legal system and methods that utilize labor's industrial power.

Before the emergence of the GDC local, Portland's Belmont Law Center, a free speech legal defense service, avoided working with jail support groups, finding them counterproductive. But now, "having the GDC be the initial contact with arrestees makes our job in legal defense much more effective," says Stuart Sugarman, an attorney with the Center. "They're organized and reliable."

At the forum, Sugarman stressed the importance of the GDC's jail support and praised a local copwatch group for collecting statements and contact information from witnesses of police misconduct.

GDC member Marianne Hall talked about the Portland local and how it operates. "Providing jail support for demonstrations is a good way to gain practice supporting arrestees," says Hall. She described how the GDC is developing a defense infrastructure that anticipates larger, more intense, industrial struggles.

The jail support group was functioning prior to affiliating as a local of the General Defense Committee. After supporting 175 arrested demonstrators on the first day of the 2003 Iraq invasion, they decided that teaming up with the IWW might add to their ca-

abilities. As the GDC, they've done support for anti-war marches, Bush and Cheney protests, and a large healthcare march among others. They have their own core group of volunteers and a growing support base that extends outside the local IWW membership. The Portland GDC hopes to expand its work to include support for strikes, Jobs with Justice actions, and police accountability efforts.

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.



NLRB ruling attacks workers' rights...

continued from page 1

interviews which could reasonably lead to discipline, and we will not conduct any interview without a witness after a witness has been requested."

Instead, IBM appealed the case to the national Board.

Like I said before, ironies abound in this case, and foremost is that even though the initial ruling was that the company broke the law, this charge could never have resulted in the three workers' reinstatement. This was a limitation of *Weingarten* from the beginning — a boss was still free to fire a worker who wanted a coworker or union rep. present at a meeting. The easiest way? Just don't have the meeting and fire them anyhow. For workers in an employee-at-will environment, who have no guarantee of due process, it isn't illegal or a breach of contract to fire a worker who is suspected of wrongdoing without ever getting their side of the story. (The 8.2% of private sector workers who do have a union contract can use the grievance procedure in their contract to seek due process.)

Despite its limitations, invoking the *Weingarten* right has been important to workers who are in the process of organizing. When organizing takes place, management normally turns up the heat by scrutinizing and harassing workers, often in the form of one-on-one meetings. While having a coworker present will not level the playing field, workers facing questioning by management often feel more secure with a coworker there to bear witness, even if only to later corroborate what was said.

A coworker being present can often mean the difference between getting fired and standing up for the collective rights of the

Weingarten timeline

1975: In *NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 U.S. 251, the Supreme Court ruled that the NLRB's determination that Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act "creates a statutory right in an employee to refuse to submit without union representation to an interview which he reasonably fears may result in his discipline" was "at least permissible under" the Act. The Court also acknowledged that "[i]t is the province of the NLRB, not the courts, to determine whether or not the 'need' [for a *Weingarten*-type rule] exists in light of changing industrial practices and the NLRB's cumulative experience in dealing with labor-management relations." The Court did not address whether the same rule would apply to a non-unionized workplace.

1982: In *Materials Research Corp.*, 262 NLRB 1010, the Board extended the *Weingarten* right to cover employees in non-union workplaces, holding that such employees have a right to request the presence of a coworker in an investigatory interview which the employee reasonably believes could result in disciplinary action.

1985: The Board reversed itself in *Sears, Roebuck & Co.*, 274 NLRB 230, holding that *Weingarten* principles do not apply in circumstances where there is no certified or recognized union. In *Sears*, the Board also held that the Act compelled the finding that *Weingarten* rights do not extend to a nonunionized workplace.

1988: In *E.I. DuPont de Nemours*, 289 NLRB 627, 628, the Board adhered to the rule enunciated in *Sears*, but acknowledged that "the statute might be amenable to other interpretations."

2000: In *Epilepsy Foundation*, 331 NLRB 92, the Board revived the holding of 1982's *Materials Research*, as a permissible interpretation of the Act.

2004: In *IBM Corporation*, 341 NLRB 148, the Board returned to the *DuPont* ruling, taking *Weingarten* rights away from workers who are not represented by a union.

workers on the job.

There's another reason why the IBM case was an especially tough one. While the details of the alleged harassment aren't elaborated upon, it is troublesome to think about how three men, two of whom are alleged to have engaged in some form of harassment, might cooperate to stick up for one another. It is almost certainly this troubling scenario which led employers' associations to seize on this case as their example to press for *Epilepsy* (which extended *Weingarten* to non-union workers) to be overturned. Seven employer associations filed a joint amicus (friend of the court) brief responding to three cases: IBM, a case involving a now-fired union business manager asking for representation (IBEW Local 236 from Albany, NY), and a case involving a Wal-Mart outlet in Arizona. Wal-Mart also filed their own amicus brief for the IBM case, as did the management rights-focused Council on Labor Law Equality.

Disturbingly, not a single labor organization filed an amicus brief on the IBM case, even though four labor-interested parties (UFCW, IBEW, a former IBEW business representative, and the attorney representing the IBM workers) were provided copies of the management-side amicus brief. The UFCW and AFL-CIO did jointly file a response brief concerning just the Wal-Mart case. UFCW presently has two cases waiting review by the Washington Board concerning *Weingarten* rights at the world's leading anti-union employer, Wal-Mart.

The main issue that makes this case a problem for those engaged in worker organizing is that there was no concerted activity in the IBM case, other than what came after the investigations began. Workers who are presently organizing around grievances, but for one reason or another are not pursuing formal representation, are dealt the toughest hand with this case. A precedent has now been created by a group of workers who were not engaged in organizing that will be used against workers who are. Will the addition of pre-existing concerted activity to the mix in a similar case make a difference? It's barely contemplated at all by the Board.

Are unions lawful?

In a pair of early June 3-2 votes, the U.S. National Labor Relations Board announced that workers at non-union jobs would no longer have the right to have a coworker present during management interviews that could lead to disciplinary action, and might outlaw voluntary union recognition.

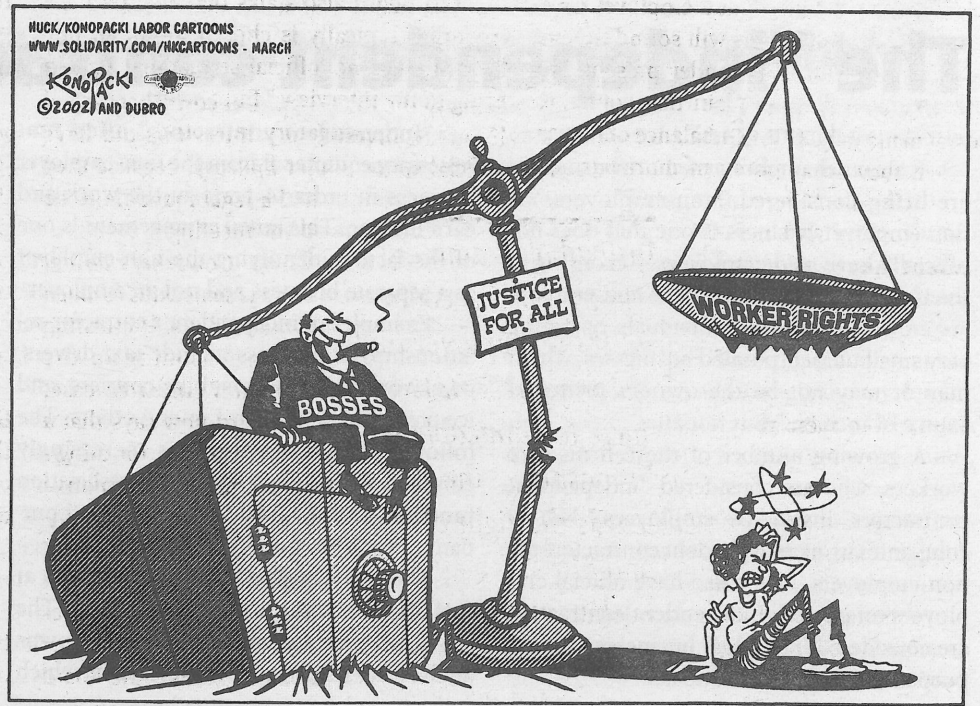
The NLRB announced June 7 that it is taking "a critical look" at "card check" agreements that enable workers to win voluntary union representation by having a majority sign petitions or authorization cards instead of going through NLRB elections.

Many unions now rely on card check agreements as an alternative to NLRB election processes that allow employers a free hand to intimidate workers and drag out the legal process for months or years. Most members organized by AFL-CIO unions in recent years were brought in through card check agreements.

"Workers and unions have been increasingly looking at ways to organize outside of the NLRB election process, because it is so flawed and so broken," AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff said.

The NLRB is also considering outlawing "neutrality" agreements under which employers agree not to interfere with unions' recruiting efforts. Typically, employers sign these agreements in response to community campaigns launched in response to bosses' union-busting efforts, or as part of labor agreements with unions representing other workers employed by the same firm.

The NLRB investigation was prompted by agreements the United Auto Workers union bargained with auto parts makers Dana Corp. and Metaldyne Corp. After the UAW successfully organized their plants, manage-



The Bush-appointed National Labor Relations Board overturned the judge's decision in a narrow 3-2 decision.

Why did the Board decide to reexamine the *Epilepsy* decision now, so soon after the ruling? Why give and then take away rights granted to American workers?

First, we simply have too many rights. In the majority opinion, Chairman Battista and Board member Meisburg argue that because "employers face ever-increasing requirements to conduct workplace investigations pursuant to federal, state, and local laws, particularly laws addressing workplace discrimination and harassment," it is no longer appropriate for coworkers to help one another at such meetings.

In addition, the Board apparently believes employees should have fewer rights in this age of "corporate abuse and fiduciary lapses," as if internal investigations of rank-and-file workers were the missing component in heading off major corporate abuse. Worse yet, references to "the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath," are grounds to take away our rights because, as a matter of policy, the Board "must now take into account the presence of both real and threatened terrorist attacks."

But while references to September 11 are

ment apparently encouraged anti-union workers to petition to decertify the union. U.S. labor law provides unions with a one-year grace period to negotiate a contract before they can be decertified; the NLRB is considering allowing immediate decertification votes where there was no NLRB election.

National anti-labor board

The NLRB was established by Congress during the Great Depression in an effort to break a wave of militant labor struggles sweeping the country and to channel workers' struggles into a regulatory system where they could be more easily controlled. Never friendly to workers' interests, in recent decades the Board has become increasingly controlled by corporate interests.

The Board's five members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. While they are required by law to be divided 3-2 between Democrats and Republicans, there is no requirement that any Board members have union or working-class backgrounds. Indeed, a review of NLRB members' official biographies posted on the Board's own web site makes it clear that the NLRB is dominated by management attorneys.

NLRB Chairman Robert Battista, appointed by President Bush, was a management labor relations lawyer with the Detroit firm Butzel Long, which he joined shortly after graduating law school in 1964 and left recently to join the Board.

Ronald Meisburg, a Bush recess appointment who has not been confirmed by the Senate, was previously a partner with the union-busting law firm of Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, P.C. He was a member of the Employment Lawyers Advisory Council of the National Association of Manufacturers from 1996 to 1998.

made a few times in the decision, anti-terrorism is not the meat of the Board's reasoning. All four "policy considerations [which] support the denial of the *Weingarten* right in the nonunionized workplace" relate to the Board's expectation that professional union representatives are the only appropriate representatives of workers, simply because they are professionals. The points are as follows:

"1. Coworkers do not represent the interests of the entire workforce." This is a claim the Board made in *DuPont*, which was rejected as "wholly speculative" in *Epilepsy Foundation*. Under the IBM reasoning, the only imaginable way the entire workforce could be represented is through a collective-bargaining contract. It seems oddly important to the Board that the workplace-wide considerations of any given grievance are more important than an expression of concerted activity, which is a primary right guaranteed in the Act. And stranger still that the only people who could correctly weigh the implications of an investigatory interview would be from outside the workplace.

"2. Coworkers cannot redress the imbalance of power between employers and employees." The Board believes that only the presence of a union rep. "puts both parties on a level playing field." Why are they on a level playing

Peter Schaumber, a Bush appointee, was a federal prosecutor before entering private practice as a trial attorney. Schaumber has been a particularly ideological Board member, filing a concurring opinion in the recent decision to abolish workers' right to have a coworker present during management interrogations in which he pointed to the Common Law master-servant doctrine as the normative model for labor relations and argued that employers have the right to discharge workers in retaliation for filing workers compensation and unemployment claims.

The two Democratic members, who have dissented from some recent Board anti-labor rulings, can not be considered union partisans. Dennis Walsh, originally appointed by President Clinton and reappointed by Bush, spent most of his career as a NLRB staff attorney, but spent five years representing employers as an associate with the Philadelphia law firm of Spear, Wilderman, Borish, Endy, Browning and Spear.

Wilma Liebman, another Clinton appointee reappointed by Bush, went to the NLRB from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, where she was deputy director. Prior to that she served as legal counsel to the Bricklayers and Teamsters unions, and as an NLRB staff attorney.

Tax-funded union-busting

A three-member panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (covering nine western states) has overturned a California law barring companies that receive state contracts from using that money on anti-union campaigns. The court ruled that the law violated federal law guaranteeing employers the right to actively campaign against unionization of their workforce. A challenge against a similar New York state law is under appeal.

field? Because the union and employer have a contract, naturally. This will sound ridiculous to those who work under present-day contracts, as it is quite plain that contracts are not made to level the imbalance of power – rather, they are made to memorialize the very different levels of power workers and management have. Can the union fire management? Can the union change how work is organized? Can the union shut down operations and move them away?

Two especially groundless statements are made in this decision to justify why coworkers cannot redress the power imbalance at a workplace as well as a union representative. “A coworker does not usually have a union representative’s knowledge of the workplace and its politics” and a coworker “typically has no other matters to discuss with an employer.” These statements are wildly asserted without any attempt to justify them. How it is imagined that a union rep. would have more knowledge about workplace politics, or be privy to more workplace issues, than a rank-and-file worker is never explained.

Global survey charts spread of repression against unions

The ICFTU’s 2003 annual survey of workers’ rights catalogues severe abuses. While the toll of 129 murdered unionists is less than the year before, it is still a grim reminder of the dangers faced by unionists. The study covers 134 countries, highlighting assassinations, assaults, arrests, death threats and firings for joining unions, presenting collective demands, or taking strike action.

Governments in many countries have installed complicated procedures to hamper union activity or strike action. Employers compound the violation by frequently violating even the inadequate laws on the books.

Eager to secure short-term benefits that the global market may provide, governments see unions as an obstacle to their economic development. In Uganda, for example, President Museveni publicly admitted to the mass dismissal of striking textile workers because their “action would scare off investors.”

In 2003, Colombia was again the most dangerous place in the world to be a unionist. A total of 90 people were killed for union activity in the Latin American country.

In November Burma sentenced three representatives of the Federation of Trade Unions to death. In China, authorities continued to suppress all signs of independent union activity. A record 1,900 unionists were arrested in the Republic of Korea, with 201 prosecutions. The effects of new forms of repression were evident in the case of Bae Dal-ho, a 50-year-old union activist at the Doosan shipbuilding firm who burnt himself to death in January 2003. A suicide note left in his car said, “due to the company’s provisional seizure of my wage I have not received any pay for more than six months.” His wages had been withheld and access to his bank account restricted by court order as a result of his role in a 47-day strike the previous year.

The Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe continued to show its total intolerance of unionism. Some 2,800 postal workers were fired for taking part in a jobs boycott, representing almost half of the 6,566 African workers dismissed in 2003 for union activities.

The Middle East remains the most restrictive region, placing severe limitations on union rights. But there has been a gradual thawing in some countries.

Nine of the ten new European Union member states were cited, largely for disparities between labor legislation recognizing union rights and the reality. For example, management of a car depot in Lithuania forced each worker to sign a letter of resignation from their union or face dismissal.

The Board also states that “because the coworker typically is chosen on an ad hoc basis, he has no ‘official status’ that he can bring to the interview.” But coworkers asked to attend investigatory interviews did have ‘official status’ under *Epilepsy*, because they had a legal mandate to be at the meeting.

“3. Coworkers do not have the same skills as union representatives.” Returning to the reasoning in the original *Weingarten* case, the Board now says that a primary reason for allowing a union representative to attend investigatory interviews is the advantage it gives the employer. Assuming that the union representative possesses “unique skills,” the Board believes that a union representative can facilitate the interview in helpful ways “which save the employer valuable production time.”

A problematic justification for confining *Weingarten* to workplaces with a recognized union, no? Why does the employer’s concern for production time trump workers’ rights to concerted activity? Clearly the point of the presence of an advocate in an investigatory interview is not to speed the process so everyone can return to work.

The Board does briefly contemplate the difficulty of a situation where an employee requests a “co-conspirator” as a representative coworker. In *IBM* this could have been a problem, but none of the workers got to the point of naming the person who they wanted to come along, so it did not become an issue in the case. Instead of establishing a guideline for this sort of situation, the Board prefers to make a “bright line” in order to provide instruction to employers, and throw out

I have seen the future, and it works

BY ERIC LEE

I returned a few weeks ago from a month-long journey to Australia and New Zealand, countries in which the union movement has taken some huge steps forward in its use of the new communications technology. I’d like to share six of the things that I saw – examples of trade unions using the net effectively.

1. There are unions in Australia which recruit members online. By that I don’t mean that they allow potential members to print out a PDF file of the application form which they can then fill in by pen and mail in. (Though there are unions which consider that a kind of “online recruitment.”) Nor do I mean that a potential member fills in an online form and then gets sent something in the post which they have to fill in again in order to join. I’m talking about real online recruitment, where joining a union is as easy as shopping at Amazon.com.

A pioneer in this field is the New South Wales Teachers Federation, whose website is located at www.nswtf.org.au/ The NSWTF website allows teachers to join their union, paying with a credit card – in spite of a rather complex payment structure. If they can do this, why can’t workers join any union, anywhere, the same way? (Editor: A similar feature exists at www.iww.org.)

2. Unions in Australia have begun to make use of a campaigning model pioneered by LabourStart, using keyword-based advertising on Google. One of the first to do so is the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union. In early May, childcare workers and their supporters across Australia took part in an email campaign based at the LHMU’s website (www.lhmu.org.au). At one point, a thousand email messages a day were pouring into the inbox of the country’s treasurer, Peter Costello. Google’s keyword-based advertising is now playing an increasing role in the union’s online campaigns.

3. In several of the events I participated

the *Weingarten* right all together in workplaces where there is no certified or recognized union.

“4. The presence of a coworker may compromise the confidentiality of information.” This is probably the most strikingly odd logic the Board uses to justify the reduction of workplace rights. The Board contends that an employer in a non-union setting has an obligation to preserve confidential information, and cannot trust a mere coworker to keep matters confidential.

Tangled up in this are two kinds of confidentiality: 1) confidential information for the employee being interviewed, like medical records or allegations of theft; and 2) facts of an investigation that might come out in an interview that the employer might wish to remain confidential.

The Board does not draw a distinction between workers who request the presence of a coworker and arguably forego their own confidentiality rights, and the indisputable right of a worker to talk with other coworkers about problems in a workplace that might arise from an investigatory interview. Instead, the Board wraps up all “confidential” concerns in the same blanket, and in doing so impairs workers’ rights to share information and potentially act in a concerted fashion.

The Board again imagines that a union representative is better equipped to judge what kind of information should be shared with workers, by virtue of their legal duty of fair representation. This time, the Board expects that the union representative will “assure confidentiality for the employer,” but it is unclear what benefit comes to the worker from preserving this confidentiality.

The Board is also concerned that workers might be less candid or forthcoming with a coworker present during an interview than they would be alone. Another way to put it: an employee might be less likely to be intimidated into admitting something not in their

interest with a coworker there – and we can’t have that.

The Board recognizes that many of these basic concerns also exist in unionized settings, but again they point to the professional role of a union representative, who they naturally believe has a “continuing interest in having an amicable relationship with the employer.”

Instead of examining what problems could arise if the employer and union representative have too amicable a relationship to provide adequate protection for an employee, the Board discards the right of rank and filers to help one another, and thus takes away an expression of concerted activity.

While making union representatives the only ones entitled to sit in on investigatory interviews, the Board argues that only those close to management, with management’s interests in mind, should provide help to a worker who is about to be disciplined, because that would be the best for the employer.

In a nutshell

The rights of workers in nonunion settings after the *IBM* decision:

Workers in nonunion settings still have a right to a right to seek a coworker’s presence at an investigatory interview (or for that matter, any meeting with the boss), but the boss may now lawfully deny the request and compel the meeting on threat of termination. From the decision, “Our only holding is that the nonunion employer has no obligation to accede to the request, i.e., to deal collectively with the employees.”

The boss may also not lawfully retaliate against a worker for making a request to have a coworker present.

The full decision – including a strongly worded dissent concluding that the Board’s ruling is unlikely to survive the test of time – can be found online at www.nlr.gov/nlr/shared_files/decisions/341/341-148.htm



in, I spoke about how someday we will all be using handheld, wireless devices to access the Internet. For at least one Australian union, that “someday” is now.

Members of the Flight Attendants Association of Australia (www.faaa.net) were quick to inform me that use of wireless devices to access the net was common in their union. That shouldn’t be surprising; flight attendants spend a great deal of their time in airports and hotels, two of the places where wireless Internet access is most likely to be available. The FAAA is one of the unions making the most of tools like email, as it is the only way to reach most members.

4. One of the big issues facing the union movement in the advanced industrial countries is going to be ensuring that members and potential members have access to our websites and email from their workplaces. Employers will have to be compelled, either by collective bargaining or by law, to give unions electronic access to their members.

In most countries, this is at best an aspiration, but in New South Wales unions have managed – after a five year struggle – to get the government to propose new legislation to ensure just such access. (For full details, go here: http://workers.labor.net.au/215/news3_legal.html)

5. That last link would have taken you to what is perhaps the crowning achievement of the Australian labour movement online: the weekly online newsletter *Workers Online*.

Launched more than five years ago, *Workers Online* has already published some 225 issues, all of which are still viewable on the net. Edited by a half-time journalist staffer, it has become essential reading every Friday not only for union activists, but for journalists,

politicians and others. To see what an online union newspaper would look like, check out <http://workers.labor.net.au/latest>

6. And finally, there’s news syndication. Many Australian websites share their news content through something called LaborNet (www.labor.net.au). If I visit the website of, say, the New South Wales Teachers, I can read the latest news coming from the nurses union. It may not seem like much, but at least here in Britain, the idea that unions will run links to other unions’ news stories is utopian. Globally, LabourStart has managed to do something like this, but Australia offers perhaps the only example of a national labour news syndication service online.

None of this should be taken to mean that unions in Australia have done a perfect job. I also saw examples of unions with poor websites, or unions that were doing nothing to collect the email addresses of their members, or who were doing an utterly inadequate job of campaigning online – just like unions in most countries.

But I also saw some examples, six of which I mentioned above, of truly impressive work being done down under. I have seen the future of how unions everywhere will use the net, and like Australia itself, it’s bright and sunny.

Banning cybersnooping

The Australian state of New South Wales is preparing legislation to outlaw cybersnooping on workers using technology such as video cameras, email and tracking devices. The law would make it a criminal offence to undertake any form of covert surveillance unless a boss can show a reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing by a worker.

Otherwise, employers would be barred from secretly accessing private emails, tracking website access, using tracking devices in work vehicles, or blocking lawful union communications. However, bosses could snoop on workers’ email messages if they informed workers that they intended to do so.

Women paid 38¢ on the dollar

According to U.S. Census reports, women workers earn 77 cents to every dollar a man earns, demonstrating continued sexism in the economy. However, a new report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research shows that even this may be an inflated figure.

As a case study of this gender pay gap, a federal court judge decided in June that multi-billion-dollar Wal-Mart must face a class action gender bias lawsuit that could highlight discrimination problems and encourage changes throughout the retail industry.

The lawsuit, originally filed by six women, alleges that the world's largest company pays female employees less than men for the same jobs, passes them over for promotions, and retaliates against those who complain. A study of Wal-Mart payroll data by the plaintiffs showed women employees earned an average of 5 percent less than male counterparts with inferior education, experience and performance reviews.

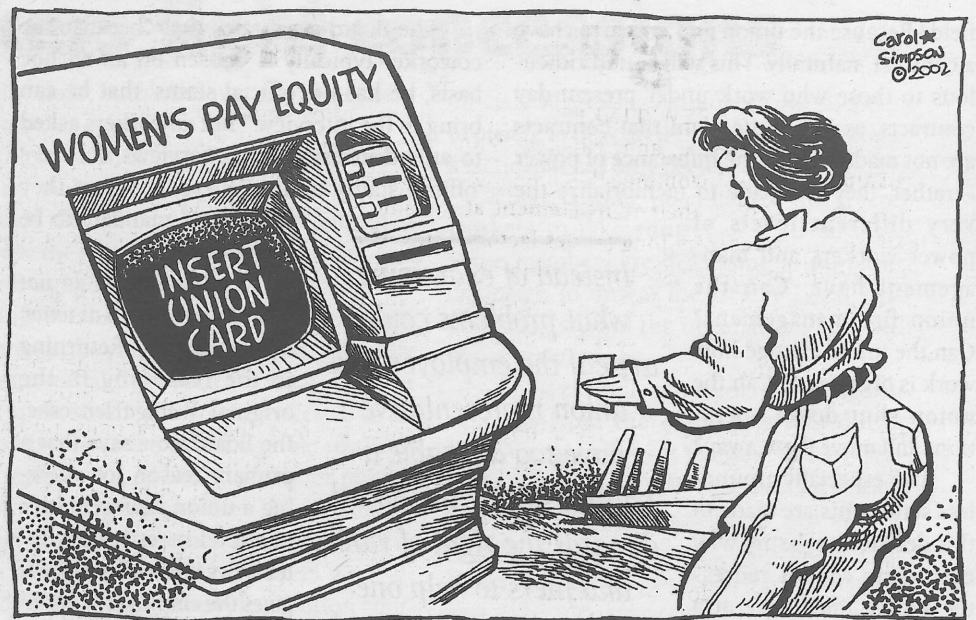
Wal-Mart, which last year posted revenue of \$256 billion, operates almost 3,600 stores

employing more than 1.2 million U.S. workers. The company denies supporting discrimination, instead faulting individual managers for any discriminatory treatment.

The 15-year IWPR study of almost 3,000 men and women, found that women earned just 38 percent of what male workers earn. This study used more realistic criteria than those used by the Census Bureau, comparing earning patterns over a 15-year period instead of the single-year comparisons of full-time workers used by the Bureau.

Study designers and economists Stephen Rose and Heidi Hartmann explain that "Collecting data over a long period of time is necessary to understand a work force where only 25 percent of women work full-time, year-round, compared with 75 percent of men."

The IWRP found that women with graduate degrees earned only slightly more than men with a high school diploma. In the IWRP study, only 9 percent of women earned more than \$50,000 per year, compared to 42 percent of men. Forty-five percent of women



workers averaged \$25,000 or less, compared to just 11 percent of men.

The gender earnings gap affects both high and low-paying occupations. According to the Institute report, female physicians and surgeons earned a median of \$88,000 a year, 63 percent of the \$140,000 male median. Male

lawyers earned a median \$90,000; women lawyers \$66,000. Male dishwashers earned \$14,000, compared to \$12,000 for women. Most of the occupations where men and women come close to an equal wage are unionized positions, like postal service clerk and telecommunications installer.

Port truckers continue organizing, strikes

A port truckers strike began June 28, as the *Industrial Worker* went to press. Early reports suggest the largely spontaneous strike was effective at major East and Gulf Coast container ports including New York/New Jersey, Baltimore, Hampton Roads, Va., Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans and Houston.

In Savannah, truckers parked their rigs along the road leading into the Georgia Ports Authority's main gate, creating a stark contrast to the empty yards inside.

In New Jersey, the strike halted nearly all traffic in and out of the Port Newark/Elizabeth container complex. Tom Adamski, CEO of Cross Port Transportation, said the only traffic in and out of terminals was by over-the-road and company-owned vehicles.

Hundreds of truckers attended an early morning rally at the Newark port. Driver Alex Paredes said drivers wanted the right to organize and bargain over issues such as wait

time. Truckers often spend more than five hours waiting in lines at the Newark port to receive chassis or to be inspected.

The ports of Charleston, Miami, New Orleans, and Atlanta were also shut down, according to media reports. Nearly 100 truckers rallied at the New Orleans port, and few of the port's 300+ truckers reported for work.

In Miami, 150 truckers picketed outside the entrance to the port, prompting port authorities to agree to meet with the truckers. In Baltimore, traffic was down by 50 percent on the second day of the strike.

The CSX railyard at Charleston, SC, was shut down June 26, as truckers honored a 6 a.m. picket line set up by more than 70 truckers determined to block management efforts to clear the yard of hundreds of loads before the Monday shutdown. Rail engineers refused to move trains in solidarity.

Port authorities threatened activists with arrest if they disrupted traffic, but dozens of truckers continued to picket Charleston's three container ports June 28 and 29, with only a handful crossing the lines.

A handful of truckers picketed Boston's container port, while others met to consider actions from Philadelphia to Houston.

In Hampton Roads VA, where port truckers struck in May, a shippers' blacklist has barred several activists from work in the port. Companies also increased rates, organized cook-outs, and took other steps to defuse truckers' anger. Although several Virginia truckers stayed home in solidarity with the strike, early reports indicate that the blacklist succeeded in preventing picketing, and so kept the port open.

Results on the West Coast were mixed, handicapped by lack of stable organization and communication. Leaflets circulated on the coast cited poor working conditions and high fuel prices, but also demanded that the bosses drop all litigation against the Oakland 3 and recognize the troqueros as employees. Strike plans were disrupted by an injunc-

tion against the Oakland 3 - Ruben Lopez, Delph Jean and Irvinder Dhanda, troqueros who the companies accuse of instigating the April 30 - May 7 wildcat strike that closed the port. When supporters showed up to join picket lines June 28, troquero activists were laying low to avoid being dragged into court.

The *Journal of Commerce* reported that despite the absence of picket lines several truckers did strike in Oakland, but that because of chronic overscheduling of workers traffic was moving at near-normal levels.

Early reports said that Los Angeles area ports were almost entirely shut down, but by noon most truckers had reported to work. However, an estimated 20 percent remained on strike. The Union Pacific Railroad yard was clogged with containers, while Burlington Northern Santa Fe slashed the number of containers slotted for its trains in order to keep its yard moving.

The nationwide strike came at one of the slower seasons for many ports, but shippers worried that unrest could continue into August, when the busy season begins.

The strike was part of a wave of largely uncoordinated actions sweeping the country. In Northern California, owner-operators who haul cement and asphalt struck for two weeks in May, after employers refused to negotiate over pay. The drivers own the rigs, but haul construction material in company-owned trailers. Traffic on highways was repeatedly tied up for hours, as truckers convoyed to company lots to comply with demands that they return the trailers.

The Teamsters held a June 14 national meeting of port truckers, and issued a press release calling on shippers to improve conditions in order to head off the strike. Their efforts appear to have undermined the strike in some ports. Press reports noted the IWW's efforts in support of the truckers, and several reporters contacted us for information.

Information on the port truckers struggle is regularly posted to www.iww.org.

AFL-CIO attacks Million Worker March

AFL-CIO officials sent a memo to affiliated organizations June 23 calling on them to withhold support from the Million Worker March planned for October 17 in Washington, D.C. The march was initiated by International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 in San Francisco and has received support from unions throughout the U.S.

Many AFL labor councils, the ILWU (longshore) Coast Caucus, the California Teachers Association, the South Carolina AFL-CIO, AFSCME DC 1707 and the Teamsters Black National Caucus have begun to mobilize their membership to back this historic call. Two IWW branches have also endorsed the call, and the IWW General Ex-

ecutive Board is currently considering a motion to formally endorse it.

With support for the rally growing, the AFL-CIO issued a memo to all AFL-CIO labor councils and state federations urging them "not to sponsor or devote resources to the demonstration in Washington DC, but instead to remain focused on the election and to devote all mobilization efforts to the grassroots-political campaign effort between now and Election Day."

Evidently the AFL-CIO prefers to spend its resources campaigning for millionaires to mobilizing workers to defend their rights.

Details on the Million Worker March can be found at: www.millionworker.org/



Detroit school workers wildcat against lay-offs

FROM WORLD SOCIALIST WEB SITE

Detroit public school workers organized wildcat strikes against massive job cuts June 21 and 22. Most of the workers are members of unions, but furious that their representatives are "in bed with management" they decided to fight back themselves.

Some 3,200 teachers, custodians, bus drivers, engineers, and other school employees received lay-off notices in mid-June. Initially, 700 employees turned out for a June 17 Board of Education meeting, which was canceled in response to the chanting crowds.

During the wildcat, police opened a cordon at one bus terminal where drivers were ordered to leave the yard or lose their jobs. So many drivers drove to schools and parked the busses there. A painter with 15 years working for the school district noted that 400 building tradesmen were slated for lay-offs, leaving 48 workers to cover 300 buildings. "When I first started they had 180 painters. Now there are three. How can three people cover 300 buildings?"

A carpenter noted that the board had contractors in the buildings as soon as workers were laid off. Workers complain that the unions did not put up a fight against the cuts. Shop stewards for the Teamsters encouraged bus drivers to continue work, which only three of approximately 300 did.

Carpenters continue fight

As members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters continue to fight for control of their union, Carpenters For a Rank and File Union rallied outside an UBC District Council meeting in Chicago May 6th and succeeded in reducing the full benefits retirement age from 61 to 60.

Some 130 Carpenters gathered outside the Council's headquarters with banners and a bullhorn to state their demands. Cliff Willmeng of Local 1 explained "we came here to make our voice clear and heard to a District Council long alienated from its own membership." In a break from past protests, 70 Latino workers called out for a greater Latino presence within the District Council.

Carpenters also demanded an end to the 175-hour benefit cap, a more fair out-of-work system, lower salaries for union representatives, and the right to vote for those representatives and to vote on their 2005 contract.

Outsourcing picket duty

The Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters has hired dozens of immigrant workers not eligible to join the union to staff its picket lines outside non-union job sites.

The workers stand outside in the blazing Arizona sun holding picket signs and banners for \$8 an hour - better pay than they're used to, but far less than the Carpenters would pay its own members. If passersby have questions, the pickets have leaflets.

Apparently the Carpenters find it easier to hire pickets to protest substandard conditions than to organize the workers enduring them. If the workers turn out to be undocumented, the union promptly fires them.

Bosses mount "drug search" in anti-union attack

Bosses at a Finnish-owned Huhtamaki Americas plant in Waterville, Maine, recently performed a random drug search throughout the plant facilities. A private company flew drug-sniffing dogs in from Colorado for the search, meant only to demonstrate management's authority and instill fear.

Human Resources Vice President Carl Walker confirmed that the searches were performed without the cooperation of local or state authorities. Police refused to participate, arguing that there was no probable cause for the search which would violate Fourth Amendment guarantees against illegitimate search and seizure.

Waterville Police Chief John Emery said the company's request for police intervention was a management tactic to "enforce their rules, their regulations, their contract" with the union, and had little to do with explaining rumors of drug use. 397 of 400 workers in the plant are union members. No drugs were found in the search.

Nicaraguan garment workers face union-busting

BY ANDREW LINKE

Today in Managua, approximately 300 fired union members continue their long wait for a court to order their re-instatement at the Korean-owned Kim Jong textiles factory just outside the Nicaraguan capital. While the legal process drags on, workers also continue to build pressure on management with protests and community outreach.

Kim Jong workers voted to form the first union in their shop March 22. Their motivation was excessive overtime with no pay, physical and verbal harassment (women were especially affected here), and dehumanizing policies such as management collecting permission slips at the door to the bathroom.

At the end of May I traveled to Nicaragua and Cuba as part of a Witness for Peace delegation examining economic realities. I met with three Nicaraguans who were among those fired, and who are deeply involved in the ongoing struggle.

Kim Jong is a garment factory with Free Trade Zone status, which produces for export to major retailers in the U.S. Factory bosses fired many union supporters just three days after the vote. Included in the firings were

Juan Carlos Smith, secretary general of the newly formed branch of the Textile Maquila Federation, and Jose Feliz Campo, now a trained organizer and labor rights investigator. Their mentor and advisor in the struggle, career organizer Gladys Mansanades, is a 64-year-old single grandmother with about 30 years experience in the field.

Economist Roger Cerda of the NicaNet resource base uses Consumer Price Index figures to show that Nicaraguans' purchasing power has declined in recent years. The living wage, calculated with 1999 figures, is 1,827 Cordobas per month. With workers earning just 960 Cordobas per month (US\$65) at Kim Jong, there is clearly a gap. When asked how the workers dealt with the shortage Juan Carlos responded, "You just have to make it stretch. Maybe no breakfast or no dinner, just lunch."

Workers' children who can afford to attend school likely have one uniform for the entire year. Many workers buy food on credit (the days of the factory store are returning). Others cannot afford bus fare and walk some 4 km to work.

Since being fired, workers have filed with

Nicaragua's Ministry of Labor for reinstatement and union recognition. Unfortunately, this process could last years. The dismissals are illegal and Juan Carlos said management "did this knowing that they were violating the law, but that it might effectively dissolve the union." He said that since March a fourth of the once 1,200-strong workforce has been fired: "They want to erase anything that smells like a union."

The struggle has been escalating lately after the Ministry of Labor found no justification for the firings and ordered that the workers be rehired. However, only the Supreme Court has the power to enforce the ministry's ruling. In the meantime, Juan Carlos' colleague Jose Feliz Campo explains, "one way or another we gather bus fare for protests. Some days there's no money for food but this motivates me so the other compañeros [friends or colleagues] won't go through this. If we don't do it ourselves no one will."

Mansanades told of Kim Jong management tactics familiar to Wobblies, and indeed to any struggling worker. "I'm out on the streets. I don't work in the Free Trade Zone anymore. They made me famous. In any factory, any Free Trade Zone, my name is there." Employers commonly share photos of recently fired militant workers with each other.

Along with blacklisting, another tactic used by the bosses is labeling the unions "terrorist organizations." This went beyond mere publicity when the factory filed criminal charges against members of the union — charges that, if upheld, could carry two- to seven-year prison sentences.

Most workers still inside the factory say they support the union struggle. Naturally, those who don't are the many new hires brought in to replace the fired workers. Juan Carlos explains that those still employed are excited for the return of the workers and hopefully the Textile Federation along with them — a sign that conditions will improve.

Through all the struggles, there are signs of hope. Juan Carlos has been handling legal aspects of the fight for years, and at the time of our interview was just months shy of graduating law school. Six more members of



*Gladys Mansanades:
"Young people have no future unless they're organized. This is our struggle, and the government is our greatest obstacle."*

the federation will be graduating soon as well.

The members also look to other factories — a limited number — for inspiration. The Mil Colores factory in the Los Mercedes Free Trade Zone has made progress after a nine-year struggle and international boycott campaigns called by the Campaign for Labor Rights against Target and Kohls. There are now two independent unions in the shop and regular dialogue with management. Job security, compensation, safety measures, production and protection of personal needs have improved with growing membership. While the case of Mil Colores is only a first step in the fight for genuine worker empowerment, it shows the potential of militancy.

Though security guards with shotguns protect Kim Jong's gates, "every morning and every afternoon we're out there in front of the factory" explains Juan Carlos. With international solidarity, which was a key factor in the successful Mil Colores struggle, the goals of these newly organizing workers can be recognized.

Mansanades appropriately illustrates the predicament workers find when faced first by multinationals and then by the free trade policies of their government. She explains, "young people have no future unless they're organized. This is our struggle, and the government is our greatest obstacle."



Workers entering the Los Mercedes Free Trade Zone.

PHOTO: ANDREW LINKE

Teamsters president quits Bush trade group post

The head of the Teamsters union has resigned from a White House trade advisory panel to protest President Bush's decision to sign the Central American Free Trade Agreement. "I will no longer choose to lend legitimacy to a sham process in which our views ... are not respected," Teamsters President James Hoffa said in a letter to Bush.

Hoffa, who was appointed to the panel in April 2003, said the Bush administration has consistently ignored his advice. He said that the Central American agreement would weaken protections for workers because of the administration's failure to include strong labor provisions.

Maquiladoras on 18 wheels

The Supreme Court has unanimously ruled that the Bush administration can open U.S. highways to tens of thousands of Mexican trucks without studying the environmental effects on border areas. Nine states joined with labor and environmental organizations to challenge the order, which they say will increase air pollution because of laxer environmental standards in Mexico.

There are already 4.5 million truck crossings from Mexico into the United States each year, though carriers have been barred from travelling beyond a 20-mile commercial zone along the border. The new ruling overturns a January 2003 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that air-quality impact studies were required. The Bush administration insists the policy is needed to bring the United States into compliance with the North American Free Trade Agreement.

From Ponca to Taipei Globalization from below

BY JOHN KALWAIC

From Oklahoma to Taiwan, workers recently demonstrated globalization from below, responding to an abusive multinational corporation with a grassroots campaign that has brought together labor and environmental activists. Unionists in Taipei, Taiwan, greeted Oklahoma workers continuing a three-year fight after being locked out from their factory in Ponca City, Oklahoma.

The Ponca City factory, Continental Carbon Company, is a joint subsidiary of the China Synthetic Rubber Company and Taiwan Cement — both owned by the influential Koo family in Taiwan. The Koo family has a shady history of collaborating with the Japanese during World War II, and after the war with the brutal Chang-Kai Shek dictatorship. Today the family's empire stretches from mainland China to the United States.

Members of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy union (PACE) went to Taiwan to press their fight against Continental Carbon on its home turf. They were joined by members of the Taiwan Confederation of Trade Unions in protests at Taiwan Cement's annual shareholders meeting and outside the companies' Taipei offices. Members of the Ponca tribe were also present, protesting CCC's pollution of tribal lands.

This demonstration is a valuable example of multi-racial, multi-national alliances that transcend the AFL's ideology of nationalism and protectionism.

The Ponca City dispute began when Continental Carbon demanded that workers give up \$15,000 to \$20,000 in wages along with cuts in benefits and health insurance. Eighty-six workers briefly struck, and were then locked out and replaced by scabs. The plant manufactures Carbon Black, used in the manufacture of tires; the untrained scabs have been turning out inferior product and releasing toxic chemicals into nearby communities.

In addition to working with the local community and their fellow Koo family workers in Taiwan, PACE has reached out to members of the Steelworkers union, who handle CCC's scab products in the tire plants.

After testing confirmed that a shipment of CCC Carbon Black was defective, and could result in tread separation, Goodyear agreed to stop buying from CCC in September 2002. Cooper Tires, CCC's third largest customer, announced in April that it will not buy Carbon Black from the Ponca City plant, although PACE believes the company may be shipping scab product through other plants. The NLRB recently dismissed Continental's complaint charging that the union's campaign amounted to an illegal secondary boycott.

Three locked-out workers and two PACE officials began a seven-day hunger strike outside the CSRC offices June 11 after they were denied the right to speak at the Taiwan Cement shareholders' meeting (even though they held valid proxies). The workers and their Taiwanese supporters main-



tained a vigil and hunger strike outside the offices despite police harassment, ending the action on the seventh day under threat of immediate arrest and deportation. Police did not allow them to display banners or distribute leaflets to passersby, and broke up a press conference after just 10 minutes.

However, the actions did force Koo representatives to meet with union delegations. The Taiwan Labor Insurance Fund, CSRC's third-largest shareholder, is also considering action if the lock-out is not resolved.

However, stronger measures may be needed to bring this three-year-old lock-out to an end. While the solidarity seen thus far is a good start, imagine the results if the community were to shut down the scab plant — if only for its own protection.

Imagine if not only Goodyear and Cooper, but Bridgestone, Firestone and other companies were forced not to deal with Continental Carbon. Any labor federation, whether radical or moderate, that wants to respond to the modern force of corporate globalization will have to bring the rank and file into the global arena, where their forces can unite to confront and abolish corporate greed.

Washington grocery workers fight concessions

BY X337969, SEATTLE

The United Food and Commercial Workers in the Puget Sound (Washington) Region, after no agreement by the June 24th deadline for a new contract with the Allied Employers, have extended the contract to July 9th.

While this is good news for many, in that working under the status quo contract is better than take-aways, there are few signs that the leadership is preparing for a long struggle.

"Neither the bargaining table or the picket line can solve the health care crisis, but the voting booth can..." was the boldface quote on the cover of *Working America*, the UFCW summer quarterly sent to members.

As the expiration of another contract for retail workers in Washington state looms, the UFCW leadership expects that a vote for Kerry in the presidential election will solve the healthcare crisis. Rank-and-file concerns over a lack of militancy to preserve healthcare benefits bubbled over at a recent UFCW lo-

cal 1105 meeting in Seattle, a crucial starting point for members to actually participate in the direction of their struggle.

The Allied Employers, which is the monopoly of major chains including Safeway, Albertsons and QFC, have proposed the same deal as the grocery chains proposed in Southern California: slashing health benefits for current employees, and implementing another two tier wage system for checkers. The bargaining committee for Locals 44, 81, 367, 381 and 1105 in Puget Sound, without taking action to mobilize support from customers or union employees, offered concessions on health care, including higher co-pays for visits and prescriptions, a \$50 emergency room co-pay, \$15 to \$50 extra a month for family coverage, and a substandard plan for new hires for the first year of employment.

Though the contract extension expired on June 25th, no strike authorization vote has been taken to give the negotiating commit-

tee any clout, even after two months of zero progress.

Information about the progress of talks is hard to come by. One UFCW steward has reported that union officials have refused to disclose the location of the negotiations, and there is a gag order for both sides against discussing details of the negotiation process. Questions about how strike funds, raised by a controversial dues increase last year, have been spent so far also go unanswered, as do questions about the use of a public relations firm instead of member outreach for publicity work. Suggestions that the Teamsters should be asked to honor all picket lines in order to shut down the employers were ignored (at least one grocery distribution company has informed managers that employees who honor picket lines will be replaced). Most actions remain symbolic, at most union

officials suggesting employees ask shoppers to pledge to boycott if that time should come, a tactic that has only been employed recently.

There is some potential for the grocery workers to take control of their struggle. Some members are discussing a full-blown campaign to unseat the UFCW Local 1105 president, should the negotiations end with major concessions.

A past example of success in forcing concessions from the employers was during UFCW negotiations at Seattle's Madison Market in 2002, when IWW members led a nearly year-long shop floor campaign and won increases in health care and 5% COLAs – unheard of in the industry. However, there is a vast difference between a bargaining unit of less than 100 and one of more than 15,000. How the current struggle plays out remains to be seen.

Reclaiming our time

Nearly 150 people participated in a June 11-13 Chicago conference sponsored by the Take Back Your Time network.

The second annual Take Back Your Time Day will be held October 24 – marking the point when U.S. workers will have put in as many hours on the job as our West European fellow workers do each year.

The conference was a study in contrasts. National Coordinator John DeGraaf's opening remarks recalled the Haymarket Martyrs (though not their politics), but also proudly pointed to support from the Hilton Family Foundation (which apparently believes longer vacations would be good for business in their hotels, but is not extending shorter hours to its own workers; he also pointed to support from the Duluth Central Labor Council and churches).

Forty years ago, sociologists worried about how we would cope with the leisure time automation would make inevitable, DeGraaf noted. "I remember thinking ... that this was a problem I could deal with."

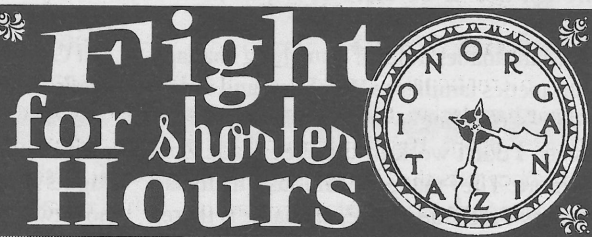
But that leisure never arrived. Instead, "we traded our time for money and stuff," DeGraaf said – adding that many poor workers didn't even get that.

U.S. workers' hours are used around the world to drive down standards, as companies tell workers they need to compete with our long hours. But DeGraaf insisted that shorter hours would actually be good for business over the long term.

A speech that began with the 1886 general strike for the 8-hour day ended with the IWW's "Bread and Roses" strike (though without mentioning the IWW), at least implicitly framing shorter hours as a labor struggle, and one that would require a mass working-class movement to succeed.

The speeches and workshops that followed were by a sometimes uneasy mix of academics, labor activists, social workers concerned with deteriorating family and community structures, a smattering of "human resources" professionals concerned with work-life balance, and the Voluntary Simplicity movement, which urges people to reduce consumption so they can afford to work fewer hours. However, there was clearly growing recognition that this is not viable for many low-income workers, who would be in danger of starvation if their lives got any simpler.

Participants also recognized that for most people the growing time shortage can not be solved individually. But while some spoke of direct action and organizing, the emphasis was on legislative action. (TBYT's Board has adopted a four-point legislative program calling for three weeks' paid vacations, a cap on mandatory overtime, an Election Day holiday, and paid family leave.



There was much discussion of support for a "livable" wage so that workers would not be forced into holding multiple jobs.)

There is considerable evidence that U.S. workers feel increasingly harried. Hilton VP Kendra Walker cited a Hilton survey in which one in three Internet respondents said they would trade a day's pay for a day off from work, were they given the choice, and that most would work just 4.8 hours a day if they controlled their own schedules.

Other speakers pointed to several factors leading to longer work hours, including our health care system, the decline of union strength (and the AFL's abandonment of the issue in the post-World War II era), economic incentives to overwork built into overtime pay premiums, growing inequality and consumer debt, and a corporate-dominated culture that values consumption and work over leisure and time.

Another issue that popped up repeatedly was the fundamentally irrational nature of our economy, which values useless toil and destruction as economically productive, but devalues enriching our environment, our communities, and our lives.

One of the few presentations (besides my own) to address the issue of power directly was British author Jay Griffiths, who recalled centuries of struggle against the imposition of capitalist time. "Time is not found in dead clocks," she said; "time is life itself, ... life revelling in rebellion against the clock."

The first Time Day saw more than 200 events organized across the U.S. and Canada (including several by IWW branches), and more than 100 news stories. But most events were modest in scope. This year Time Day falls on a Sunday, and many groups are focussing efforts on the religious community. The Massachusetts Council of Churches, for example, has signed on to a "4 windows of time" campaign (also backed by the state AFL-CIO) encouraging people to reclaim small pockets of time to spend with their families; an effort which might lead to useful discussions about the time crunch, but deliberately avoids the question of power.

12-hour days at Goodrich

Workers at an Ohio Goodrich plant that makes aircraft wheels and brakes approved a UAW contract June 8 that will allow the company to schedule workers for three 12-hour shifts on weekends. Workers would be paid for 40 hours, but would not receive overtime or shift differential pay. Workers rejected an earlier proposal that would have required mandatory overtime.

Protesting the 'Democratic' convention

The Democrats will be nominating John Kerry in Boston this summer. We will be in the streets protesting and discussing while the corporate mainstream stages the charade of political choice.

On the weekend prior to the convention, the Boston Social Forum will be held July 23-25 at the University of Massachusetts. Several thousand activists are expected for workshops and forums on a variety of topics. The IWW will host a workshop, and staff a table. For info: www.bostonsocialforum.org.

On the following Monday, July 26, the first day of the convention, a coalition of radical organizations will hold a march from City Hall through the financial district and on to the State House and the Federal Building. We will be highlighting the complicity of the Democrats in the war in Iraq, the cutbacks in social services and the globalization of the capitalist market. We are still negotiating for permits, and so details will be determined shortly. contact: susandor@crocker.com

Finally the Black Tea Society will host a Convergence Center in Copley Square during the week of the convention, as well as a Really Democratic Bazaar in the Boston Com-

U.S. employer-based health care system in crisis

For the first time in 40 years, a majority of Americans working in the private sector no longer receive health care coverage from their employers – and those who still do are being forced to pay an increasing share of it out of their own pockets.

Only 45 percent of private sector employees participated in employer medical plans in 2003, down from 66 percent in 1990, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Even for full-time private sector workers, only 56 percent participated in employer-sponsored health plans in 2003, down from 76 percent in 1990.

Health insurance premiums for employer-sponsored plans will hit \$12,485 for family coverage in 2005, according to the National Health Care Coalition.

Soaring health care costs have exacerbated the union/nonunion labor cost differential, giving employers a powerful economic incentive to bust unions. Benefit costs rose 6 percent for nonunion workers and 11.2% for union workers last year, largely because of union workers' superior health plans.

The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world spend as much as 14 percent of GDP on health care. No other country uses employer-provided insurance as the primary vehicle for health care funding. But while per capita health care spending is more than twice as high in the U.S. as in other countries, the quality of care is lower by almost every measure, according to a recent study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Why? Administrative and billing costs now consume 25 percent of all health care spending in the U.S., or \$450 billion a year.

mon July 27 and a Day of Action July 29. For info: <http://blackteasociety.org>

Boston officials have announced plans to close the commuter rail hub at North Station starting three days before the convention, as well as I-93 and other downtown streets.

Republicans in New York

Marches, teach-ins and other events are slated from August 20 through Sept. 1 to protest the Republican National Convention in New York City. Details and a visitors' guide are available online at www.rncnotwelcome.org and www.counterconvention.org. A wide range of organizations plan to confront the Republicans' war on immigrants, women, workers in the U.S. and around the world, and the environment.

The city has announced plans to shut down much of downtown Manhattan during the convention, restricting protestors to a single corner near Madison Square Garden.

Cops picket DNC

BY BRIAN BASGEN

On June 8th the Boston Patrolmen's Union began picketing the Fleet Center, site of the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Boston. Fire fighters, IBEW, SEIU, school bus drivers, and other unions walked the line in solidarity. Even the scabbing construction unions, whose pie cards decided their unions would break the picket, could not force workers to cross the lines, many of whom refused to cross the picket or slowed their work to a crawl.

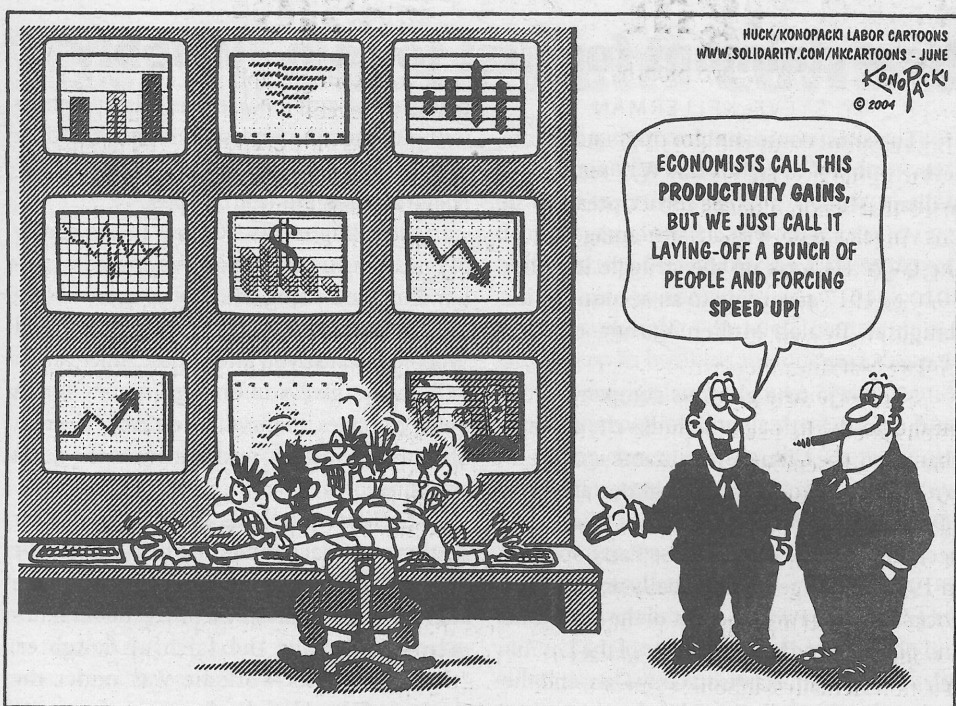
This symphony of workers solidarity would not last long, however; after all, this was a picket created by cops! Without delay city and union lawyers wound the picket up in red tape. By the third day, construction vehicles began crossing the line and the picketers opened an easy path. No one on the line raised their eyes or uttered a word to the scabs. It had become clear that the cops were playing dress-up, not having a picket.

On the morning of the fifth day, the cops decided to end their 'picket' of the Fleet Center, but will 'picket' elsewhere.

On the third day of picketing, members of the Bl(A)ck Tea Society, a coalition organizing against the DNC this summer, decided to join the picket to show our solidarity. (Anyone stopping work on the convention can't be all bad.) We came without signs or slogans – our purpose was to show support.

Within a half-hour, after some murmuring, a big man busted through the line, put his hand on us, and asked about our group, though he seemed to have the answer already. We explained that we were with the Black Tea Society, and he told us: "Thanks for coming, you are not wanted, now get the fuck out of here."

Despite the initial militancy, the community support and the lack of decent wages, these "liberal" Boston cops didn't sway from their central role: protecting the interests of the state against any dissent.



UNITE's sweatshop unionism

An East Brooklyn garment factory repeatedly violated workers' rights, refusing to pay overtime to the 175 workers who made women's sweaters at the Danmar Finishing plant, and paying piece rates so low they often fell below the minimum wage. Such sweatshop conditions are increasingly common, not just overseas but in the United States as well. Indeed, they are allowed under the factory's "union" contract with UNITE Local 155.

Danmar fired seamstress Maria Arriaga (a 10-year veteran of the plant) and 12 co-workers three years ago after they complained about the unpaid overtime. The workers knew better than to ask the union officials to support them; instead they turned to a local workers center, Make The Road By Walking, which helped them file a complaint with New York state's labor department.

It took 18 months to even get a hearing. But after three years, the NYS DOL ruled against Danmar in December 2003 and ordered it to compensate 175 current and former workers for the unpaid overtime. Throughout the lengthy process, the "union" did nothing to help the workers win their jobs back, or get the wages they were entitled to.

An estimated 60,000 workers toil in New York's garment industry, many of them in sweatshops operating under UNITE contracts. The state labor department says more than 10,000 Chinatown unionized garment workers earn just \$300 a week for a brutal 72-hour work week – well below minimum wage. (In UNITE's defense, nonunion shops in outlying areas pay much less.)

The larger problem is a long tradition of business unionism and bureaucratic leadership within UNITE which goes back to its origins as the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. From the start, the ILGWU

Aussie power workers in sick-out

More than 80 percent of TXU's (Texas Utilities) Victorian powerline workers called in sick or failed to turn up for work June 24.

The power company is treating the absence of more than 200 of its line workers as an illegal strike. But the Electrical Trades Union denied it was behind the action.

"It sounds like (the powerline workers) have got a bad case of lineyitis. I just hope it's not contagious," said Dean Mighell, ETU southern states branch secretary. "I think Texas Utilities has a very nasty bug. I've never seen this happen with a happy workforce."

The Industrial Relations Commission has suspended the ETU's right to impose work bans. TXU is now asking the Commission to allow disgruntled customers to sue the union for losses resulting from work stoppages, which it blames for delayed hook-ups.

The main sticking points in the dispute are the union's request for a 36-hour working week, pay raises and TXU's failure to take on enough apprentices.

has been almost entirely composed of immigrant women workers, but the AFL and Socialist Party (which dominated the union) put white male lawyers – most of whom had never worked in the shops – in charge.

Committed to scientific management and industrial peace, the ILGWU became the first union in the world to strip its members of the right to strike over grievances. Rather than strain their relationship with the bosses by striking, workers were forced to submit their grievances to binding arbitration. This worked so well at crippling workers' power on the job that it was adopted by business unions in nearly every industry.

To this day, many UNITE locals prohibit actual garment workers from running for union office and the union continues to be run by people with no shop floor experience.

At one point, workers had succeeded in winning decent conditions and the seven-hour day; but for several decades the union has stood by as production was moved overseas or to non-union factories. In exchange, the union received "liquidated damages" of millions of dollars a year to compensate the union welfare fund for lost dues from outsourced workers. And in 1991, the union turned down the bosses' offer to increase piece rates, instead diverting the money to the welfare fund (which provides health benefits and day care, among other services).

No longer able to stay afloat with their class-collaborationist policies and faced with plummeting membership, UNITE has consolidated locals into vast regional conglomerates. It recently negotiated a pending merger behind closed doors with the Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees international.

This article draws on a much longer report by Greg Butler posted to his gangbox web site: www.geocities.com/gangbox/

Guards attack IUE strikers

Indiana state troopers took up scab-hearing duty June 1, after 12 striking IUE-CWA members complained that they had been injured when security guards attacked their picket line in Bedford, Ind.

The two dozen riot-clad troopers did not arrest the guards or company executives; instead they made sure there was a steady flow of scabs crossing the picket line. Workers struck Visteon – an auto parts supplier – after the company announced plans to eliminate more than half the plant's 1,150 jobs.

Nurses in bidding wars

Growing numbers of non-union hospitals have turned to a reverse auction system in which shifts are awarded to the nurse who agrees to accept the lowest pay rate. While the winning bids are typically higher than nurses would earn under standard overtime rates, they are much less than managers would pay to fill the shifts with temporary nurses from agencies – and help to perpetuate a system in which most hospitals hire far fewer nurses than they need to operate safely.

Boom goes the bust

BY JON BEKKEN

While economists celebrate the booming economy, the unemployment rate remains unchanged. While jobs are indeed returning, there are so many workers who had given up looking for work that each new round of hiring results in more workers pounding the pavement looking for work.

And the jobs they're finding (those who are lucky enough to find jobs) are hardly the stuff economic booms are traditionally made of. In the last 12 months, as many people have landed jobs as bill collectors (a lot of people built up a lot of debt in the last couple of years, and the banks want the money) as in the entire manufacturing sector.

Inflation-adjusted wages are falling, as prices are inching up but wages are held down by the vast pool of our unemployed fellow workers – even more desperate now that ex-

tended jobless benefits have run out. (Indeed, the average time it takes a laid-off worker to find a new job continues to rise – it's now up to five months – even as the numbers forced into part-time work also climbs.)

The Congressional Budget Office reports that while the richest 1 percent of the U.S. population saw its wealth grow 109 percent from 1983 to 2001, the bottom two-fifths watched its "wealth" fall by 46 percent. The income gap is now the widest in 75 years.

And the Economic Policy Institute reports that the U.S. industries expanding as a share of total employment pay on average 13 percent less than the industries which are shrinking. So while relatively good-paying jobs continue to disappear, the temp sector is booming.

You better watch that booming economy, to make sure it doesn't leave you busted.

Day of action against corporate crime

The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal has declared the upcoming 20th anniversary of the 1984 Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal as the Global Day of Action Against Corporate Crime. Besides coordinating protests against Dow-Union Carbide facilities worldwide, ICJB also invites groups fighting corporate crime to take action December 3 against the human, environmental, consumer and labor rights violations in their own neighborhoods.

Twenty years after the world's worst industrial disaster, survivors and their children are still battling to bring a criminal corporation to justice. Meanwhile, Union Carbide – the company responsible for killing over 20,000 to date – is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Dow Chemical. Dow says it only inherited Carbide's assets, not its liabilities.

Probably the longest-standing fight for justice by survivors of an industrial disaster waged against a transnational corporation, the Bhopal struggle epitomizes the worst abuses of globalization and the challenges involved in holding corporations accountable. For information, visit: www.bhopal.net

Coordinate with activists worldwide by registering via email to: icjb@bhopal.net

Immokalee workers reject Taco Bell \$110,000 bribe

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has returned a \$110,000 check from fast food giant Taco Bell, instead vowing to continue its three-year boycott.

Taco Bell is the largest buyer of Immokalee tomatoes, and the Coalition is demanding that it take responsibility for starvation-level wages that haven't changed in 20 years. If buyers agreed to pay an additional penny a pound to boost farmworkers' wages, pay would almost double.

The boycott campaign is taking root on many college campuses, with several colleges cancelling contracts with Taco Bell in response to student protests.

Columbia U TAs retreat

Graduate Student Employees United announced a "hiatus" in their strike against Columbia University in May, seizing on an appeal by Democratic Party politicians for a cooling-off period as an excuse to abandon the unsuccessful four-week strike.

Administrators have refused to meet with the union for more than two years, but told reporters that they might talk to union representatives if picket lines came down. The university is appealing a 2002 NLRB ruling that Columbia teaching assistants have the right to unionize. That appeal is still pending.

Tomb of the unknown worker

A Chinese laborer who died in New York when an 8-foot construction wall collapses on him June 7 was working for a boss who hadn't bothered to get his name or to provide safety equipment. He remains unidentified.

Major League sweatshops

Pittsburgh activists have distributed thousands of Major League Sweatshop Baseball Cards to fans at Pirates games. The cards call attention to the workers who produce Pirates caps in Bangladesh, Bobble Head dolls in China, and baseballs in Costa Rica.

Things got ugly June 19, "Photo Fest" at PNC Park. It was also the Gay, Lesbian and Transgender PRIDE FEST which drew 700 people to the game. No Sweatshops Bucco! activists got off to a great start handing out Sweatshop Baseball Cards to fans waiting in line to have their photos taken. Many realized there were six different cards and passed the cards amongst themselves.

But then a bigot with a Bible and a megaphone started telling Pride Fest attendees that they were all going to hell. The Pirates shut down the Photo Fest, but fans kept rolling across the bridge and the bigot kept spouting. Our sign reading "Welcome Gay, Lesbian, Transgender people to PNC Park for the best Major League Sweatshop Education in America" came in handy.

Temporary workers do all the clean-up at PNC Park after ball games. Workers stand in line for up to three hours to sign up for a four-hour shift making \$6 an hour. These are some of the jobs Pittsburgh taxpayers subsidized. The unions that supported these projects are negotiating terrible contracts for the workers they represent and have allowed huge numbers of workers to simply fall off their radar screens. When we say "No Sweatshops Bucco!" we are not just talking about workers in China and Bangladesh.

Back to the printing press

The first edition of Major League Sweatshop Baseball cards is nearly gone! We are preparing to go to press again – this time with 18 different cards. Some people are asking us for "generic" cards that do not specify a baseball team so they can "be used anywhere."

There is no such thing as a teamless baseball card, but we would love to publish a card that targets *your* baseball team. Our goal is to publish 18 different cards representing 18 different teams – Major League, Minor League, Little League, whatever! If you have a campaign you would like to be represented, have artwork or ideas to contribute, or want cards to distribute in your area, please email us at nosweatshopsbucco@yahoo.com.

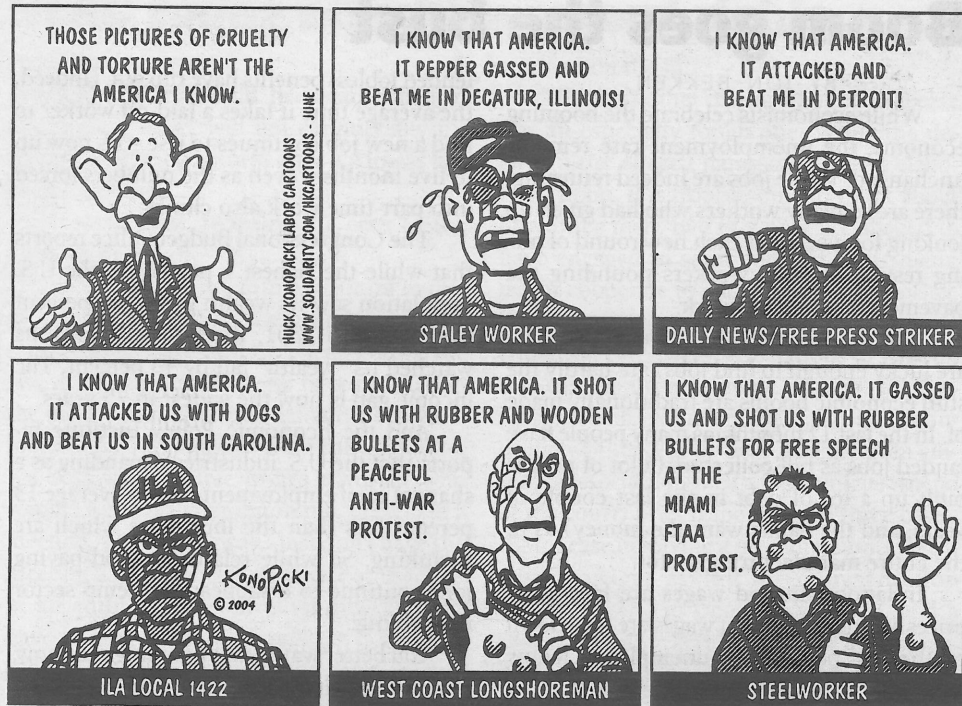
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The war on workers...

continued from page 1

wealth and income disparities between the West and the rest of the world.

Australian support for the second Gulf War role is a shameful continuation of the U.S. alliance which has had bipartisan support for the last 50 years. Australia is a client state. It is in the perceived interests of the Australian ruling class to maintain this alliance with the U.S. Of course, to the extent that the Australian ruling class benefits from closer integration with the economies of SE Asia and the emerging markets of Asia generally, our 'national interest' may actually be adversely affected in the growing divide between elites for the spoils of globalisation.

Regardless, for the Australian working class this war, like all wars, is against our collective interest. War is nothing but state-sanctioned mass murder and is never justified. Legitimate self-defence against attack is of course the right of any free people, whether at a community level or at a national level. But geo-political wars as practiced throughout human history are merely organised violence to achieve political ends – thus, the U.S. State Department definition of terrorism in fact implicates nations such as the United States for murdering human beings in Iraq.

By its own definition, the U.S. remains the largest terrorist state in the world, the largest acquirer of weapons of mass destruction, and of course the sole global superpower. It might be argued that the U.S. is merely remaking the world in its own image.

War of course pits worker against worker. The endless examples of battlefield solidarity between warring soldiers under truce conditions illustrates more than words the absolute ruthlessness of throwing fellow workers into war against each other to serve the political and economic interests of the class that despises them while praising their patriotism.

There are plenty of Vietnam vets in the U.S. (not to mention Australia) who live on the streets outcast from their society, the nation whose values they supposedly fought to preserve. Soldier, like wage slaves, are provided with subsistence only as long as their masters require their services.

Gulf War Syndrome is an example of the long-term consequences on the health of those who go to war, but just as unemployment and austerity serve the ruling class in the daily competition between workers for wages, so it serves to provide fertile recruiting ground for the next generation of soldiers.

Profiteering from death

As in the U.S., Australia's corporate sector will be provided with ample opportunity for profiteering. Politicians will be provided with ample opportunity for re-election. Brave 'stay-at-home patriots' will denounce progressives for their opposition to this war. The working class will be divided and therefore prevented from utilising our industrial power to stop the war build-up in its tracks.

Organised road, rail and maritime transport workers could render military operations in Iraq (or any other war) impossible. In Scot-

land, during the build-up to war, ASLEF-organised train drivers carried out a black ban on moving Ministry of Defense materiel to NATO facilities. However, such inspiring examples of workers using their organised power in support of their own interests remain limited and isolated.

In Australia, the Howard government has been masterful at dividing the working class along issues of social policy, in the increasing context of military buildup and state repression. The failure of the former Keating (Labor Party) government to entrench values such as multiculturalism, engagement with Asia, gender equality and social progress generally resulted from the continuing reverses suffered by Australian workers under globalisation and growing corporate power.

The failure of the labor movement to concentrate on basic economic matters has created a working class in Australia that is fearful, divided and in various stages of retreat from economic forces which are beyond the power of any government to control. History is replete with examples of authoritarian movements thriving in such environments.

Labor movements in the advanced economies are finding that they are no longer needed as the junior partners for business and the state. And so the social gains made during the 20th Century are under attack.

Lost civil liberties will never be given back. These battles will need to be fought again. The mistaken belief that our rights are protected through living in a Western liberal democracy ignores the fact that our economic system preceded the social gains achieved by mass movements. This will become clearer as the War on Terror evolves. The only freedom will be the freedom to be exploited, or for the lucky few the freedom to exploit others. The prospect of the first truly international corporate/military dictatorship represents an unprecedented subjugation of humanity, unparalleled in history.

Notwithstanding the risk to Australians from terrorist activities such as the Bali bombing, the primary risk lies in the real economic and political agenda of the War on Terror.

U.S. allies throughout the world are increasing state repression against their citizens under the cover of fighting terrorism. In the U.S., the federal government has militarized all levels of the domestic police forces. The Ministry of Homeland Security has ensured that civilian police and emergency services are now under the control of the military, removed from civilian oversight. Racial profiling is standard policy, whether at airports in security screening or in allowing employers to sack workers from Arabic and Muslim communities. Harassment and intimidation of U.S. citizens by their government is rampant. The U.S. has decided to suspend the application of its own constitution for U.S. citizens deemed to be enemy combatants or threatening 'national security.' Progressive unions and environmental and social justice organizations are finding an escalation of government surveillance, infiltration and dirty tricks campaigns designed to crush resistance to the Bush administration and their illegiti-

New claimant for first to coin "Wobbly"

BY STEVE KELLERMAN

The latest contestant for originator of the term "wobbly" to signify an IWW member is William Mullen, a street corner preacher in Los Angeles who was a fierce antagonist of the IWW. He took up the struggle in either 1910 or 1917 according to an account by his daughter, Beulah Mullen Karney, entitled "Papa's Story."

Mullen joins a glorious company of aspirants to the title that includes the all-time champion, the Chinese restaurateur of Western Canada who spoke the immortal words "Eye Wobble Wobble"; the most likely suspect, an anonymous Socialist Party speaker in 1912 Los Angeles; an equally anonymous Socialist Labor Party speaker of the same time and place; the odious publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, Gen. Harrison Gray Otis; and the darkest horse of all, Daniel DeLeon.

The story on Mullen is that when he first took up his skid row ministry he encountered IWWs soapboxing on the same street corners and quickly conceived a visceral hatred for the union. He developed a variety of tactics for spreading his message, the most clever

mate accession to political power.

The fading American dream

The class struggle in the U.S. is intensifying despite the best efforts of the government and the corporate media. Workers have seen endless corporate scandals resulting in job losses, theft of entitlements, and pensions by fat cats with political connections to the current administration. As living standards fall for the many, the American dream has faded for those who believed that if you worked hard you could provide a decent life.

The massive turnouts in peace rallies in the U.S. before and during the war illustrates the growing levels of anxiety at the direction in which the U.S. is headed. If workers needed any further example of the real agenda, the role played by the U.S. government in assisting the ship owners and the Pacific Maritime Assn. to force a concessionary contract on the International Longshore Warehouse Union is evidence enough. This was achieved via threat of military strikebreaking on the docks, an employer lockout, and continued use of national security dogma to weaken solidarity for the ILWU. A campaign to preserve high-paying union jobs (a rarity in the U.S., like Australia) was not a message deemed suitable for the American public.

As with the MUA dispute in Australia in 1998, demonisation of organised workers reached fever pitch during this dispute, resulting in a low point when ILWU members loaded war cargo unpaid during their lockout. Given that the decline and failures of the U.S. labor movement continue unchecked, the conduct and outcome of the ILWU dispute shows the likely consequences for the rest of U.S. labor. As the breaking of the air traffic controllers by President Reagan in the early 1980s signified the decades-long retreat and concessions by U.S. workers, the ILWU dispute shows that no worker in the U.S. can expect to use collective power against their

SEIU: End occupation of Iraq

On June 22, SEIU convention delegates renewed their call for an immediate U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The resolution points to high unemployment, declining wages, attacks on unions, huge cuts in public services, and massive budget deficits. "This crisis is a product of the Bush administration's policies ... of military intervention abroad and attacks on working peoples' rights at home."

SEIU notes that the invasion of Iraq was "based on deception, lies and false promises to the American people and the World, ... result[ing] in the death of thousands of Iraqis and hundreds of US soldiers." The resolution concludes by endorsing U.S. Labor Against the War, and calling for an end to the occupation, redirecting resources from the military to human needs, protecting civil liberties, and bringing U.S. troops home.

being to assault hecklers in his audiences without warning and seemingly with little provocation and then to have the victims arrested by obliging nearby cops.

According to Ms. Karney, in the course of one of his tirades on IWWs allegedly panhandling and using the proceeds for booze, Mullen stated that "[IWW] stands for 'I Will Wobble' because you know these Americans... will always give you enough money for liquor. Wobblers, that's what you are!" The rest, of course, is history; we have borne the name ever since.

Ms. Karney tells us that the motive for all this was that Mullen, while he loved the IWWs, hated "the sin, the lawlessness, the anarchy that enslaved them." A noble sentiment. And, says the faithful daughter, "throughout his work he was under the shadow of the Almighty."

"Papa's Story" can be found on the Internet at www.murraycreek.net/papa/chp18.htm. The fullest discussion of the origin of the name appears in *Wobblers, Pile Butts, and Other Heroes* by Archie Green, written before the appearance of "Papa's Story."

employer without serious consequences.

Increasing attacks on the Australian labor movement, state repression and erosion of civil liberties and other social gains represent similar attacks on Australian workers.

The labor movement has everything to lose from the War on Terror but much to gain by resisting it. The reliance on the U.S. Alliance for the economic and political security of Australian elites must be reversed.

As a minimum we must struggle to close all U.S. bases on Australian soil; oppose any war in Iraq; oppose the War on Terror; use targeted collective power against those corporations making profits from the war; refusing to load, manufacture, transport, sell, or assist with the operations of any war cargo; engage with and build genuine anti-war movements capable of taking the struggle back to the job, where all our power lies and where we can win.

New York turban fight

continued from page 1

New York Mayor Bloomberg wants to have the Olympics come to New York City, but the city administration has policies that make it difficult for Sikhs to work in civil service jobs because of prejudice against the turban. The city is not the friendly site for international events it presents itself as.

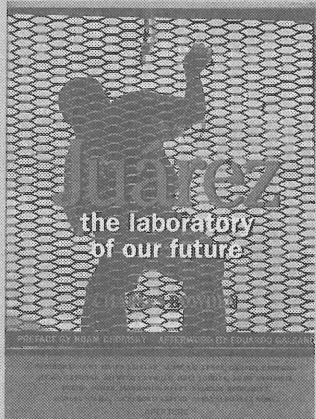
In the post-9/11 world the deep xenophobic nature of American society is rearing its ugly head. All over the country immigrants are being attacked because of their race, religion or country of origin. Muslims, many of whom left their homelands to get away from the oppression of Islamic fundamentalists, are treated as terrorists when they live in the USA.

It goes without saying that it is not our fellow workers who profit by this activity. This post-9/11 hysteria is blind and ignorant. My boss thought that I was a Muslim; a reporter thought I was from India. Many remarked how good my English is; it should be, I'm a native New Yorker.

My fellow transit workers heartened by my initial victory are now talking about what to do. This ultimately is about who owns you: you or your boss. My co-workers are talking about taking action on my behalf, getting a petition and perhaps conducting a job action in protest of the lack of religious freedom on our job. We all work on one of the world's busiest subway lines, so it is critical that the boss keeps us all intimidated and submissive. The gross unfairness of the MTA's action has angered many of my co-workers. It has now become an important battle in the subway system, and the MTA may just have gotten themselves in deeper than they expected.

Editor's note: FW Harrington is also an IWW member. Letters demanding his immediate reinstatement to his position in passenger service should be sent to MTA President L. Reuter, 370 Jay Street, Brooklyn NY 11201.

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS

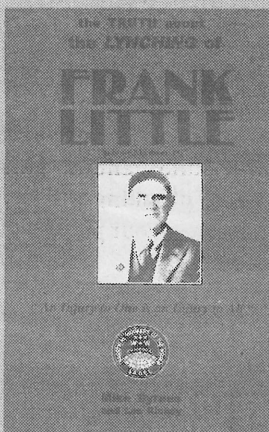


Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future
by Charles Bowden, preface by Noam Chomsky, afterword by Eduardo Galeano

A vitally important book, focusing on the intimate connections between the border towns of El Paso and Juárez. Beautifully produced, this book combines dozens of powerful full-color photographs of daily life, brutal tragedy, and struggle with an essay by Bowden that takes on issues of globalization, immigration, corruption, crime and poverty. Text and photographs combine to depict everyday life in Juárez with an urgency and passion that grows from desperation, but also from the possibilities of a very different life. Chomsky's introduction offers a biting critique of NAFTA and its effect on workers' rights, while Galeano

asks whether the third world really should aspire to be like the first world. "Dreams and nightmares are made of the same material," Galeano notes, rejecting "a development model that scorns life and idolizes things." 136 pages, \$15.00

The New Rank and File edited by Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd
Interviews with 27 organizers from the 1970s through the 1990s who are facing the challenges of a new economy with the same determination and creativity shown by those profiled in the Lynds' earlier collection of interviews with activists of the 1930s. With section heads drawn from the lyrics to "Solidarity Forever," these stories run the gamut from rank-and-file organizing around the world to community struggles against shut-downs, from direct action organizing to a campaign that transformed scabs into solid union members. Includes a particularly excellent example of workers using the Weingarten right in the course of organizing. 262 pages, \$16.00



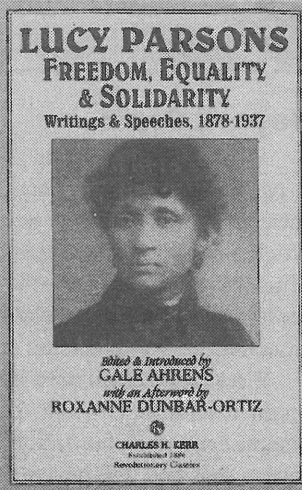
The Truth about the Lynching of Frank Little
by Mike Byrnes and Les Rickey

This is the first book-length treatment of the August 1, 1917, lynching of IWW organizer Frank Little during a miners' strike in Butte, Montana. The authors, both long-time Butte residents, have tracked down contemporary historical records and newspaper accounts – and several photographs reproduced here for the first time – to offer a definitive answer to the question of who killed Fellow Worker Little, and why. A richly detailed narrative of the event that transformed Butte and crushed the IWW presence in Montana's mining industry. See review page 10

127 pp, signed, \$16.95

Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality & Solidarity: Writings & Speeches: 1878-1937

edited and introduced by Gale Ahrens with an afterword by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
"More dangerous than a thousand rioters," that's what the Chicago police called Lucy Parsons – America's most defiant and persistent anarchist agitator, whose cross-country speaking tours inspired hundreds of thousands of working people. Here, for the first time, is a hefty selection of her powerful writings and speeches: on anarchism, women, race matters, class war, the IWW, and the U.S. injustice system. 183 pp, \$17.00

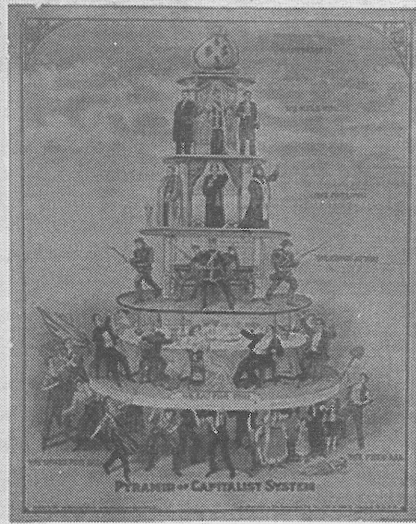


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The Rambling Kid: A Novel About the IWW
by Charles Ashleigh, intro by Steve Kellerman
Hobo novel now back in print 302 pages, \$14.00



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

Book Reviews: What work rights?

REVIEWS BY JON BEKKEN

Glenn Solomon, **You Could Be Fired for Reading this Book.** Berrett-Koehler, 2004, \$14.95, paper, 186 pages.

The title sums up the book's central point: U.S. workers are generally at-will employees who can be fired at any time, with or without cause. Exceptions generally include workers covered by union contract; workers in Montana, where state law prohibits firings except for good cause (though workers can still be laid off); and government employees covered by civil service regulations and constitutional due process and free speech rights.

Solomon draws on long experience as an employment lawyer representing workers to discuss the implications of the at-will doctrine, and the limited protections available to workers even under anti-discrimination laws.

Many workers believe they have legal rights, and that they live in a society where those rights can be enforced. Those are dangerous illusions. Solomon holds out little hope for litigation, instead encouraging workers to negotiate contracts with their employers specifying that they can be fired only for cause and to support state legislation modeled on Montana's law.

Most useful are chapters on the litigation process and on the non-competition agreements and enforceable promises. This book may prove a useful corrective for workers who believe they live in a just society. But it needs better editing; the writing is often tedious and over-simplified (to the point where it can be misleading), the examples too abstract, and there is not enough detail on state-by-state differences to be helpful to workers trying to determine their options.

Murdered by Capitalism

John Ross, **Murdered by Capitalism: A Memoir of 150 Years of Life and Death on the American Left.** Nation Books, 2004, \$15.95, paper, 368 pages.

This is a truly dreadful book, self-indulgent and wildly inaccurate. John Ross has written for many years on Mexico for the *Nation* and other publications, but this travesty of a "memoir" suggests that the reader can not rely upon Ross even to accurately record universally known facts, let alone trust his interpretive judgments and observations.

I mention this book only because it contains extensive material on the IWW and the radical labor movement more generally, offering a morasse of misinformation which should not be permitted to pollute the public consciousness. (I should note that I am working off an "uncorrected proof"; the publisher did not respond to repeated queries about changes made to the final edition, though reviewers working off that edition have noted that it too is riddled with errors.)

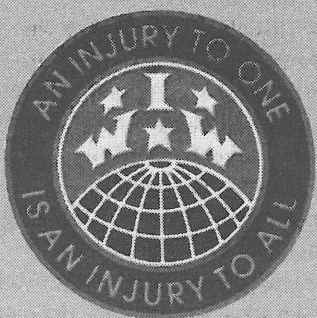
Some errors will be obvious to all. Big Bill Haywood is Hayward here, his co-defendants in the Haywood-Moyer-Pettibone trial serve 20 years in jail (amazingly, Ross gets the verdict and each name wrong, even while citing Lukas' book), Emma Goldman directs Czolgosz to assassinate President McKinley (and later repents of it), and scores of other such absurd inventions.

These claims are largely attributed to the author's booze-fueled "conversations" to a vast panopoly of ghosts: Rudolph Schnaubelt (Ross pins the Haymarket bombing on him, painting an elaborate scene in which activists draw lots to determine who will attack the police they had no way of knowing would be there), Leon Czolgosz, Emma Goldman, Elizabeth Gurley-Flynn, and many more.

Ross is no more reliable when he writes of events he claims to have been present for. He completely bungles the details of the IWW's 1964 Cedar Alley strike, to cite just one example, but this is the sort of story that will be much more difficult for readers to check out for themselves.

It's a shame this book was published, and an embarrassment to all involved. Avoid it.

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Indonesian timber workers seize bosses

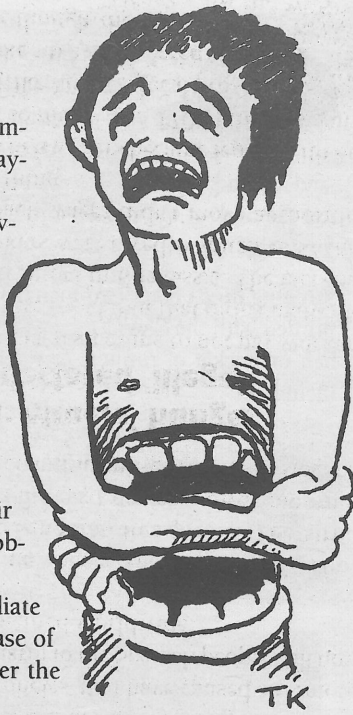
Some 3,000 workers with two Indonesian timber companies have been on strike since mid-June, demanding payment of salaries for April and May.

Nine workers began a hunger strike June 23, after government officials refused to meet with them, while others have seized two executives of Hong Kong-based PT Kalimantan Plywood Industry and PT Santi Murni Plywood and are holding them hostage. The companies say they are short on cash, and have demanded that workers settle for about half their normal wages.

"We are accustomed not to eating. Moreover, we haven't received our salaries for two months," said Gartini, one of the nine hunger strikers. "All the workers and their families are experiencing the same fate as us, they are probably starving," he added.

At press time, the companies had agreed to immediate payment of half the back wages, in exchange for the release of the executives. The remaining balance would be paid after the work resumed.

Ismed Soerya, chairman of the East Kalimantan Indonesian Labor Struggle National Front, said the government was colluding with the companies to oppress the workers. "The people are still being oppressed by the economic and political systems practiced by autocrats who believe more in capital strength than the power of the people."



Nigeria: general strike, repression

Former Nigerian military dictator and current president Obasanjo has responded to a three-day general strike with legislative proposals to dismantle the Nigerian Labor Congress and restrict unions' right to strike.

The strike began June 9 in response to skyrocketing gasoline prices, a day after a high court judge banned the strike and ordered the government to cancel the fuel price increase. Although the Petroleum Prices Regulatory Agency agreed to this, people demanded to see the prices change on the streets if the strike was to be cancelled.

The government claims that the only way to end Nigeria's chronic fuel shortages is by deregulating and privatizing the industry. Oil-rich Nigeria's scarcity of its own natural resources is a prime example of the problems of neoliberal, export-based rather than subsistence-based economic policies.

Nigeria is the world's seventh largest oil exporter and a major supplier for the U.S. market. Oil exports generate 80 percent of all government revenue. More than two-

thirds of the 126 million Nigerians live on less than a dollar a day.

Despite the court order, schools, offices and businesses were closed, while members of the Commercial Motorcycle Association monitored price changes at petrol stations.

However, police shot and killed two unionists and arrested others during a raid June 10. Police confirmed dissolving protests, claiming they were "unlawful assemblies," but insist that no bullets were fired.

On the third day the strike ended as prices were being adjusted, but unions warned that the strike would resume if the changes were not complete within seven days.

"They cannot continue to insult our intelligence. They cannot continue to mortgage the future of our children," NLC president Oshiomhole told crowds in Lagos.

Other backers of the strike criticized the decision to end the strike, insisting that more could have been won. The National Democratic Movement condemned the settlement as a "betrayal of the Nigerian people."

of eliminating the government deficit, and was responsible for developing the most austere social budget of all the governments of the European Community.

Rato has paraded triumphantly around the EU-15, claiming that Spain is at the top of the league because it is the first member to reach public deficit zero. And none other than Tony Blair's Minister of Economy, Gordon Brown, became Rato's main advocate for the IMF position.

Never mentioned is the enormous cost this "success" has had on the quality of life of average people in Spain. And these are the same policies that Rato is going to follow at the IMF Policies that have caused enormous pain and harm to the Spanish people will now be implemented worldwide.

called by the General Labor Confederation against soaring gasoline prices. The strike continued the next day as crowds mourned the dead, chanting anti-government slogans.

Russia: Miners' hunger strike declared 'illegal'

In Russia, it's a crime to not pay workers what they are owed. But that didn't matter to local prosecutors in Khakassia. The fact that mine workers were owed as much as \$7,000 each in back wages didn't move authorities to do anything.

But when miners became fed up with being owed so much, and 170 of them began a hunger strike May 17, local prosecutors suddenly woke up and declared the strike "illegal" even though the miners broke no law. The strike ended May 28 with the workers being paid their wages.

Steelworkers padlock plant

Mexican steelworkers at Matamoras' main plant struck June 9 to demand better working conditions and to protest shortages in their profit-sharing bonuses. Siderurgica del Golfo workers chained and padlocked three principal entrances to the building.

Attorneys for the company call the strike illegal, saying workers did not provide the legally required advance notice. Management has filed a criminal lawsuit at the Public Ministry office against those steelworkers it deems responsible for locking the factory gates.

Hundreds of steelworkers from other states have joined the Matamoras workers on the picket line.

Workers are also seeking a \$200 bonus as compensation for the company's poor labor conditions, including dangerous equipment and work in temperatures of up to 55 degrees centigrade, or 130 Fahrenheit.

Korean hospital workers win 40-hour week

A 13-day strike by 15,000 Korean nurses and administrative staff was settled June 22 when hospital management agreed to meet workers' demands for a 40-hour week.

The new schedule will be phased in over two years, with workers alternating shifts to cover weekends. Temporary staff will be gradually transferred into permanent posts, and paid at least 40 percent of regular scale.

The strike was the first of a series of planned actions. Unions at automakers have begun a series of quickie strikes to support demands for pay increases, and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, has threatened a general strike against the government's plan to send more troops to Iraq.

KorAm Bank workers struck June 18, after new owner Citigroup failed to meet demands for job security and independent management. Citigroup intends to merge the bank into its Korean division by September.

Victory for Aussie Borders workers

A campaign by Unite, an Australian group organising casual and temporary workers, has won a victory against U.S.-based multinational Borders Books. After a series of picket lines and leafleting actions supported by Australian Wobblies, management agreed June 4 to come under the national 'Award' regulating workers' minimum wages and working conditions.

This victory is an important example of workers holding multinationals accountable. After six rallies, petitioning, picketing and enduring employee courage, this is a triumph for any retail worker. The fact that Borders will be under the reins of Australian labor rules is by all means a valiant achievement, but the future of Australian labor laws themselves may be of concern since the victory.

The awards are negotiated between unions and employers' associations on a state and national basis, and set minimum wages and working conditions for workers in most trades and enterprises. Employers typically come under the Award if the relevant union is able to establish a presence on the job; workers can be signed to individual contracts waiving Award conditions. In many workplaces, unions negotiate enterprise agreements that go beyond the Award minimums.

In addition to offering protections against discharge and other basic rights, the Award includes penalty rates for night and weekend work, ranging from 25 percent to as high as triple time for particularly undesirable shifts. Thus Award workers on Sunday night would go from AUS\$14.50 to around \$42 an hour. Managers and workers on individual contracts would not receive the penalty rates.

Prime Minister Howard's administration has filed legislation that would undermine the Award system, eliminating many benefits Australian workers have fought hard to gain. The government has also proposed restrictions on the right to strike, and on other industrial action.



Boycott Pepsi

Workers fired from the La Mariposa S.A Pepsi bottling plant in Guatemala continue their 20-month fight for reinstatement (see article last issue). The union met with Pepsi officials June 14, who offered a financial settlement if workers would drop their court case, but refused to discuss reinstatement.

Please send email messages to: pepsico@premier_recruitment.com, boardofdirectors@pepsi.com and fundacion@cabcorp.com, stating that you will boycott Pepsi products until the workers are reinstated.

Haitian Free Trade Zone workers fight for union

Workers in Haiti's Codevi FTZ continue their fight for their jobs and their union. Management has confronted workers with severe violence, and locked them out of the factory June 8 after a one-day strike. Codevi produces apparel for U.S.-owned Levi Strauss.

The dispute began in February, when workers struck to protest the firing and brutal beating of a representative of the SOKOWA union. The confrontation escalated in March when 33 workers were attacked and expelled from the Ouanaminthe factory.

An international campaign in support of the workers and negotiations in April brought all the workers back by mid-May.

A one-hour warning strike was called June 4 in response to a breach of contract. Grupo M bosses quickly arrived at the factory, threatening to shut it down. Next, the Dominican Army expelled workers from the

factory and removed ID badges and t-shirts from some women employees.

A full strike was called June 7, but workers agreed to return on the 8th if man-

agement would negotiate. Instead, the Dominican Army locked the gates at 5:30 a.m.

Workers are calling for the Dominican Army's retreat, reinstatement of all workers, and negotiations between Grupo M and SOKOWA. You can support their struggle by writing: Ouanaminthe factory general director Fernando Capellan at fcapellan@grupom.com.do; Grupo M CEO Limbert Cruz at lcruz@grupom.com.do; and Michael Kobori, Director, Global Code of Conduct, Levi Strauss & Co., 1155 Battery St., San Francisco CA 94111, mkobori@levi.com.

Play Fair at the Olympics

For sportswear companies, the Olympics are an ideal opportunity to promote their newest merchandise. But behind the spotlight are the millions of underpaid and often abused workers who produce that clothing.

With the 2004 Summer Olympics approaching, the Clean Clothes Campaign network, Oxfam and Global Unions are organizing the Play Fair at the Olympics Campaign to expose the abuse that major garment manufacturers are responsible for.

The International Olympic Committee has the leverage to influence the conditions under which sportswear is manufactured around the world, especially since it has the primary right to use the Olympic logo.

A website has been established to pressure the IOC and leading sportswear companies into respecting international labor rights, including a link that will send email messages on your behalf at www.fairolympics.org.

Fascist sympathizer named new IMF director

BY VICTOR NAVARRO

Rodrigo Rato has been appointed the new managing director of the International Monetary Fund. But press reports have ignored his background. Rato was Spain's Economy Minister from 1996 on, and was responsible for the dismantling of the already inadequate Spanish welfare state.

While in government, Rato supported such policies as making religion a compulsory subject in secondary schools, requiring more hours of schooling in religion than in mathematics, undoing progressivity in the tax code, funding a foundation dedicated to the promotion of Francoism (i.e., Spanish fascism), and so on.

In the economic arena, he dramatically reduced public social expenditures as a way

French premier loses power

French electricity workers cut power to Premier Jean-Pierre Raffarin's home June 15, as part of a series of protests against plans to privatize public utilities. Workers also cut off power to the home of former premier Alain Juppe and other prominent politicians.

Meanwhile, masked workers are carrying out "Operation Robin des Bois" (Robin Hood), a campaign to restore electricity to the 250,000 homes cut off every day for non-payment. The government insists it will punish the militants' "illegal behavior."

Six killed in Lebanon strike

Army troops opened fire on thousands of protesters in a working class neighborhood in southern Beirut May 27. Six people were killed, dozens wounded and 130 arrested.

The protest was part of a general strike