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Wobs connect with truckers across West Coast

BY ADAM WELCH

Following a two week strike wave by truckers working out of West Coast ports in early May and a second June 28 - July 4 strike wave by their East Coast counterparts, IWW organizers have been meeting with strike leaders in the West Coast ports. They have issued a newsletter, *Troquerro*, and are posting updates on the truckers' struggle at <http://iww.org/unions/iu530/truckers>.

Port employers have for many years classified truckers as "independent contractors," making the drivers responsible for paying their own insurance, maintenance on trucks and skyrocketing fuel prices. Independent contractor status excludes the truckers from traditional labor laws as well.

In Los Angeles, thousands of truckers drive cargo out of the Long Beach and San Pedro ports. They are almost entirely long-term immigrant Latinos and most speak English. A strike called in LA June 28 in solidarity with striking East Coast truckers slowed down the port for several hours the first morning, but quickly fizzled. Toward the end of July, truckers at CALCO, a medium-sized company with 60 drivers, organized a week-long strike in response to firings of trucker activists. The drivers were able to win the fired activists their jobs back and a small wage increase.

The LA truckers have a long tradition of organizing going back into the early '90s. Several successive attempts were made to organize independent truckers organizations, such as the Latino Truckers Alliance (LATA), creating a truckers cooperative, and organizing with business unions such as the Teamsters and Communications Workers. Currently several pro-union groups of truckers meet separately without much coordination.

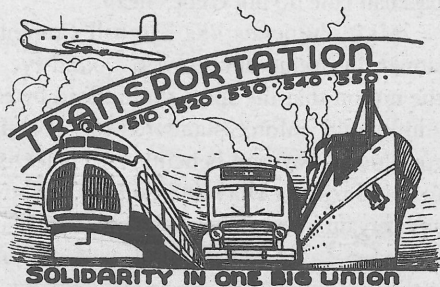
Port organizers with the Teamsters held a July 30 forum at their LA hall, where the IBT announced plans to work with trucking companies in a corporate-style campaign to convince port employers to drop the existing companies that hire independent contractor truckers and switch to trucking companies already organized under their union.

Supposedly truckers could become employees of these companies and join the Teamsters. Their union has been providing legal support to drivers in several ports, but has generally discouraged the wildcat strikes and direct action organized by the truckers.

It is not yet clear how truckers will respond to the plan to make deals with employers instead of organizing the truckers to use their power of shutting down the ports.

During the first strike wave, the Oakland drivers joined after the Los Angeles and Stockton drivers. Three leaders have emerged: Ruben Lopez, Dealth Jean and Ervinder Dhand, who are respectively Latino, African-American and Indian. During the first strike wave, the three met with port bosses and arranged a settlement which met with some opposition. Oakland truckers received raises that varied widely from company to company, most within the 5-15 percent range.

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Social service workers turn to IWW for respect

BY ANDREW LINKE

In three Wobbly job branches on both coasts, IWW members care for troubled youth, rape and domestic violence victims, the mentally handicapped, and the elderly. However, working conditions within the social service industry rarely correspond to the value services workers provide. Workers routinely encounter job insecurity, low pay, and often a demoralizing lack of respect – but these workers decided to organize to solve those problems.

Founded in 1973, Portland Women's Crisis Line offers sexual assault and domestic violence victims emergency assistance including help finding shelter, 911 cell phones, face-to-face contact at the hospital and/or in court, and referrals to organizations that offer a range of more in-depth services, such as counseling. Crisis line staff also work with victims on safety plans and talk them through process of escaping abusive relationships.

In the fall of 2003, Crisis Line workers chose IWW representation, and with strong community support recently waged a successful contract campaign.

Janus Youth Programs is a nonprofit corporation under contract with Multnomah County (Portland, Oregon). The IWW represents workers at two shops, both of which deal with troubled youth in a voluntary setting. Harry's Mother – the first to organize – specializes in family reunification and offers a temporary facility where youth ages 9-15 can live for up to a week away from their family. This shop has about 25 workers, including Crisis Intervention Specialists, Case Managers and Residential Advocates.

Streetlight and Porchlight Youth Shelters are primarily for street youth aged 17-20 who do not have a safe or comfortable home environment they can return to. They are able to stay at the shelters up to 120 days. Five Residential Advocates at each shelter each work overnight shifts two to three nights per week.

The capacity for each shelter is 30 youth, and they are often full.

Both Janus shops deal with potentially violent and/or drug-affected clients. Workers have been chased after with knives, had their lives threatened, had to dispose of dirty rigs, have had phones fail to dial out when 911 needed to be called – the list goes on and on.

Although the agencies that refer clients to Janus have starting wages of \$11/hour, Janus starts workers at \$9.25/hour to work with the exact same youth! When these shops were first unionized in 2000-'01, Janus had 30 units with about 600 employees. As a result of mismanagement and budget cuts, today there are just 12 shops with some 225 workers.

Dare Family Services was founded in Massachusetts 40 years ago to "provide therapeutic treatment foster care for abused, challenging and neglected children up to age 18." As the state began deinstitutionalizing mentally ill and retarded persons who had been warehoused in state facilities, Dare developed a mentor program to work with people of all ages who require supervision and assistance.

Nine workers serving mentally retarded adults at two of Dare's 10 residential facilities won a unanimous NLRB representation vote last February and have been in negotiations for 16 months. Workers decided to join the IWW after Dare rebuffed repeated efforts to rein in a particularly abusive manager, and to give workers – many of whom have worked for the agency for 10 years or more – more of a role in running the facility.

Workers pay the price

Janus, Dare and the Crisis Line are each formally independent, but receive most of their funding through contracts with local or state government. The chosen contractor controls almost all logistics of the operation, and the state relieves itself of accountability for working conditions – severely limiting work-

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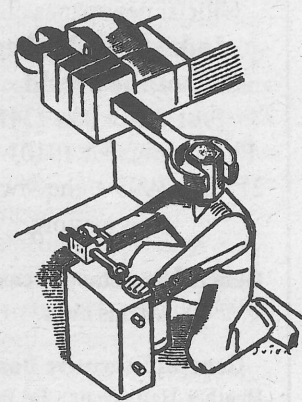
Defending our humanity at work

BY ARTHUR J. MILLER

Is there dignity in labor? It seems the mass media thinks not, for the working stiff is portrayed as a dull and natural-born loser. Hell, in this society those who have it made and are seen as the finest of citizens are the folks who have us natural-born losers making them rich. The bosses see no dignity in labor, and they let us know that by dehumanizing us at the point of production. In their eyes we are less than the machines, because the machines have investment value. We don't even have that value, because if one of us breaks down there are other losers out there ready to replace us.

So many folks don't understand that the verbal abuse we workers put up with is part of a long-standing process to dehumanize us into accepting the idea that we are somehow inferior to the bosses. This process seeks to strip us of our dignity as human beings. This dehumanization has become as much a part of a job as is picking up a tool and using it. Many just accept it as a part of having a job.

I have always been a bit of a rebellious worker and I maintain my dignity by either standing up to the abuse, or every time a boss abuses me making sure that it costs him in his pocketbook. I once hit a town with most of my stake used up, so I had to take any job I could. The only job I could find was washing dishes at a local restaurant. I had a real asshole for a boss who at every opportunity would find a way to take his shit out on me.



I did not say anything back because I wanted to get a little stake before I moved on. But I made sure that it would cost him money. The oven was in the back and one day I turned up the heat and burnt the hell out of his ham for the lunch special. Not only did it burn that ham, but he thought there was something wrong with the oven and called in someone to repair it. He baked some cakes and had them cooling and I made sure that when he pulled the pan off the cakes would crumble into useless pieces.

I got to the point of having so many ideas on how to cost him money that I looked forward to his trash talking. One day, when he went out the front door to look at something, I locked the side doors and turned the sign around to say "Closed." (At lunchtime most of the customers came in the side doors.) When he discovered it, he thought he forgot to open those doors in the morning and he was babbling about it the rest of the day. The

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Everett Massacre: "Deputies" descendants honored

The Snohomish County Sheriff recently presented the Washington State Law Enforcement Medal of Honor to the descendants of two men killed by their fellow gun thugs in Everett, Wash., Nov. 5, 1916, while firing upon a boatload of IWW members coming to town to support striking shingle weavers. The following letter was sent to the *Seattle Times* in response to its July 22 article about the ceremony:

To the Editor:

Although I have sympathy for families who want to think well of their ancestors, it is chilling that Washington law enforcement has seen fit to grant medals of "honor" to two murderers who were shot by their own drunken comrades in an effort to prevent peaceable workers from exercising the rights of free speech and free assembly.

In the present "homeland security" climate, it seems that the most heinous crimes can be considered "honorable," as long as the criminals wear tin stars. This gives a very clear message that modern law enforcement officers don't have to be troubled about being called on to trample the rights of citizens: as long as they're working for the government, anything they do is "honorable."

James D. Crutchfield, New York

Raising children is work

Thank you for putting out a useful, truthful and historically aware newspaper. I read every word, as I do of *Labor Notes*.

I'm one of those people who never got a salary until I got divorced. My labor was that oh so necessary work of bearing and rearing children and keeping a household together. It amazed me when I found out that Canadian women (and others) had mothers' allowances.

Why can we pay people to learn to kill when we can't find the money for mothers' child care? The abortion issue would be ir-

relevant if the women's movement had worked for salaries for mothers. Yes, nursing and feeding children does cost money.

What say you, industrial workers?

Margie Eucalyptus,
Kansas City



Sudan genocide

Many years ago, I got involved with trying to alleviate a situation in

Eastern Nigeria, with imposed starvation in the breakaway province of Biafra. This was during the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War (1967 - 1970). The Nigerian government, with military aid and personnel from several countries, was imposing a policy of genocide by starvation in the Biafran land in order to defeat that nation. These countries included the USSR, Franco's Spain, Egypt and East Germany.

Food was not getting in. Children, especially, were starving. This has been buried in history. As Howard Zinn says, these things will continue to happen because we have learned to bury them.

So now we have a situation of genocide in the South Sudan. The acts of genocide in the Sudan are more direct. To remain silent is to give consent. Any act of protest may help the people of South Sudan.

Raymond Solomon

Farewell, Fellow Worker

Palestinian activist Farouk Abdel-Muhti died of a heart attack July 22, while giving a talk in Philadelphia. He was 56 years old. He was released from jail April 12 after being held for two years without charge by U.S. immigration officials. He was in solitary confinement for much of that time. As a Palestinian who came to the U.S. four decades ago, Abdel-Muhti was "stateless" and had no country to which he could have been deported.

Several IWW members were active in Abdel-Muhti's defense campaign, and he was a featured guest at this year's New Jersey-New York IWW's May Day picnic.

Searching for baseball's lost soul

BY SOURDOUGH SLIM

Wobblies are not immune from a particularly American (read that North, Central and South) malady known as "baseball fever." The telltale symptoms are persistent perusal of box scores, sudden detours at sporting goods stores, and piles of *Baseball Digest* magazines that never seem to make it to the recycling bin. While we love the game for its former glories and for the aesthetics of a well-executed double play, our working class consciousness opposes its modern, greedy boss class' exploitative nature.

Over the past few years, several IWW branches and other interested fans have begun organizing a Sweatfree Baseball campaign designed to expose the sweatshop production of Major League Baseball licensed logo materials like hats, shirts and other promotional merchandise which benefits team owners, players and the leagues.

MLB originally began milking this megamerchandise cash cow by purchasing the goods from licensed production factories. Now, with gear like the fashionable "Coopers-town Collection," MLB directly contracts the work. As any fan can tell you, these items of baseball chic do not come cheap.

MLB plutocrats like Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig have turned a blind eye to the notion that the sport should lead by example, and enforce standards for working conditions, pay and benefits, end blacklisting, and respect workers' rights to organize and bargain — sort of like members of the players union do, eh? All of MLB's exploiters are making millions from the sale of this gear. It is long past due for those who toil in the factories to have a better share of the kale.

Of course, campaigns like these require baseball's consuming class — those who buy their seats at the ballparks and purchase the MLB sweatshop goods — to withdraw from their well-engineered comfort zone to a place where some degree of moral conscience can be awakened. Wobblies and other activists know that when they reach out to the fan

base, they respond positively. But this is not an easy job, when you factor in the dynamics of the sheer numbers we're talking about. How do we effectively reach the actual millions? Remember, Major League Baseball stadiums are like fortresses, protected by in-house security and local police. Informational picketing or more militant forms of confrontation often leads to arrest at these venues.

An ideal scenario might involve a little help from inside the sport. Does a sympathetic ballplayer or MLB executive exist? And would they have the courage to buck the status quo? Maybe. Recently, Toronto first baseman Carlos Delgado has publicly refused to comply with the mandate that ballplayers remove their caps and face the flag during the playing of the national anthem before the first pitch is thrown. He has said it's his way of voicing opposition to the U.S.'s deadly debacle in Iraq. Could this be a first step toward other stands for principle by the players? They benefit from these sleazy deals; they need more information; and they won't get it from Bud Selig.

The recent release of the first edition of Sweatfree Baseball's collectible baseball cards may signal a turning point for public awareness. The informative, pocket-sized cards run counter to the commercial baseball cards collected by young and old alike. It began with the No Sweatshops Bucco! group and IWW members in Pittsburgh and other areas. Does a major league team play in your area, or a minor league affiliate? Then you, too, could design a card for local distribution.

Major League Baseball is the best merchandiser of licensed logo gear in all of sports. Many of its top facilities have been financed with public funds from taxpayers.

Baseball has become another monolithic corporate beast, hungrily gobbling up the rights of the commons while privately reaping huge profits. It's ugly, not-so-little sweatshop secret is a great place for the public to start to reclaim a past-time which has long since lost any semblance of a soul.

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Starbucks workers continue union drive despite NLRB

New York City Wobblies withdrew a union representation petition after the National Labor Relations Board agreed to hear Starbucks' appeal of a regional NLRB ruling upholding the right of Starbucks workers at the 36th and Madison store in Midtown Manhattan to unionize. The company is demanding a regional bargaining unit.

After the national Board agreed to hear Starbucks' appeal, Stuart Lichten of Kennedy, Schwartz and Cure, the law firm representing the workers, issued a sharp rebuke: "This employer apparently inhabits some parallel universe, in which \$7-an-hour at-will employees are 'partners,' 'supervisors' are not supervisors, 'store managers' do not manage the store, and 36th Street is 'downtown.' ... The employer, in keeping with its up-is-down worldview, now asks the Board to overturn more than 40 years of precedent."

Also pending are unfair labor practice charges contending that the company threatened wage cuts, gave bribes to sway the vote, and selectively enforced a no-distribution policy to quash workers' freedom of speech.

"We expected the delay tactics, but the company's approach is really reprehensible," said Anthony Polanco, a worker at the store. "Starbucks needs to accept that no one who comes to work every day and works hard deserves to live in poverty."

"Starbucks and its union-busting law firm have succeeded in obliterating our right to a vote," said IWW member Daniel Gross.

Unable to wait out the NLRB's notoriously slow process, workers withdrew the election petition. Instead, they will address their concerns through a direct action campaign, while reaching out to Starbucks workers across the continent. A march from the store to Starbucks' regional headquarters (33rd and 5th) is being planned for August 28, beginning at 2 p.m.

Workers from around the U.S. have contacted the union to report across-the-board raises given by the company as a preemptive strike against organizing.

A report in the August 9 *Newsday* notes that many workers at stores throughout Long Island, Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan had complaints about physical problems caused by working at Starbucks. Most asked not to be identified in the article, saying they were concerned about losing their jobs.

Although *Fortune* magazine ranks Starbucks as one of the 100 best companies to work for, workers struggle to pay for the chain's much-heralded benefit plan. The cost can be prohibitive even for full-time workers making \$7.75 an hour in some of the most expensive cities in the country.

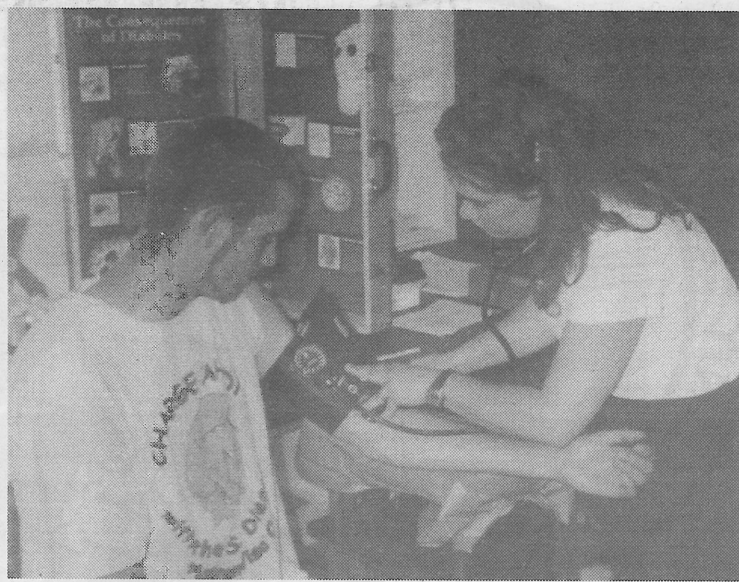
And many workers complain of repetitive motion injuries, caused by Starbucks' inattention to ergonomics in designing its stores and work rules.

Three years ago, Starbucks had to pay \$18 million to settle a class-action lawsuit from managers charging that the company wrongfully denied them overtime pay. A similar suit is pending in Florida. Several workers compensation claims for repetitive motion injuries are also pending.

Earlier, the IWW Starbucks baristas union and the international human rights group Global Exchange united to call on Starbucks to fulfill its commitment to purchase at least 5 percent of its coffee from fair trade certified sources. "We see our struggles for humane wages and working conditions as united," said Gross.

Less than 1 percent of Starbucks coffee is fair trade certified. "The right to a living wage is universal," said Valerie Orth, fair trade organizer with Global Exchange. "We hope Starbucks will guarantee its café workers the right to freedom of association."

Documents on the drive are available on the Starbucks Baristas Union website at www.starbucksunion.org.



The Philadelphia GMB ran free health screenings July 27 & Aug. 4 as part of its South Street Organizing Project. The IWW has contacts at several outlets on the busy retail strip, a solid committee in one national chain, and is helping workers organize on the job for better conditions.

IWW organizer fired at Wild Oats

BY MARK DAMRON, CINCINNATI

Tom Kappas, who has been leading an organizing drive at the Wild Oats natural food store in Cincinnati, Ohio, was recently fired. Although Wild Oats states that his union activity has nothing to do with it, his coworkers do not believe that is the case.

On Friday, July 9, after clocking out for the evening, one of the managers at Wild Oats detained FW Kappas because he wanted to "talk." The manager then went and got another worker who was also on his way out. He stated, "Although I feel bad about it, I must search your bags and check your receipts."

FW Kappas gave the manager his receipt for the items he had in his bag, including 19¢ in produce from the "spoilage" cooler, which the produce manager allowed employees to purchase at 10 cents a pound. The manager said he shouldn't have discounted the fruit and told him to throw it in garbage. Figuring that 19¢ wasn't really worth his job, FW Kappas threw the bananas in the garbage and left.

The next day Kappas was called before three managers, including Store Director Fred Meyer. Feeling a bit uncomfortable, he asked for a union representative to be present before he answered any questions. Meyer said

there wouldn't be any questions because he was being fired for trying to "steal" the fruit.

At that time produce manager Robert Lee denied allowing discounts on waste produce, so Kappas clocked out for the last time a few minutes later. Lee later admitted he "made a mistake" when he denied that he had approved such discounts. The policy of discounting produce was widely understood and practiced but unwritten, according to half a dozen workers who have provided the IWW with written affidavits to that effect.

Managers refused to provide FW Kappas with a copy of their written statement "justifying" the firing, nor did they permit him to rebut it. FW Kappas told the store director that the termination was clearly retaliation for his union activity. One manager responded by saying, "We don't care if you are in the union, this isn't a union shop."

The Cincinnati Branch of the IWW has written the store asking that they reinstate FW Kappas, and other employees are circulating a petition to have him reinstated. The story was covered in a local paper, *City Beat*, and other actions will be taken if FW Kappas is not reinstated promptly. For more information contact: cincyiw@iww.org

IWW Assembly in Edmonton

The 2004 IWW General Assembly will be held at the Queen Alexandra Community Hall, 10425 University Ave., in Edmonton, Canada, Sept. 3 - 6. Friday will begin with a meeting of the General Executive Board; IWW members are welcome to observe.

Friday evening, a forum on organizing strategy will feature representatives of recent IWW organizing campaigns, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of regionally based, industrial and single shop campaigns. An informal social will follow.

The business of the assembly will be done Saturday and Sunday. In addition to reviewing officers' reports and nominating officers for the coming year, several constitutional amendments have been sent to Assembly for consideration. Copies have been provided to all IWW branches and members.

Saturday evening (Sept. 4), beginning at 7 p.m., a concert with Guy Smith and Maria Dunn will feature songs to fan the flames of discontent. An open mike will follow. IWW member Guy Smith - who critics have compared to Billy Bragg, Woody Guthrie and Paul Weller - has been singing on picket lines and at demonstrations for the past decade, and released a CD, "Red Square Dance," in 2002.

Maria Dunn combines her Celtic heritage with the influences of North American folk and country music to write songs inspired by historical and contemporary characters, that capture their struggles and triumphs. In 2002, she received a Juno nomination for her second recording, "For a Song." Her newest project, "We Were Good People" (2004), explores the stories of working people in Western Canada - telling tales of resilience and hope through experiences of immigration, internment, exploitation and the Depression.

Admission is free for Assembly delegates, otherwise \$5, a donation for the unemployed.

The Edmonton Branch has added a frequently updated General Assembly page to its web site, which includes information on accommodations and transportation: <http://edmonton.iww.ca/ga.html>

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.



The hidden cost of Wal-Mart jobs

Employment policies at Wal-Mart cost California taxpayers approximately \$86 million a year in public assistance to company workers, according to a University of California - Berkeley study released August 2.

The study found that Wal-Mart workers in California rely on the state for about \$32 million annually in health-related services, and \$54 million a year in other assistance such as subsidized school lunches, food stamps and subsidized housing.

"When workers do not earn enough to support themselves and their families through their own jobs, they rely on public safety net programs to make ends meet," said the report by Arindrajit Dube of the UC Institute for Industrial Relations and Ken Jacobs of the Center for Labor Research and Education.

The researchers estimate that the approximately 44,000 workers at 143 Wal-Mart and its sister Sam's Club stores in California earn about 31 percent less than workers in large retail as a whole, and that 23 percent fewer Wal-Mart/Sam's Club workers generally are covered by employer-sponsored health insurance. Reasons for the low rates of coverage include higher employee turnover, eligibility restrictions, employee costs for health plans, and plan quality.

To determine Wal-Mart's costs to taxpayers between March 2001 and March 2002, the researchers examined Wal-Mart's compensation policies, and wage data contained in public testimony in a sex-discrimination case against the company.

"As the country's largest employer, (Wal-Mart) has become the standard setter," the report said. If other California retailers apply the Wal-Mart model to their 750,000 employees, Dube and Jacobs estimate taxpayer support to retail workers will increase by \$410 million a year.

The complete report is on the Web at <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/lowwage>

Quebec Wal-Mart organizes

The Quebec Labour Relations Board has accredited the UFCW to represent a Wal-Mart store in Saguenay, Quebec; ruling that the union has demonstrated that it represents the large majority of the store's employees. If the decision survives on appeal, it would be the only Wal-Mart outlet in North America to be unionized.

Wal-Mart defeated unionization in Thompson, Manitoba, just days afterward, on a 67 - 44 vote. It was the second time in less than a year that the company had defeated the workers' efforts to unionize. The UFCW attributed the defeat to management threats.

Roofers union charged in extortion scheme

The Manhattan District Attorney's office has indicted Local 8 of the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers and eight union officials and alleged mob figures with a scheme to extort more than \$2 million from roofing contractors.

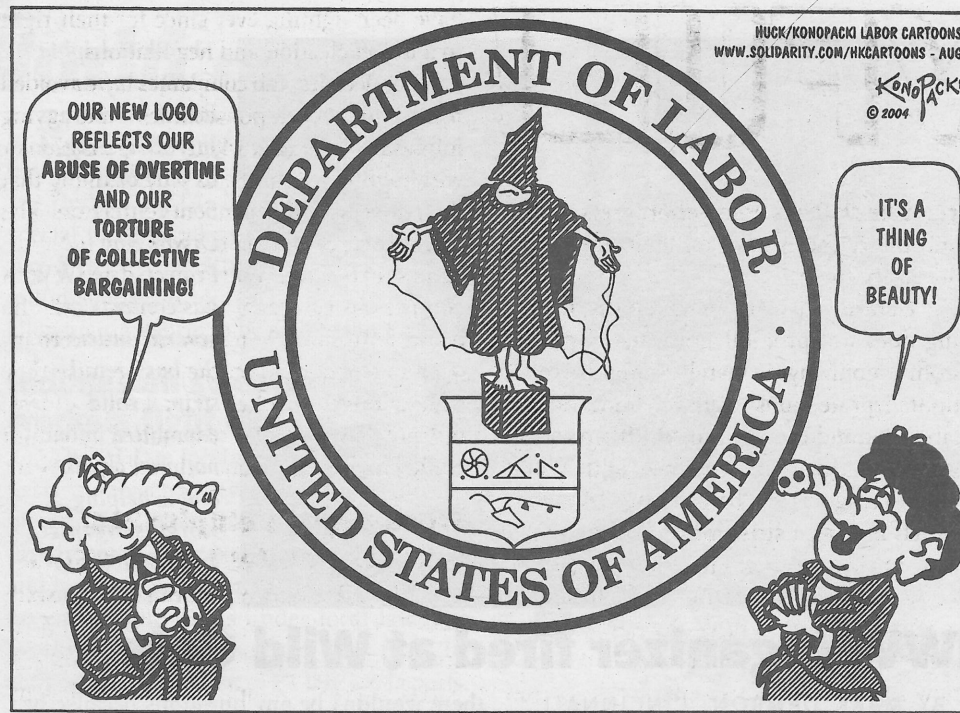
The local was charged with similar forms of racketeering in 2000, and some officials were removed. Prosecutors say the union used threats to shut down work sites of contractors who refused to go along with the scheme under which contractors were permitted to use nonunion workers and ignore union work rules in exchange for bribes to union officials.

The contractors who benefitted from the scheme - paying only about half as much in wages and benefits as required under the union contract - were not charged.

Plumbers' officials ousted

Four officials of a plumbers' union pension fund have been removed as part of a settlement reached August 3. The four must also pay \$10.98 million in penalties.

The action comes two years after the Labor Dept. filed suit charging trustees of the



Saskatchewan's provincial labour board is considering efforts to unionize Wal-Mart stores in Weyburn and North Battleford. Wal-Mart is arguing that provincial labour laws violate Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms by restricting its right to communicate with workers during union drives. A court has already quashed a subpoena from the labour board that would have forced Wal-Mart to turn over several internal documents including a copy of its union-busting manual.

Wal-Mart operates 231 department stores and five Sam's Clubs in Canada.

Injured workers suffer from California workers' comp cuts

A sweeping "reform" of California's workers compensation program pushed through by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger with the backing of many Democrats is resulting in long delays and reduced benefits for many injured workers. The changes have had little impact on employers' premiums, but have been a bonanza for insurance companies.

Under the law's new guidelines, company doctors assess the percentage of a worker's permanent disability caused by work and the percentage that can be attributed to other factors such as arthritis, osteoporosis and body weight. Even whether or not a woman has given birth can affect the benefits injured workers receive. Insurance companies are routinely rejecting workers' claims on these grounds, leaving workers unable to work and without any means to survive.

Economy still sputtering

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that U.S. payrolls increased by just 32,000 in July, far less than the numbers of new workers entering the job market. As inflation picks up,

Plumbers and Pipefitters National Pension Fund with mismanaging its \$100 million investment in the Diplomat Resort & Spa in Florida. The removed trustees include union President Martin Maddaloni and Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Patchell, who will be allowed to continue in their union posts.

ILA officers face charges

Federal prosecutors have brought racketeering and extortion charges against New Jersey and Florida officials of the International Longshoremen's Association, and some newspapers have reported that a civil racketeering case against the union will be filed soon. Such a case could lead to the government seizing control of the entire union, which is being sued by several rank-and-file members who contend that a recent contract vote was rigged.

The ILA says the new contract - relegating new hires to second-class status such as has long prevailed on West Coast docks - was approved by a 4,873 - 3,886 vote. However, a thousand workers in the port of Jacksonville were denied the right to vote, and dissidents claim voters in many other ports were intimidated. The ILA discarded the results from some locals where it contended election rules were not followed.

real wages are falling as employers take advantage of massive unemployment to cut starting wages and scale back annual raises.

The BLS reports that 52 percent of workers who lost long-term jobs in 2001 - 2003 and landed new jobs by this year now earn less than they did before - with a third earning at least 20 percent less. More than a third of workers who lost their jobs in that period had not found even part-time work.

SEIU decertified by San Francisco janitors

BY MICHAEL CONNELL

Service Employees International Union Local 1877 has been decertified as collective bargaining agent for the vast majority of San Francisco janitors. A new, independent union, United Service Workers for Democracy Local 87, will now represent the unit.

The decertification vote was held by the NLRB August 5, after janitors working for the largest cleaning contractors in the city filed petitions requesting an election.

Out of 1,698 eligible voters, 947 janitors voted for USWD and 573 for the SEIU. There were 121 challenged ballots, and 18 that were declared void. Some San Francisco janitors at smaller contractors will continue to be represented by SEIU Local 1877.

Behind the decertification is a long battle between the SEIU international and members of the local, formed over fierce protests through a process of mergers decreed by SEIU international officials. In addition, workers complain that wages have fallen behind in recent years, and contractors have been allowed to replace long-time janitors with lower-paid new hires. Similar fights are underway in SEIU locals across the country.

Teamsters give up right to strike at US Freightways

The IBT Freight Division has reached agreement with USF Holland on Holland's expansion into the east. USF has been eager to move forward with its expansion following its shut-down of USF Red Star in May during a Teamsters strike.

The agreement provides for preferential hiring for former Red Star employees. But they will have to apply as new hires, and meet unspecified hiring criteria. They will begin as casuals and probationaries, and if hired will work through a two year pay progression.

USF Holland has announced it will open eight new terminals in areas previously served by USF Red Star. Teamster officials have said they expect further expansion soon into the rest of the former Red Star territory.

As part of the agreement, the IBT surrendered the right to strike to win union recognition in office organizing drives in exchange for an expedited election procedure.

Union scabbing at RNC

Workers seeking to pressure New York mayor Bloomberg to negotiate new contracts picketed the site of the upcoming Republican National Convention July 19, only to see unionized truck drivers cross picket lines.

Striking Utah Co-Op miners win

Miners at C.W. Mining's Co-Op mine in Utah accepted management's reinstatement offer July 6, ending a 10-month strike by the 75 mostly Latino miners.

The miners halted production at the mine Sept. 22, 2003, in a show of solidarity for miner Bill Estrada, who was fired that day. Management responded by firing the workers and locking them out. The fired miners reached out to the United Mine Workers for help, and the union responded by filing unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB on their behalf. The Board ultimately ruled in the miners' favor, ordering the company to reinstate them with full back pay.

The Co-Op miners earn between \$5.25 and \$7 per hour with no health insurance or retirement benefits and say they are forced to work in unsafe conditions. The UMWA has filed for a representation election.

"Some of the conditions these miners describe to us are reminiscent of the early days of coal mining, when workers were treated more as property than as human beings," said UMWA Secretary-Treasurer Carlo Tarley. "The UMWA is committed to making sure these miners are brought into the 21st century."

New York Web continues job fight

IWW member Keith Harrington continues to fight religious discrimination and bigotry by New York City's Metropolitan Transit Authority. The MTA refuses to allow FW Harrington, who has worked in the subway system for 23 years, to work in passenger service because as a Sikh he wears a turban.

The IWW's International Solidarity Commission has distributed an appeal for solidarity to unions around the world, and the case has been taken up by the union representing subway workers.

Recently, FW Harrington was called in to the MTA's Special Investigations Unit, based on a false report concerning conductors on the #1 local (he works the #4 as a driver), who were suspected of writing notes threatening to blow up the Republican National Convention. It appears that he was questioned solely because he wears a turban, and thus is considered a prime terrorism suspect.

Letters demanding an end to harassment of FW Harrington and his immediate reinstatement to his position in passenger service should be sent to MTA President L. Reuter, 370 Jay Street, Brooklyn NY 11201.

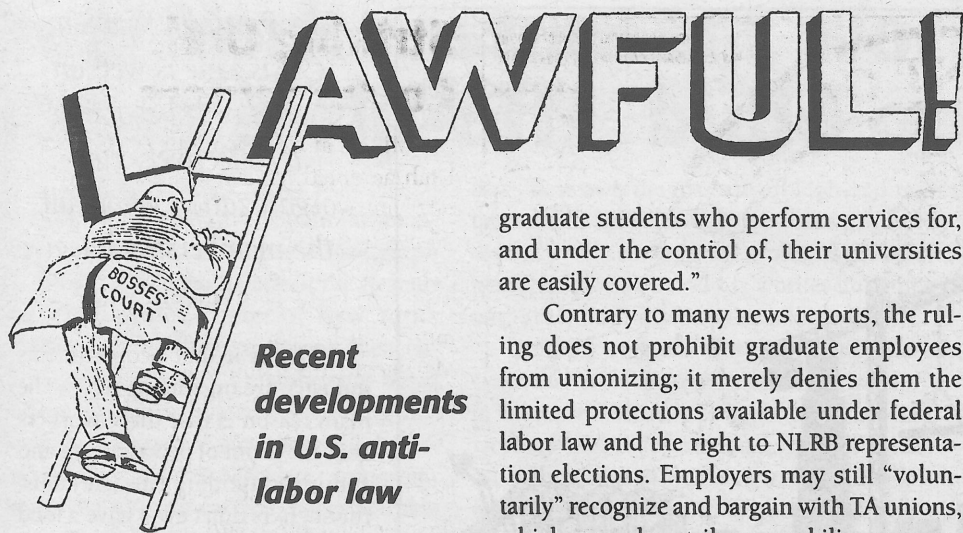
Sew-in near Athens' Acropolis

A group of faceless activists worked at sewing machines on a rooftop in the center of Athens overlooking the Acropolis August 10, to draw attention to the plight of exploited workers. In March, the Clean Clothes Campaign launched a campaign with global unions to protest the abuse and exploitation of sportswear workers. Inadequate wages, high levels of compulsory overtime, impossibly high work targets, denial of workers' rights, sexual harassment and verbal abuse pervade the sportswear industry worldwide.

Hundreds of organizations have participated in the campaign in over 35 countries.

Supporters of the campaign include world famous Olympians such as Spanish cyclist Miquel Indurain, Canadian runner Bruce Kidd, U.S. hammer thrower Kevin McMahon, Spanish swimmer Gemma Mengual, Australian swimmer Sarah Houbolt, Dutch runner Kamiel Maase and the French World Cup soccer player Didier Deschamps.

Although some sports brands have responded to proposals to end labor abuses in sportswear sector, most have not and the International Olympics Committee has refused to accept in Athens more than half a million signatures collected by the campaign.



Recent developments in U.S. anti-labor law

NLRB rules grad employees have no right to unionize

Reversing an earlier decision, the National Labor Relations Board has ruled that graduate students who work as research and teaching assistants are not employees as defined by federal labor law. In a 3-2 decision, the board dismissed a UAW petition to represent teaching assistants and other graduate employees at Brown University, reversing its holding in the New York University case four years before. The ruling applies only to private colleges and universities; state schools are not covered by federal labor law.

The same majority that revoked workers' Weingarten rights (see article last issue) ruled that graduate teaching and research assistants "are primarily students and have a primarily educational, not economic, relationship with their university." The decision ignores the reality that these workers perform the bulk of first and second year teaching — often designing and teaching even advanced courses without any oversight or supervision.

The two dissenters noted that the ruling "disregards the plain language of the statute — which defines 'employees' so broadly that

graduate students who perform services for, and under the control of, their universities are easily covered."

Contrary to many news reports, the ruling does not prohibit graduate employees from unionizing; it merely denies them the limited protections available under federal labor law and the right to NLRB representation elections. Employers may still "voluntarily" recognize and bargain with TA unions, which may also strike or mobilize community support campaigns to secure recognition.

Faced with mounting work loads and inadequate salaries, TAs have organized at colleges across the country. Several unions now represent graduate employees, including the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the Communication Workers of America, the United Auto Workers and the United Electrical workers.

Newly elected AFT president Edward McElroy called the decision "outrageous." "These people obviously are workers," he added. "If members of the NLRB can't recognize a worker when they see one, they shouldn't be on a national labor board."

The AFT has said it will continue organizing campaigns across the country — including at the University of Pennsylvania, where the NLRB impounded election ballots pending the outcome of legal appeals. The IWW represents AFT organizing staff at U Penn.

Cabbies organize union, but Friendly refuses to negotiate

Drivers for five companies owned by Friendly Cab Co. in Oakland, California, have voted to join Teamsters Local 70 after the NLRB agreed that they are employees, but the companies are refusing to negotiate. The company insists the drivers are independent contractors, and say they will appeal the ruling to federal court.

The cabbies first organized in 2002, and

have been fighting ever since for their right to a union election and negotiations.

For decades, cab companies have avoided many employer responsibilities — like paying minimum wage or workers' compensation or withholding payroll taxes — by claiming that their drivers are independent contractors. The Friendly case was decided based on the companies' extensive control over drivers; in a companion case against Veterans Cab the board found that Veterans' drivers were indeed independent contractors because they were allowed to solicit their own business, did not have to take dispatched calls and could choose where and when they worked.

Truck drivers employees, not independent contractors

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit has upheld an NLRB ruling that drivers who leased tractor-trailers from a transport company as "employees" rather than independent contractors (Time Auto Transp. v. NLRB, 175 LRRM 2334). Although the drivers were hired under an independent contractor agreement, they were required to make monthly payments on their equipment that could be forfeited for inadequate performance. The appeals court agreed that even though the drivers paid their own expenses and got no benefits, they were employees because of the amount of control the company had over the manner of the drivers' work.

Hidden cameras unlawful

The NLRB has ruled that Anheuser-Busch violated the Taft-Hartley Act when it failed to give notice to and bargain with the union before installing hidden surveillance cameras in work and break areas in order to detect suspected illegal drug use. However, the employer will be allowed to discipline 16 employees whose misconduct was discovered through the illegally installed cameras.

NLRB leaves nurses hanging

A week after nurses at Albany Medical Center filed for a NLRB election, a senior manager threatened to withhold a promised \$2-an-hour raise if the nurses voted the union

in. The threat was successful, and the union filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge.

On May 28, 2004, 456 days after the election, the NLRB finally ruled that the hospital's threat was illegal. So what did the NLRB do? It implemented its standard remedy, ordering the hospital to post a notice telling nurses that "we will not threaten that an announced \$2-an-hour pay increase will have to be renegotiated or changed in any way if you select the union as your collective-bargaining representative."

And that's it. The hospital broke the law, and all it must do is post a notice promising not to violate the law in the future. Too bad you can't get the same deal in traffic court.

Labor Dept. can enforce new financial reporting rules

A federal judge in Washington, D.C., has denied the AFL-CIO's request to delay implementation of new financial reporting rules requiring unions with annual receipts of \$250,000 or more to electronically file with the Labor Department more detailed reports about their financial activities than previously were required. Unions say the electronic reporting software has not been fully tested and is defective, and that the new rules are unnecessarily burdensome.

EEOC picketed

Protesters picketed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission headquarters July 2 on the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, complaining that the agency takes too long to investigate discrimination cases and is not protecting workers. It takes an average of 421 days for the EEOC to process a case, even under new procedures that restrict the evidence workers can present.

Chain gang asbestos removal

The state of Utah is using state prisoners to do asbestos removal as part of a renovation of the state Capitol dome. Prisoners are paid \$1 an hour (the state says its a stipend, not a wage), but participation in the program improves their chances of making parole (assuming they live to enjoy the free time).

Million Worker March support continues to build

The Million Worker March organizing committee has secured the Lincoln Memorial for Sunday, October 17, and is appealing for urgently needed funds to support logistics on the ground, as well as volunteers to build the march in their area.

The march has been called to protest the government's anti-labor policies, ranging from the war in Iraq to economic policies that have cost millions of workers their jobs, to labor laws that prevent workers from organizing, to "free trade" deals that pit workers around the world against each other, to environmental policies that poison our communities, to a health "system" that leaves a third of the population without affordable access to health care, to undemocratic workplaces.

Although the AFL-CIO is discouraging its affiliates from building the march, several local unions and labor councils have endorsed it. Among independent unions backing the march are the IWW, the United Electrical Workers (UE) and the National Education Association.

Information on march plans can be found at www.millionworkermarch.org. Donations to cover costs are urgently needed, and can be made at the site via credit card.

9 million lose health benefits

The percentage of people getting health insurance through employers fell sharply from 2001 to 2003, resulting in 9 million fewer workers with employer coverage after accounting for population growth. The percentage of people under 65 who get health insurance through employers fell from 67 to 63 percent over the two-year period.

The Center for Studying Health System Change says the drop was caused by rising unemployment, and by premium increases that led some employers to eliminate health plans or make them so expensive that other workers could not afford to participate.

End of the Internet dream?

BY ERIC LEE

A decade ago, many of us were enthusiastic about the Internet in part because we believed that it opened up extraordinary opportunities for the left. The Internet could not be censored, we argued. Censorship would be treated as damage to the system, and information would route around it.

But a recent report from the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders makes for frightening reading. Indeed, after spending only a few minutes reading it you may well become convinced that the dream of a free and instant means of communication which governments would be unable to censor has turned out to be an illusion.

The report tells us about some of the "usual suspects" — the kinds of regimes you just know are blocking free use of the web by their citizens. A typical example would be Cuba, where in the words of Reporters Without Borders Secretary-General Robert Ménard, it is "no surprise that Fidel Castro gives orders about the Internet as he does about everything else in Cuba." (The report asserts that "Cuba is one of the world's 10 most repressive countries as regards online free expression.")

The outstanding example of an authoritarian regime grappling with control over the web and email is, of course, China. As the report points out, "With a total of 61 Internet users in detention at the start of May 2004, China is the world's biggest prison for cyberdissidents. It is also the country where the technology for e-mail interception and Internet censorship is most developed. What's more, the authorities recently decided to tighten the vice and roll back the few gains made by Internet users in recent years."

Ironically, and perhaps inevitably, U.S. corporations are providing the technology to



make it possible for the dictators in Beijing to control the net. According to Reporters Without Borders, "Cisco Systems supplies China with equipment that allows it to intercept and analyse data circulating on the Internet with great precision. Cisco's state-of-the-art routers enable the Chinese cyberspolice to spot 'subversive' Internet users."

In an appendix written by Harvard's Ben Edelman, examples are given of how the censorship is often concealed. Try to visit a website which the government wants to block and you usually get error messages about 'time-outs' and sites not being found, rather than an explanation of what is really happening.

Far more chilling, I thought, was the case of Uzbekistan — a primary ally of the U.S. in the war against terror. The former Soviet republic has decided not merely to block access to undesirable websites, but in some cases to create fake versions of those websites. They call these counterfeit versions 'modified mirrors.' "When Uzbek users request the controversial sites," Edelman writes, "they automatically receive the altered copies in place of the authentic originals. Experts might realize something is wrong, but this tampering is exceptionally difficult for ordinary users to notice or detect."

One might think that the focus is on relatively poor countries where only a small percentage of the population is Internet-literate. After all, blocking access to particular websites in Uzbekistan affects only a very small number of people. In that country, only around 2 percent of the population is online.

But South Korea is one of the world's most wired countries. According to the report, fully 85 percent of the population uses email, and 40% have broadband connections. And yet even there, the government routinely blocks websites that "undermine law and order." In practice, this means things like the arrest a year ago of two activists, Kim Yong-Chan and Kim Jong Gon, because — among other "crimes" — they had downloaded a copy of The Communist Manifesto. They were accused of violating national security laws and are still being held without trial.

There are also chapters about Western democracies like Canada, Australia, the U.S. and Britain where one wouldn't expect to find a lot of censorship, but where censorship is in fact growing all the time.

This should concern unionists. While union websites have not been the primary victims (yet) of Internet censorship, the regimes which are today doing most of the blocking are regimes which are extremely unfriendly to unions. It is only a matter of time before websites which campaign for union rights internationally, such as Global Unions, LabourStart, the International Centre for Trade Union Rights and the Campaign for Labor Rights, find themselves being blocked or — in a worst-case scenario — get 'corrected' by a regime like the Uzbek case described above.

So whatever happened to the dream of world in which the free flow of information couldn't be stopped? Was it really an illusion?

It was only a dream — if one believed that technology provided the solution. The technology of the net is great, but it is in the end only technology. To ensure that there will be a free flow of information, a web without borders, requires constant vigilance and struggle. (The full Reporters Without Borders report is available online at: www.rsf.org.)

Organizing social service workers...

continued from page 1

ers' access to job security, fair benefits and wages, workers' rights and public scrutiny of management.

Indeed contracting out the services is more efficient, if the government wants to rid itself of pesky 'expensive' workers demanding a living wage and fair conditions.

Sara Willig, a case manager at Dare, points out that workers at Department of Mental Retardation-operated facilities have long been unionized. Allowing private agencies to employ workers releases the state from dealing with such unionized workers. If grievances surface, the government can – and does – note 'it's not our operation,' while the agency can say 'we don't have enough money.' Stuck in the middle are workers, many part-time, who typically make \$9 to \$15 an hour and often work a second or third job.

As funding for social services continues to be cut back, workers find themselves pressed to preserve services with fewer co-workers and less support. Comparatively well-paid managers, some with little if any experience doing the work, use the language of teams and empowerment while stripping workers of any real control over their jobs. And if workers complain, the agencies can always pass the buck to the funders.

Growing numbers of workers are responding to the attacks on public services by organizing. Dare and Janus workers organized with the IWW after Wobblies who worked in the shops suggested getting together to improve conditions. "I'd always been a passive Wobbly," Dare IWW delegate Sara Willig notes, until workers' annual Christmas in June party (there's never time for a staff party in December) turned into a gripe session. So she suggested that they unionize, and some coworkers expressed interest.

Since SEIU was the best-established union in the industry, they were contacted and a meeting was set up. But the IWW was also invited to make a presentation, and after hearing from both unions the workers decided they preferred the IWW's approach. IWW organizers met with the workers over the next few months. Once a majority had joined the IWW they asked for recognition, and when the boss refused they filed for a NLRB election.

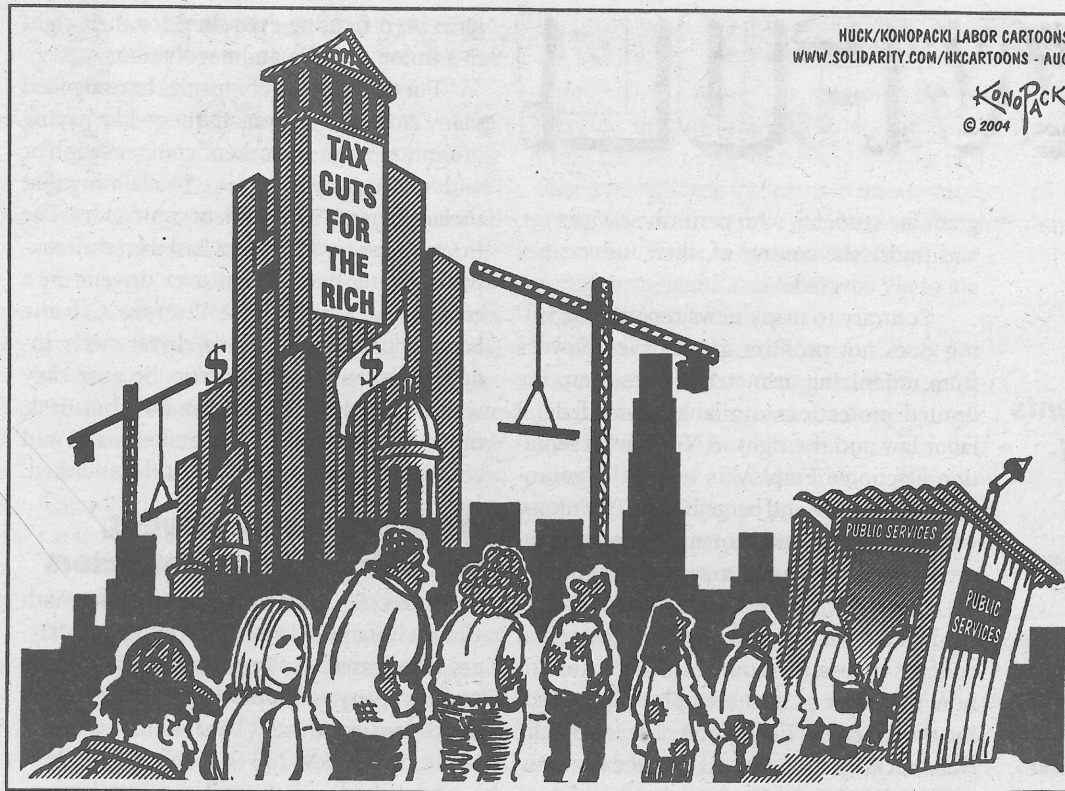
Privatizing public services

Portland Women's Crisis Line's annual nonprofit tax return shows that government contracts account for more than 80 percent of its funding, showing their vulnerability to the ebb and flow of politics and resource allocation. Tax cuts in recent years, and reduced funding for social services of all kinds, have a serious impact on agencies and their workers. But decreased funding is often aggravated by questionable management decisions.

Janus cried 'poverty' during 2001 negotiations, while Wobs later discovered \$2 million dollars in unrestricted assets. Janus is once again saying it can not afford to pay a living wage in negotiations for a second contract that are about to enter their second year. But while management has demanded pay cuts of \$1 to \$1.50 an hour from workers, it has increased the amount it pays the Salvation Army for its shelter space from \$7.50 to \$13.50/sq.ft over the past four years.

Dare has consistently refused to open its books, even as it claims at the bargaining table that it can not afford to improve compensation. But somehow Dare found \$95,000 in the 2002-'03 fiscal year (2003-'04 figures are not yet available) to hire a union-busting attorney to write employee manuals and handle negotiations with the IWW. "It's obscene," Willig notes. "My co-workers and I won't see \$95,000 in three full years of labor."

Many disputes are more about power than money. A major factor in the decision to unionize was Crisis Line management's response to pressure from the county to "pro-



fessionalize." PWCL worker Stacie Wolfe explains that professionalization means "implementation of an 'Informational and Referral' model of services, and pressure to move away from a grassroots way of offering services."

"Over the past couple fiscal years, Dare has adopted the corporate model wholeheartedly," Willig adds. However, "it becomes more and more obvious that this model can't mesh with human services." It was no accident that the longest section of the union's proposed contract was titled "Dignity and Respect on the Job."

Non-profits are not necessarily easy bargainers, and may be as authoritarian as any boss. In 2001, Janus fought hard to hide their \$2 million. They also employed traditional union-busting tactics, announcing layoffs of three activist employees. Workers responded with demonstrations and other efforts to mobilize community support, and an Un-fair Labor Practice complaint. And they won.

Dare has been a harsh negotiator as well. It took months of bargaining even to get them to agree to a union recognition clause. "It's all about power, plain and simple, they don't want to grant us any more than they have to by law," Willig says. "They're definitely trying to punish us for having the gall to do this [organize] to them."

For Crisis Line employees, a new executive director hired after the Board agreed to recognize the union understood that 'professionalization' as the county defined it was not necessarily in anyone's interests. As a former union organizer, the new director was more receptive to workers' concerns.

Workplace democracy has been a major issue in all three shops' struggles. For example, in the recent Crisis Line talks, workers sought not merely pay hikes, Wolfe explains, but "enforcing our will to conduct business at the agency in a democratic, grassroots fashion. We mostly wanted to ensure that everyone was important to the functioning of the agency, respected and given the things that they needed to be happy and reduce the effects of burnout."

Janus workers organized in part to fight cutbacks and layoffs and to fight for a living wage. While wages continue to be a major issue, with Janus paying substantially less than other agencies (as we go to press, Janus said it will present a new proposal at the next bargaining session to replace the \$1 an hour pay cut currently on the table; workers are asking that Janus raise wages to meet area standards), Hollie Hefferman says they've won an improved grievance procedure, a cleaning schedule, "an awesome training article," and strong workers' rights language.

"Unionizing has definitely raised our collective morale," Willig says. Dare Family Services workers organized to combat their

manager's abusive and unfair policies, as well as to regularize the employment status of some part-time workers. The manager routinely posted insulting notes in full view of not only fellow employees, but also clients; threatened to fire workers (almost all of whom had worked for the agency far longer than him) on an almost weekly basis; and singled out some workers for constant harassment. He even accused a union activist of stealing from a client during a staff meeting; this manager was abruptly removed without explanation recently. The IWW is also seeking back pay for two new workers who saw their pay cut by \$1.50 an hour last September, when their work was reclassified (although their duties remained the same).

The nature of workers' demands might explain their affinity for the IWW. In the Dare and Crisis Line drives, workers considered other unions but preferred the IWW for its direct member control, emphasis on shop floor struggles, and broader social vision.

At the Portland Women's Crisis Line, the new contract establishes full time status at 36 hours per week, with full benefits. Part-time workers receive 50% of benefits at 18 hours. A recent Portland IU 650 branch press release explains these gains: "The newly established benefits package includes four weeks of paid vacation, eleven paid holidays off, eight hours of health leave accrued per month, funeral leave for the death of any member of self-identified family, health and dental insurance, and twelve weeks of unpaid extended illness/parenting leave."

Equally important, Wolfe said, is that "staff now is guaranteed a voice in the hiring of all members of management, and staff within the sexual assault program now hold onto the right to assist in the hiring of all new staff within that program." There is also now a well-designed grievance procedure for any cases beyond a written warning.

At Dare, the IWW helped a member of the bargaining unit (the only worker not carrying an IWW card when we sought recognition) a couple thousand dollars of overtime he was owed for working 58 hour weeks for five months. Nearly half of that time was paid from a client trust fund, and Dare claimed that he was either an independent contractor or, since he was paid from two funding sources, wasn't eligible for overtime. Not surprisingly, the Department of Labor disagreed.

At Janus, community support building, including call-ins and demonstrations, was particularly important. This aspect of the Portland campaign is essential in an industry where more traditional forms of industrial action might endanger clients. Crisis Line workers used a community radio station to solicit listeners to write letters to the board backing union recognition.

The Portland Women's Crisis Line is well on her way to becoming a collectively run organization where all the membership has a voice...

Why is it that people in this industry are organizing now? The main reason is that these workers bear the brunt of privatization and continued funding cuts. At Janus, the shelters don't even have a food budget. "We are feeding our clients from food bank donations and private donations," Hefferman notes.

The agency just avoided massive budget cuts, but funds are still tight. Yet enormous resources are squandered on missiles and bombs. "Oregon has a huge deficit right now, and of course the money

is there for all services to be restored if the military and 'homeland security' end up taking back burner."

Dare, too, claims its contracts with the state Department of Mental Retardation do not provide enough funding to cover costs, leaving no room for improved pay or benefits. (Dare also receives funds from direct donations, other social service programs, and client trust funds.) Yet somehow the agency was able to spend over \$100,000 on a union-busting attorney who seems determined to drag negotiations – and her billable hours – out as long as possible.

Workers have suggested that if the DMR contracts, some of which go back 20 years, are not adequately funded, Dare should try to renegotiate them. But it is easier to put the squeeze on workers and services. "It's not coincidental," Willig notes, "that as Dare begins to treat its workers so disrespectfully it simultaneously begins a massive drop in the quality and quantity of care to its clients."

Workers are organizing because they realize they can change their own work environment. While funding policies may seem like a distant issue beyond workers' reach, their shop floor conditions are not. Workers in the social services industry are being asked to take up the slack for inadequate funding, and as a result are subjected to working conditions that could easily be changed if workers had a say. These conditions are the trickle-down effect of broader policy trends. Social service bosses increasingly manage workers according to an authoritarian corporate model, but it is clear that organized workers can effectively insist on a different model.

At Portland Women's Crisis Line, Stacie Wolfe explains, "the agency is well on her way to becoming a collectively run organization where all the membership has a voice, and is well taken care of."

Gun thugs attack North Carolina meat packers

Two years after Smithfield Packing and the Bladen County Sheriff Department were convicted of violating the civil rights of unionists in 1997, both are facing new charges by the National Labor Relations Board for assaulting workers at Smithfield's Tar Heel, North Carolina, hog processing plant.

The NLRB complaint charges Smithfield Packing and its in-house cleaning contractor QSI with illegally assaulting employees, threatening workers with arrest by immigration authorities, causing workers to be falsely arrested, failing to pay wages, and threatening workers with bodily harm.

The attacks followed a walk-out by 250 maintenance workers. Workers quickly won the strike, but management responded by attacking workers at the plant. Smithfield is the only packing plant in the country to employ a full company police force with armed officers and the right under state law to make arrests and charge people with infractions.

New York restaurant workers fight abuse & rip-offs, build own future

BY ANDREW LINKE

"ROC-NY cooperative restaurant member sweat equity," reads a poster-size graph behind Saru Jayaraman's desk in the Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York's power Manhattan office. Jayaraman is executive director of ROC-NY, a membership-based workers' center dedicated to winning improved conditions for New York restaurant workers. One of ROC-NY's most important ventures is a 200-seat upscale cooperative restaurant that will be opening in Tribeca later this year.

Thousands of restaurant workers throughout New York City lost their jobs after September 11, and when Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 100 closed a 90-day temporary relief center called the Immigrant Workers Assistance Alliance, Jayaraman, an immigration lawyer, and Bekkac Mamdouh, a former waiter at the Windows on the World restaurant in the World Trade Center, established the ROC-NY.

ROC soon expanded from pairing workers with jobs and providing classes and other services to helping workers fight for their rights in court and in the street. Jayaraman explains that the Center currently has four main programs: restaurant industry research and policy publishing, attacking corporate restaurant conglomerates guilty of worker abuse, the cooperatively owned and run restaurant, and a visa program for undocumented family members of workers killed at work on September 11.

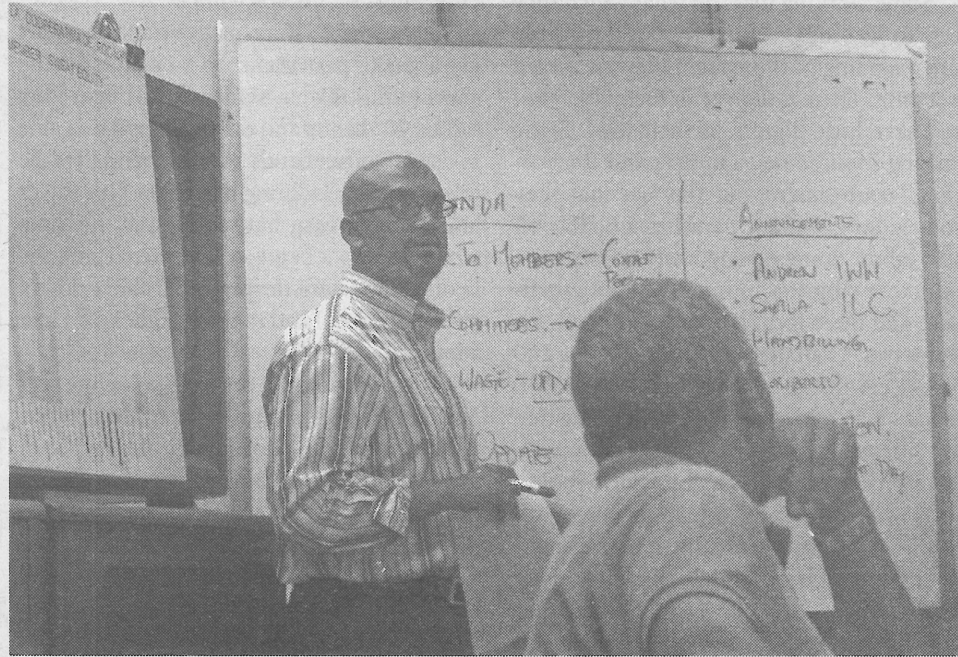
The research and policy piece of ROC's agenda is essential for raising awareness of the troubles restaurant workers face in New York: it is a first step in solving the problem. Through formal surveys, interviews and intensive research, the Center has accumulated an impressive library of statistics. Their research indicates that restaurant profits and jobs have grown by 250 percent over the last 10 years, while average workers' wages stagnated below \$20,000. And though not a new statistic, the fact that only one percent of New York's 150,000 or so (some estimates are as high as 225,000) restaurant workers are unionized is also significant. The Center's unique approach to advocacy and activism within the industry reflects an understanding that organizing efforts need a new approach. Such as approach must be outside the traditional methods of business unions, and take organizers wherever necessary. Behind kitchen doors or interviewing workers on public transit when they finish their shift, ROC is changing the game.

The Center has taken its research to the New York state legislature, advocating to add restaurant workers onto a minimum wage increase law – a bill NY Governor Pataki vetoed. Most servers, bussers, bartenders and many tipped staff are excluded from the conventional state minimum wage, and relegated to a lower amount per hour. In New York this is now \$3.30 an hour: the bill would have raised that by over a dollar. ROC's most ambitious policy work includes a bill requiring that restaurant owners found guilty of labor law violations lose their license to operate.

Huge restaurant management corpora-

tions now own the majority of high-end restaurants in New York. These firms not only distance workers from the profits of the business, but they also exclude worker influence with truly authoritarian decision-making.

Helping organize workers against these corporate 'mini-empires' within the industry is key to the broader struggle for restaurant workers' rights Jayaraman explains. As the second portion of ROC's agenda, campaigning on the ground and facilitating lawsuits for back-wages, overtime compensation, or even outright abuse has been a Center tenet since the beginning. Enlarged settlement checks totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars hang on the wall of the office as victory trophies from such clashes.



"We're trying to promote self-governance, that's the key here..."

Co-op project manager Stefan Mailuaganam facilitates the meeting. The ROC chart detailing workers' sweat equity is displayed to the left.

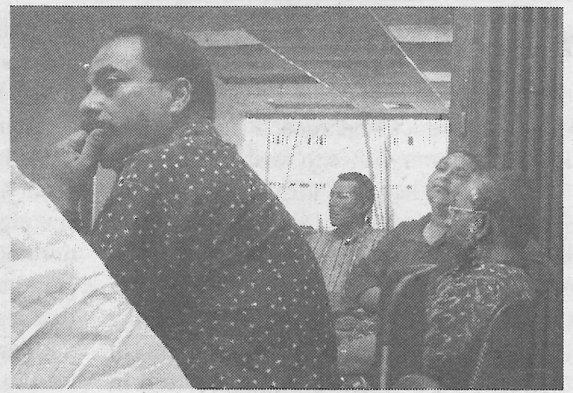
One of the most recent campaigns is one against Alan Stillman's multi-million dollar Smith and Wollensky Restaurant Group, Inc. Cité workers claim management intentionally cheated them by not paying for time workers were on the clock, and after they filed a complaint with NY's Department of Labor management hit them with a pay cut.

Cité line cook Floriberto Hernandez was one of the lead organizers in the shop, but unexpectedly passed away several weeks ago. Management, capitalizing on the tragedy, has tried to divide workers in his absence, but to no avail. The workers have strengthened in his memory, and following legal action and demonstrations at the restaurant, the Center expects a victory settlement soon. The Cité confrontation is exemplary of ROC's ability to gather popular support for all of their campaigns. The case received publicity from major New York media including the front page of the *New York Times* Metro Section.

In May, workers settled with management of a Greek restaurant where workers had been cheated of their pay and subjected to physical violence. The settlement included money for a Mexican worker beaten, and postings throughout the restaurant about the right to organize, the right to promotion and the right to grievance proceedings through ROC,

among other items.

In September 2003, ROC and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund helped five undocumented immigrant workers win reinstatement and \$200,000 in back wages. Immigration issues are tied to worker struggles, and ROC research reveals that two thirds of New York restaurant workers were born outside of the country. This demonstrates the importance of the fourth ROC initiative, the visa program. Most undocumented workers are very reluctant speak of their mistreatment, fearing deportation or other punishment under increasingly strict immigration policies. The visa program will regularize immigrant



ROC members come from more than 20 countries and have decades of restaurant experience.

volunteer hours (the new worker/owners will not contributing money) s/he has completed in the preparation activities. Each member must complete 100 hours to be included as an owner of the restaurant, and chairs will not be held without this commitment. In addition, the time is nearing for workers to assemble resumes and plan their position requests, with which the Center will help.

Along with membership in the co-op there will be certain responsibilities. Among others, such tasks include siding with fellow workers in any worker/owner dispute, participating in at least one ROC-organized demonstration per month, and not missing more than three Monday meetings in a row.

As project manager Mailuaganam is organizing investing and location planning, helping to write the corporation by-laws and tackling other logistical necessities. One of the four subcommittees organized at the meeting will work with him on these issues. The other three subcommittees will be the General Manager Chef Committee, in charge of screening applicants and job placement, the Catering committee, which will organize catering services using co-op staff, and the Fund-raising and Event Committee, to manage incoming money and develop and schedule outreach. The meeting breaks off into groups to brainstorm and solidify subcommittee members' roles. "We're trying to promote self-governance, that's the key here," Mailuaganam reiterates over resonating simultaneous Spanish-English translation.

Financing for the project is a major issue, as the workers can contribute only time and effort. An Italian cooperative restaurant organization has invested \$500,000, which is a sizable chunk of the projected \$2.5 to 3 million needed to open the restaurant. Unfortunately, at home in the States the Center has had some difficulties. The Lower Manhattan Development Corp. is a public agency that controls more than \$1 billion in federal money slated to rebuild lower Manhattan. LMDC has been consistently unresponsive to appeals by ROC for funding. The agency has no application form, no timeline for distributing the money, and has been run irresponsibly. At a City Hall Select Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment meeting several weeks ago to investigate fund distribution, LMDC representatives simply didn't show up. However, the Tribeca film festival mysteriously received \$3 million from the organization earlier this year.

Despite the obstacles, workers are getting excited. Former Windows server and co-op member Utjok Zaiden optimistically told the *NY Times*, "Nobody is going to waste food, nobody is going to steal, nobody is going to break glasses." Zaiden understands that his interests are best served by being honest and respectful of his own investment.

Serving high-quality food representing fare from workers' home countries as well as traditional American food, the restaurant might one day be a flagship for other restaurants and organizations throughout the city and beyond. Next Monday, and every Monday until opening day, workers in this room will gather to decide for themselves how they can operate a world class restaurant and realize worker self-management and ownership. There is much work to be done, but with the rapid growth and rising influence of ROC as a predecessor, workers should be confident that their 'sweat equity' will pay off.



The Center's unique approach to activism within the industry reflects an understanding that organizing needs a new approach... Behind kitchen doors or interviewing workers on public transit when they finish their shift, ROC is changing the game.

Defending our humanity

continued from page 1

nice thing about that particular trick was that I had a lot fewer dishes to wash.

He never had any idea that I was the source of his problems. I was just that lower life form out back washing dishes. I had about all I wanted for a stake and one day he made the mistake of telling me that he was going to stick me in the trash can with the rest of the trash. I got right up in his face and in very vivid detail explained to him what I would do to him were he to ever lay a hand on me. Then I went into a rant about the class struggle. At first he turned red with anger, but then he turned white as a ghost. At one point he started to leave but I informed him that he should get his ass back because I was not done with him. When I got off my soapbox I dismissed him and he left. He sent his wife in to fire me and pay me off.

Seeing the world as it is

We are conditioned to see things the boss's way and many of us apply the boss's values to ourselves, our co-workers and everything else around us. Which is true reality? The idea that the rich capitalists have some divine right to own and profit off the labor of the cursed ones damned to a lifetime of hard labor with little to show for it? Or maybe our curse is that we have allowed a class to feed upon us and convince us that somehow this is the natural order of things?

There is that old saying: "if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then more than likely it is a duck." What do you call something that is totally dependant upon something else for its existence and does not produce anything useful in return? You call that a parasite. Now, if something walks like a parasite, looks like a parasite and talks like a parasite, we could call that something a parasite, right? That something is the capitalist boss. Living,

breathing, talking parasites; that's what they are, and that is all that they can ever be, and that is how we should treat them.

It matters not if they are small-timers trying to hit it big or the fat cats at the top of the economic ladder; even when they form massive organizations like the WTO, they are still nothing more than useless parasites. All the grand activity of the WTO is nothing more than a spectacle because the WTO produces nothing – it only deals with the trade of goods we produce. The truth is that it should be called the World Parasite Organization. There is no dignity in being a parasite, rather the parasite lives at the expense of the host body. The working class is the host body that the capitalist parasites feed off of.

Working folks labor to produce everything of value. Some of that production fulfills people's needs. Some of that production is little more than useless junk that the capitalists dupe people into thinking they need.

Some working folks do what which they need to in order to survive, but have little understanding of the system they are forced to endure. There is dignity in their labor, but they have little dignity in their lives. Some working folks come to understand the economic arrangement and the fact that they produce for economic parasites who live off their labor. Some strong workers struggle with these parasites to improve their conditions, and there is dignity in standing up for themselves. Then there are the fools – the 100 percent certifiable suckers, Scissorbills, Mr. Blocks – who kiss the boss's ass, thinking that their interests as slaves is with the slave masters. There ain't no dignity in being a fool.

Down in the shipyard we regulars have been working for a while. I had been installing lugbody butterfly valves, a real pain-in-the-ass job. A tote ship came in that was going to be shut down for two days and we had some 4" and 10" pipe to fit on it, working two 10-hour shifts.

The regular workers are on the seniority

list: there are 8 pipefitters on that list. When the yard needs more workers they call the union hall. For pipefitters, the union will first dispatch metal trades pipefitters, and since there are not many of us around any more they send building trades pipefitters to fill the crew. We call them uptown fitters. There are a lot of differences between fitting pipe in a building or plant and fitting pipe on a ship.

Between the tote job and a tidewater boat coming in, there was a need for five extra pipefitters. The first shift set up everything. I did not work the first day of the tote job because I was working on another ship doing a hatch drain job. Their hatch drains had a number of short radius 90s (where the pipe makes an abrupt 90° turn) and no cleanouts. Short radius 90s will be the point where a drain clogs up and you can't get a snake past them. So I cut out all the short radius 90s; in some places I bent long radius 90° bends and other places I was able to use 30° offset bends. At each bend I saddle in a cleanout. Saddling in smaller pipe into a larger pipe is easy, but saddling in the same size pipe into a bend so that the cleanout is in direct line with the pipe after the bend is a pain in the ass. I had to do 8 saddles, so I had a lot of work to do.

I started working the tote job on the second day. There is an unwritten rule that when you come on to a job someone else had been working, the person who started the job takes the lead. The person who had been working the 4" pipe was a building trades fitter named Kenny, who I found out later had only worked in a shipyard one time before. He was a real go-getter who was trying to impress the boss because he was hoping to become a regular. But he was fitting the pipe like it is done in a building, and cutting corners.

Most pipefitters will figure out their pipe and then double check it to make sure that it is right. It takes a little longer, but it cuts down on mistakes. Well, he was not doing that and there were mistakes. At one point a pipe came too close to another pipe. In a building that is not such a problem, but everything stretches at sea. So he forced one pipe over from the other pipe. Sometimes you have to force things but you really don't want to do that because you are creating a stress point in the pipe. More often than not, that stress point will be at a fitting or a weld and in time that will be the point where you will develop a leak.

On one section he created a long monster of a pipe by welding sections together out of place. I called that pipe a Frankenstein pipe. They do that a lot in buildings, but in buildings you have more room to rig it and take your time figuring the damn thing out. On ships, though, you mostly tack and run. In other words, fit up shorter pieces, tack

them together in place, and then a welder comes behind you and welds it out. Well that monster pipe was hard as hell to rig up in place and Kenny was off on his figuring. That meant trying to cut and fit the damn thing in place. So in trying to impress the boss with how fast he could fit, the damn fool made the job take longer and made the job harder

and more dangerous than it needed to be.

After the tote job I went back on my drain job and the other fitters started the tide-water boat job. The keel coolers had to be removed and tested, and one had to be replaced.

Coolers are fitted on the outside of the shell down under the hull and they are used to chill the cooling water to engines and generators. In order to unbolt the coolers

you have to climb into the double bottoms, which are used as ballast tanks. In most cases those tanks are all rusted out. Going into the tanks from the forward end leaves you just enough room to sit up. As you move aft the tanks get smaller. You have to climb through the lighting holes. (In ship tanks, the support stiffeners have holes in them called lighting holes, which let workers crawl through, but also allow the ship to stretch at sea without too much stress on the structure. If a crack develops it will stop at the hole, which is why they are called lighting holes. Given that the keel coolers are under the engines, that means that the tank stiffeners are closer together and the foundation for the engine protrudes down into the tank, giving you less room. Some holes have pipes going through them and you have to squeeze through those holes.)

There were places where the deck above the tanks was rusted through and water from the engine room was leaking, so you had water coming down on you from overhead and water you had to crawl and sit in. The tanks were damn hot inside. We have had hot weather here of late and that hot sun on that steel hull made the tanks hotter than it was on the outside. That is about the best description I can give you of those tanks. You need to be in one to truly understand. I got brought over from the other ship for this keel cooler job because I had done them many times before and I don't mind much working in tanks, that is I don't get claustrophobia.

A lot of people do get claustrophobia when they get into such tanks, even when they have never had it before. The thing is not to focus on your miserable surroundings and keep focused on what you are doing. We had four uptown fitters and myself working that job. One fitter gets claustrophobia, so he was the tank watch; another was too large to get into most of the tanks; another could work only a short time in there, on the forward end where there was the most room. Then there

European bosses stealing more time

Germany's IG Metall union has signed an agreement with Siemens to extend the workweek at its Bocholt plant to 40 hours from 35. Weekly pay remains the same. The new contract also eliminates the annual bonuses employee received to help pay for vacations.

The French government is talking about abandoning the 35-hour week after just four years, in an effort to placate European employers demanding longer work weeks, fewer social benefits, and smaller pay checks. In Britain, more than a fifth of workers put in more than the European Union's mandated limit of 48 hours a week.

German auto makers are also demanding longer hours. Even the government is piling on. The state of Bavaria recently extended the workweek to 42 hours from 40, and Deutsche Bahn, the state railway system, is demanding six more hours a week from its engineers and conductors.

And a Dutch court has blocked a firm from making its staff work 40 hours a week for the same wages in place of the current 36. Workers had agreed to the extra hours under threat of seeing their jobs moved to a low-wage country. The FNV and CNV union federations sued, saying the demand violated national industrial agreements setting a 36-hour maximum work week.

Most Dutch workers are covered by 36-hour agreements, but actually work 40 hours; receiving an extra day off each month to make up the difference.

Europeans have worked an average of 10 percent fewer hours a year than Americans for years, reaping the benefits in more free time and better pay and living conditions. Sweden is studying the effects of a 30-hour work week. But with European unification, employers are threatening to move to places where workers are willing to work longer, harder and cheaper.

Fight for shorter Hours



The boss press is gloating, claiming the trend demonstrates that shorter hours don't work. Of course, what it really shows is that capitalism is determined to wrest every possible second of our lives away from us, and that ultimately only an international labor movement can secure our rights.

No 11-hour day for truckers

Ruling that new trucking regulations don't take into concern drivers' health, a U.S. federal appeals court has thrown out new regulations that would have permitted commercial truck drivers to drive longer hauls without taking a break. The regulations would have upped the number of consecutive hours a truck driver could spend behind the wheel from 10 to 11 hours.

New "comp time" scam

The Bush administration is once again proposing labor law changes that would allow employers to insist that workers take "comp time" instead of overtime pay if the boss demands extra hours. Under the plan, employers would be allowed to determine when workers could take their time off, essentially treating workers' lives as a piggy bank they could draw upon as convenient in order to keep the production process "flexible." A similar scheme failed to pass Congress last year.

Meanwhile, new overtime regulations are slated to take effect Aug. 23. While the government claims the changes will expand protections for workers, the July 26 *Christian Science Monitor* notes that while unions have uniformly condemned the changes, "almost every business association in the country is loudly cheering."

SEIU to spend \$65m on Kerry campaign

The 1.6 million-member Service Employees International Union says it will spend \$65 million on the 2004 campaign – \$40 million to pay for 2,000 members to work full-time as political organizers, and the rest on voter registration and education campaigns.

The AFL-CIO will spend another \$44 million; and other AFL affiliates are expected to spend tens of millions more. The Dems are also raking in the bucks from union-busters and war profiteers. Raytheon, IBM and Fidelity Investments each gave at least \$1 million for the Democratic National Convention, as part of an orgy of capitalist giving that brought in nearly \$40 million in donations. Many will also give to the Republicans.

Ironically, SEIU President Andrew Stern told the *Washington Post* that the Democrats are "a hollow party," adding that "if John Kerry becomes president, it hurts" chances of reforming the Democrats and organized labor. Stern added that Kerry's corporate-friendly message made it harder for the union to mobilize workers to support his election.

Bush staffer: Unhappy workers should take Prozac

The Reuters wire service reports that a campaign worker for President Bush said that American workers unhappy with low-quality jobs should find new ones – or pop a Prozac to make themselves feel better.

"Why don't they get new jobs if they're unhappy – or go on Prozac?" said Susan Sheybani, an assistant to Bush campaign spokesman Terry Holt. When told the comment had been overheard by a reporter, Sheybani said she was "just kidding."

RANKIN FILE



was Kenny, he would get in there and get all worked up trying to do everything as fast as he could. I guess he was still trying to impress the boss, but wanted to get out of the tank as soon as possible because it was bothering him. I tried to tell him to take it easy because he was getting himself all hot and irritated and making the job harder than it needed to be. But he would not listen to me.

Working hard to fall behind

In the shipyard workers look after each other. We help one another when needed and cover each other's backs. We share our knowledge. No one knows everything about pipe-fitting and ships, but we teach each other, and together we have our bases covered. We tend to have our areas that we are better at, and if someone has done something more we will ask for their advice. Kenny had his nose up the foreman's ass so far that he had no respect for his co-workers and viewed them as the competition. He was a fool who could not see his true self-interests. To him the union was a means to get where he wanted to be, not a bonding of co-workers.

At one point while we were waiting, he told me his story. I have always been interested in workers' stories. I guess you could call him young – Kenny was 32 years old, the rest of the pipefitters were in their forties, and a few like me were in our fifties. He told me his father had worked low-paying unskilled jobs all his life and that his family was always poor. He said he had no respect for his father who to him was just a loser. He did not have the money to go to college so he

got into the apprenticeship program with the union and wanted to get in a long-term position somewhere. His way of doing that was to brown nose the boss and try to show the other workers up. I could not get him to understand that his true self-interest was with his co-workers and that the bosses would just use him and throw him away. He was just a fool who had to learn things the hard way.

I had to do most of the work on the aft end of the coolers by myself. That was no big deal to me because, although crawling in and out gave me sore muscles, cuts and bruises on my arms and legs, once in there the atmosphere doesn't bother me. Plus, we get paid by the hour, and I don't like being one of those standing around waiting on the outside.

The cooling water comes into the coolers from 4" pipes from the engine room, and you have to unbolt a section of pipe that has a 90° on top with a flange that you unbolt. On the down side of the 90 is a bell reducer that increases the side to 8". On the hull is a ring that has tapped bolt threads that the flange on the bottom side of the bell reducer bolts to. When you have the top 4" flange and the bottom 8" flange unbolted, you have to remove that section of pipe. The damn thing is heavy and there is no place to hang rigging from so you must remove it by hand.

Once that is out, there is a 3" brass pipe coming out of the cooler; the cooling water goes down the piping, into that brass pipe through the cooler, and back out the brass pipe on the other side. The brass pipe is threaded with a nut bolting the cooler to the

hull, which you have to take off. In between the forward and aft ends, from which you have taken off the piping and the nut holding the cooler on, you have six 2½" pipes coming up from the hull. You remove the caps, and inside those pipes are threaded with nuts that you have to remove and then the cooler is unbolted. On the outside of the hull we have jacks to lower the cooler down.

The cooler is about 15' long and 16" wide. We had to drop one cooler on the port side, which we replaced with a new one. We dropped two coolers on the starboard side, which we cleaned up, tested and put back in place. At each point where the cooler is bolted on the outside and the inside there are large rubbers that compress the cooler to the hull. In putting the coolers back in we place a portapower under each part that we bolt up to compress the rubber. Once the cooler is bolted back up, we have to put the sections of pipe back on.

I tried to tell Kenny how to do that but he would not listen. I was the competition and he wanted to show me up by getting his forward end done before I got my aft end done. I would not get pulled into that self-defeating game and took my time so that I would not get too hot and would do the job right the first time. Kenny did not bother to look at how the piping fitted. That is about how such fools look at life: they only see what they think is their self-interest, not realizing that everything around them affects them, and thus they go about things blindly. He got the pipe sections in place and tightened them up without using that damn thing between his ears. And he was out of the tank before me.

Fort Wayne building trades stand up for immigrant workers

BY KENNETH MILLER

A couple of SweatFree Baseball activists took the night train from Pittsburgh to Waterloo and then went on to Ft Wayne, IN, bringing solidarity greetings to the "Cultures of Solidarity Workers Meeting" from the Pittsburgh IWW. The meeting was held in the Steamfitters & Plumbers local 166 hall. It was sponsored by the Ft Wayne Workers Project, which is closely associated with the North Eastern Indiana Central Labor Council.

On Friday we heard speakers from the Ft Wayne Building Trades talk about their coordinated response to the unjust conditions faced by immigrant workers at a local public works project. Instead of campaigning against the use of immigrant workers, they stood up for the rights of the workers on the job and protected the standards for all working people in their community.

Then we saw a dramatic reading from Barbara Ehrenreich's book, *Nickled and Dimed*. The following day, a discussion about the master-servant relationship was led by Barbara and Sandy Weaver of GCIU. We heard about a GCIU organizing campaign in World Color printing and bindery plants throughout the country. These plants are divided into high-wage, mostly white, printing sections

and low-wage "sweatshop" jobs held by minority women. The primary obstacle the campaign faces is uniting the work force across these barriers.

Members of Poland's Solidarity described the organizing environment of the '80s when they brought down the dictatorship, and how today they are struggling to maintain some workplace control under capitalism.

The Ft Wayne Workers Project has international solidarity high up on the to-do list. They have brought in workers to speak from unions all over the world and have an

the hull that ain't going to give a damn thing.

Once the bottom was bolted you saw that the top flange was off by a very small amount. If you tightened the top first the bottom flange would leak. So I took my time and made up my flanges right. We then did an air test on the system and all of Kenny's bottom flanges leaked and one of his top flanges leaked. None of mine leaked. I was back on the other ship when they did the air test, so the lead man had to go down into the tank and loosen up Kenny's flanges and make them up right.

In the process of working as fast as he could and not allowing his body to fit with the conditions he was working in, Kenny strained his back. I could tell he was hurting and told him that he should fill out an accident report and go to the doctor. A bad back is not something you want to neglect. Kenny said that he did not want to do that because the boss might not call him back by name next time there was a lot of work. Damn fool, that just plays into the hands of the bosses, for the more that workers try to hide their injuries, the worse off those workers who reveal their injuries will have it.

If you work at the shipyard for six months straight you are placed on the seniority list. If the boss needs more workers, then he can call back by name those who had worked there before and after that it goes to the Metal Trades list and then the Building Trades list. So for Kenny the first step in getting on the seniority list was to become one of the people the boss calls back by name.

So there Kenny was, the dedicated scissorbill; he tried to get the job done fast to impress the boss, only to have not done the job right and make the job last longer and look careless in everyone's eyes. He gave himself a back injury by working like a fool. He alienated his co-workers by brown nosing the boss. And he was laid off four days after we finished the keel coolers. The scissorbills are only fooling themselves, and the greatest fools there are are the fools who are taken in by their own foolishness.

Maybe Kenny did get done before I did, and maybe for a short while he did impress the boss. But did he in fact show me up? Not at all. I don't give a damn about impressing the boss and I am not competing with my co-workers. Who is the fool?

Working people need to stop identifying with the bosses and realize that their fellow workers are the only ones that they have a common interest with. There is dignity in our work and there is dignity in standing up for our common interests.

If it looks like a fool, acts like a fool and talks like a fool, then surely it is a fool. Though I pity the fool, there is no dignity in being one.

It takes 3 jobs to live

A single parent with two children would need to work at least three minimum wage jobs to meet their family's basic needs in most cities, according to a new report by the group Wider Opportunities for Women. The report used the self-sufficiency standard – a minimally adequate budget to cover food, lodging, child care and other basic necessities – which captures the cost of living better than the widely used federal poverty guidelines.

To meet basic needs, a single parent with an infant and a preschooler needs to earn \$69,241 annually (\$32.78 hourly) in San Francisco. To make it in Boston, that same family would need to make \$59,544 a year (\$28.19 an hour). Working full-time at the state or federal minimum wage, a worker would need to put in 120 to 160 hours a week to make ends meet. The federal poverty line for a family of three is \$15,260.

Stop whining

Labor Notes reports that the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is urging business leaders to send more jobs overseas, saying the workers affected should "stop whining," as "the benefits [to business] of offshoring jobs outweighs the cost."

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US Air after health benefits

US Airways has presented union workers with a proposal to eliminate all medical and prescription drug coverage for ramp, gate and reservations agents, to cut the top of the pay scale by 30 percent, and to slash pension contributions by up to 70 percent.

The proposals are part of the Alabama state employees pension plan-controlled airline's efforts to save \$800 million in wages and benefits. The airline posted a \$34 million profit in the second quarter.

Left Side C.C. Redcloud's column does not appear this issue due to illness.

Wide Wide World of Sweatshops

Major League rights violation by Gildan Activewear

The Fair Labor Association and Workers Rights Consortium have confirmed violations of workers' rights at Gildan's El Progreso factory in Honduras.

Both reports found that Gildan fired workers for attempting to form or join unions. The investigations also verified other violations of the FLA and WRC codes of conduct and Honduran law, including excessive hours of work; compulsory, unpaid overtime; failure to pay legal overtime premiums; failure to provide full statutory holiday benefits; sexual harassment by the company doctor; and failure to provide child care and nursing facilities as required by Honduran law.

The WRC investigation found examples of illegal firings of pregnant workers and failure to provide pregnant workers timely medical attention or leave from work to visit a doctor outside the factory.

The FLA announced July 29 that it was placing Gildan on a 90-day special membership review because it has "failed to achieve or maintain compliance with the FLA's standards." The FLA added that "Gildan's decision to close the factory raised questions about its commitment to freedom of association." This is the first time the FLA has taken action against one of its members.

Gildan-made Pirate t-shirts are given away for free when fans fill out MBNA credit card applications at PNC Park. Gildan Dodgers t-shirts are given away with a Bank One credit card application at Dodgers Stadium.

Central America Free Trade Agreement will fail workers

Kim Yong, a Taiwanese-owned garment factory in Nicaragua producing clothing for export to Wal-Mart and Kohl's, continues to defy repeated demands by the government to reinstate scores of illegally fired workers, end excessive mandatory overtime, pay the legal overtime wage, and correct numerous health and safety violations (see report last issue).

Over 400 workers have been fired since workers organized a union in March, including seven of the newly elected union leaders.

Workers are paid just eight to nine cents for every garment they sew for Wal-Mart and Kohl's; and forced to work 12- to 15-hour shifts, six days a week. The base wage of 29

to 34 cents an hour is less than one-half of basic subsistence needs.

Under CAFTA, Nicaragua was granted special trade privileges that will allow abusive factories like Kim Yong to export 427 million garments to the U.S. duty free, while allowing the fabric to be sourced in China.

Indonesian sweatshop workers fight closing

The PT Dae Joo Leports factory in Indonesia is subject to several university "codes of conduct." Now that workers have organized a union, the company is closing up shop and heading for China, where workers have no enforceable rights under local law. The Workers Rights Consortium says that "by shifting production out of PT Dae Joo Leports, [the parent company and buyers] are in effect cutting and running from a factory because of the costs associated with real code compliance."

Several anti-sweatshop campus groups are calling on their administrations to take action under their codes. A number of schools have contacted their suppliers to demand that PT Dae Joo Leports remain open. While some brands have cooperated, VF/Jansport and Adidas have made only weak, general statements of their "support" for workers rights.

Many factories have been closed down in Indonesia in the past five years, leaving hundreds of workers unpaid. Victoria Garment, the latest of these cut and run operations, owes workers almost two million dollars in wages and severance pay.

Victoria Garment Indonesia, located in North Jakarta, produced clothes for Eddie Bauer, Talbots, Mast Industry, Liz Claiborn, Fila, Timberland, Cato/Colby and Celic.

On May 4, 2000, the workers set up an independent union. However, working conditions did not change significantly. Due to tight schedules for export, workers were forced to work many hours of overtime, including 24 hour shifts.

The factory closed down January 1, 2004, without any prior notice for its 875 workers. Workers have filed complaints with several agencies demanding severance pay. On May 12, workers received a decision from the Central Labor Dispute Settlement Committee that the company was obliged to pay workers compensation for owed wages and severance.

Workers were able to win 20-25% raises, reduce the waiting times they have to endure, reverse the firing of a key strike leader, and make the employers apologize.

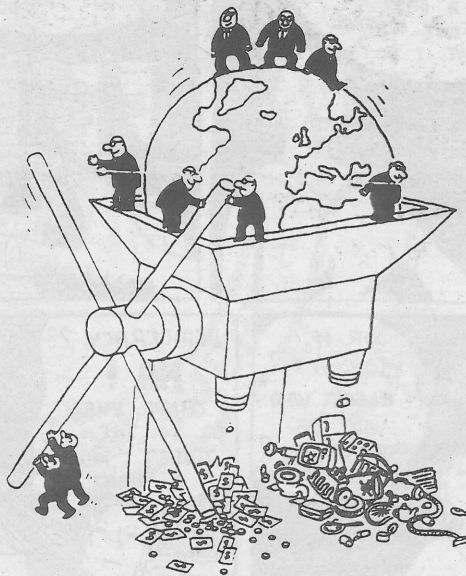
Drivers have often had to endure long waits with no or little pay while cargo is being unloaded. Before the strike, pay rates for each load had not changed in over 10 years. Since the strike the companies have been slowly increasing wait times and the latest rumor is that rates will soon be reduced.

Drivers say that the gains of the strike are being eroded away while many of them struggle to put food on the table or are even losing money after paying for fuel and maintenance costs. They say that some drivers are forced to work over the legal limit of 11 hours per day, and pay sometimes amounts to \$6 an hour or less when wait times are included.

Eastern truckers rebellious

The July strike tied up ports along the Eastern seaboard for periods ranging from a couple of days to two weeks (not counting the time needed to clear the backlog of containers). Strike action was reported at ports at Charleston, S.C., Miami, New Orleans, Baltimore, Houston, New York, Newark, N.J., Hampton Roads, Va., and Savannah, Ga.

Charleston and Miami were particularly hard hit. As late as July 12, the *Journal of Commerce* reported a two-week backlog of containers at the Port of Miami as a result of the strike, after a federal judge issued an injunction against the strikers on its 12th day. Port officials recommended that ships with large numbers of containers bypass the port.



The Hong Kong management emailed workers stating that all the assets belonging to the company in Indonesia would be handed over to the workers to pay their salaries and lawful severance, but the value of these assets is only about one-fifth of what is needed to pay full compensation.

In response, the workers have occupied the factory but the electricity, water and telephone have been cut off. The factory remains a central place for coordination, information and consolidation among the workers.

Nobody does it like Sara Lee!

Garment workers at Sara Lee's Confecciones de Monclova factory in Mexico have long suffered under exploitative working conditions including severe occupational injuries, low wages and abusive management while making Hanes Her Way products. One woman said, "I went to the infirmary almost every day with a pain in my stomach. They said it was normal." The factory refused her requests for lighter work and soon afterward she miscarried. Unfortunately, this woman's experience isn't an exception; it's the kind of mistreatment that has been occurring regularly at Sara Lee's Monclova factory.

Workers have responded by organizing for improved working conditions and demanding that Sara Lee respect their rights. Sara Lee responded by announcing the closing of the plant, which will leave over 1,000 workers unemployed.

Sara Lee isn't just cheesecake. Sara Lee also is behind many household brands including: Hanes, Playtex, Champion, Bimbo and Hillshire Farm. Sara Lee markets itself as a women-friendly company, but has failed to respect the rights of the women who make its clothes in Mexico.

SweatFree education at the 2006 All Star Game

A coalition of human rights activists held a press conference July 21 welcoming the 2006 All Star Game to PNC Park in Pittsburgh, citing the game as a landmark opportunity to publicize working conditions in factories producing baseball related products.

Mongezi Sifika wa Nkomos, an African native and founder of Azania Heritage International, said the issue is part of a larger human rights campaign that players like Stargell and Roberto Clemente would have supported.

Nader's Raiders

The Nader presidential campaign closed its Philadelphia headquarters July 29, hours after calling police to disperse dozens of workers demanding to be paid their wages. The campaign had hired people from homeless shelters to gather signatures on nominating petitions for 75¢ to \$1 per signature.

Workers were paid half the amount when they turned in their signatures, and promised a check for the balance on July 28. But when they showed up to collect their checks, they were met by long lines, armed guards, and campaign officials who were shorting checks for invalid signatures. Police were called when workers protested the short pay. The campaign says it will mail checks to the workers' homes.

"We are drawing attention to these working conditions and it's high time sports figures and owners became part of the solution," he said. "Pittsburgh has a history as a labor town. We want the political climate to reflect that tradition."

New edition of Major League Sweatshop Baseball Cards

SweatFree Baseball activists in Pittsburgh have had the best Major League sweatshop education in America this summer. Most recently we released the second edition of Major League Sweatshop Baseball Cards that called attention to the factory where they make Willie Stargell Figurines in China. Our educational effort was pushed to a whole new level when we released them on the night they were actually giving out the figurines to every fan. Huge numbers of Pittsburgh Pirate Baseball Fans are reading about sweatshops. Most would clearly prefer baseball to be a more dignified game.

Our efforts with the Sports and Exhibition Authority continue as we march on the Pirates corporate offices a few times a month. They are still ignoring us. We'll produce the third edition of Major League Sweatshop Baseball Cards in time for the new school year and take our Major League sweatshop education to school with us.

It is very clear that the Pirates expect to ignore us at least until the off season. Then we suspect they will make an announcement about sweatshop monitoring through the offices of Major League Baseball Properties in New York. Unacceptable! Here we go!

Toronto: chasing deadbeat bosses

Toronto Organizing for Fair Employment recently organized a tour of the city's pricy suburbs, taking two busloads of workers on a Deadbeat Bosses Tour to visit the homes of bosses who refuse to pay workers' wages despite orders from the Ministry of Labour.

A trio of African drummers led the crowd to the home of the owner of a garment manufacturing company called Beautiful South which owes some \$6,900 in unpaid wages. Our "tour guide" for this stop is Akram. "Every day he said, 'I promise I will pay you today,' but nothing happened," she says.

Neighbors complain of the noise, and say they're all for paying wages, but don't go to anybody's house. "You can get an order." Yes, but try getting it enforced.

Police greeted the tour at the offices of Crystal Claire, where Glamour Look used to operate. Our tour guide, Woody, says, "We will never forget this place. We shed our blood and sweat and got nothing owed to us." A neon-green placard reading "Glamour Look?" with Chinese lettering and a face with bleeding lipstick expresses these workers' rage.

The ministry has ordered two former Glamour Look directors to pay \$659,000 in unpaid wages, vacation and overtime. A Crystal Claire representative comes out, claiming "We are not Glamour Look. We are a different identity, a different company."

In Ontario, enforcing ministry orders for back wages is a difficult task. Currently, 63,000 people are owed more than \$214 million in unpaid wages.

The tour also visited the fancy home of Paul MacDonald, boss of North Star Trading. He was out in front, as workers places a STOP Bad Boss sign in the driveway. He says he can't afford to pay.

A car parts manufacturer that laid off its workers near Christmas, filed for bankruptcy, and reopened with new workers was next. Workers are close to last on the list of creditors to be paid from bankrupt firms, behind banks, Revenue Canada, and other "preferred" creditors.

The Ministry of Labour says the province has embarked on an "aggressive enforcement strategy" targeting employers who owe wages. But deadbeat bosses are rarely taken to court, nor are their personal assets seized.

Wobs connect with truckers...

continued from page 1

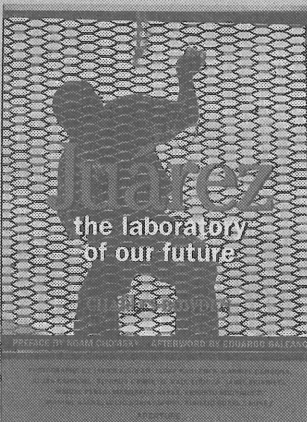
Many drivers reported that initially some companies supported the strike. One driver said that in his midsized company the bosses asked the strike leaders to step forward, fired them, and then told the remaining drivers to stay on strike. Two weeks into the strike the shipping firms authorized a 30 percent increase in rates paid to companies, with the companies passing along as much or as little as they pleased to the truckers.

After the strike the port employers attempted to initiate a court injunction against the three leaders, trying to hold them responsible for altercations between the truckers and police and claiming the drivers trespassed on company property during the strike. The injunction was later dropped, but on the condition that the three not participate in the strikes called for June-28 through July 4. Many truckers felt intimidated by the injunction and believed that if they participated in future strikes they could face fines or jail time.

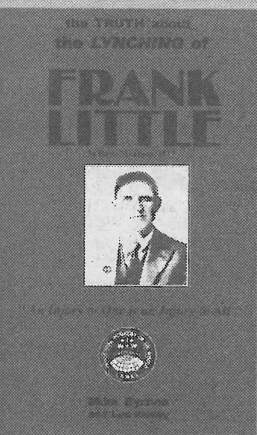
The Port of Stockton is located in the rural central valley of California, where 200 to 250 truckers ship cargo to nearby cities and warehouses. Here the truckers are over 85 percent Sikh Indian and have been meeting since the first strike wave, which they claim to have initiated. Sikhism is a religion that emerged in the North West (Punjab) area of what is now India in the 16th century. Sikhs often hold driving jobs or practice farming in the Punjab region of India.

During the strike the Stockton truckers

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



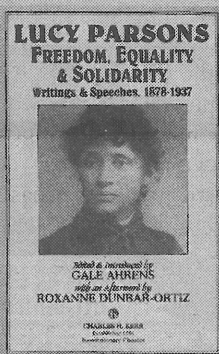
Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future by Charles Bowden, preface by Noam Chomsky, afterword by Eduardo Galeano
A vitally important book, focusing on the intimate connections between the border towns of El Paso and Juárez. Beautifully produced, this book combines dozens of powerful full-color photographs 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 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 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. 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



Just Passing Through by Paco Ignacio Taibo II
In this elegant and literate mystery adventure novel set in 1920's post-revolutionary Mexico, Paco Ignacio Taibo II is searching for a hero, specifically a leftist hero, and he thinks he has found him in the person of Sebastián San Vicente. But everyone, including the baffled novelist, is trying to figure out exactly who San Vicente really is. There is some record of San Vicente in FBI records during the Wilson era, and some mention of him in anarchist records and rumors, but the rest has to be filled in. And who better to do this than Taibo? Meanwhile, with Taibo busy in the background trying to resolve the mystery of his hero's identity, San Vicente goes about his heroic avocation of organizing strikes against the capitalists, hanging out with Wobblies, dodging thugs and hiding out from the Mexican Army. 173 pages, published at \$21.95, now just \$10.00

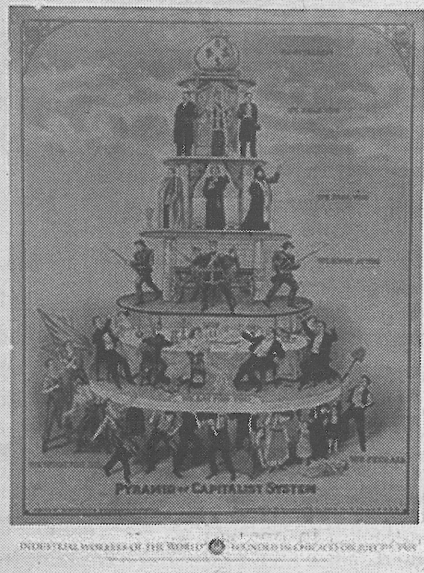


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The Rambling Kid: A Novel About the IWW by Charles Ashleigh, intro by Steve Kellerman
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Solidarity Unionism: Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below by Staughton Lynd

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 Review: Corporate rule

REVIEW BY ANDREW LINKE
Charles Derber, *Regime Change Begins at Home: Freeing America From Corporate Rule*. Berret-Koehler, 2004, \$19.95, 265 pages.

Regime Change is a basic, but pragmatic, view of the corporate power structure in America and what might be done about it. Very accessible, reading almost like a guidebook for beginners, Derber has created a valuable history of corporate regimes and how they use the state apparatus to their advantage.

We are in the grasp of the third corporate regime, which began with Reagan. Bush Sr. preserved corporate presence and maintains the self-serving status quo. Clinton showed that Democrats are willing to play the corporate power game. Now, in 2004, Derber points out that Bush Jr. is the most fanatic of them all, and is slowly handing the title for the White House to big business.

Derber believes that this third corporate regime will either implode, bringing working people with it, or will be slowly ushered out in the 2004 election – an election that he claims could be 'regime-tipping,' but even if Kerry wins, not 'regime-toppling.'

Derber does a good job of explaining how the current corporate regime uses the war on terror as an excuse to dominate sovereign territories (and conveniently those markets) as it once did with the Soviet threat. But, he argues, corporations are signing their own death warrants with their destructive behavior. Alerting people to the immediate danger posed by corporate regimes seems to be Derber's main concern, and so he has taken a mainstream approach.

One problem I have with the book is that Derber does not put enough nails in corporate power's coffin. For example, even if this corporate regime were pushed out of politics over the next two or three elections, would it not return? After all, we're not discussing the corporate regime, but rather the *third*. Obviously corporate power will creep into the White House again, just as it has in the past.

Derber encourages working within the system, although on the fringes of it. He repeatedly emphasizes that both major parties are "highly professionalized, founded by big business, and detached from the people." This idea manifests in his call for voting 'against Bush,' but not for anybody in particular.

Regime Change credits 'wildcat strikers' and other radical organizations for laying the groundwork, so Derber understands our significance, but does not take the next step. Grassroots organizations, business unions and social groups will lead the way – through the ballot – in booting corporations from the White House, he claims. Derber praises the AFL-CIO in Washington and "labor's shift toward a social movement," claiming "it is key to corporate regime change." He backs rewriting corporate charters, but not abolishing private for-profit corporations.

One of Derber's methods is choosing a group of people – any group from retirees, to immigrants, to discouraged student activists, to traditional or libertarian conservatives – and explaining how a corporate regime harms them. In this sense, 'corporate regimes for dummies' may at least rally people against the reckless regime we have had for decades. Derber seems to see corporations in politics as a bull in a china shop. He holds the fundamentals of our system sacred and is rallying support to push the corporate bulls out of battered Washington china shops before they are torn down on us all.

Many readers will disagree with parts of the book. However, it provides a useful history of corporate regimes, how the state and militarism serve corporations at the most obvious level (Derber does not discuss private property rights, which he clearly accepts), and how corporate regimes hurt many different groups of working people. Force-feed this book to a colleague or friend who just doesn't get the picture and needs a bridge into more fundamental critiques and solutions.

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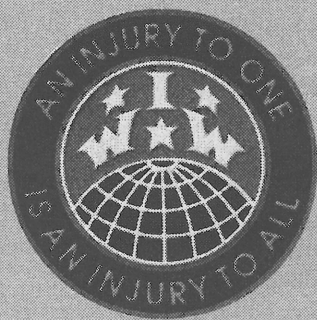
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S. Korean workers boycott troop transport to Iraq

The unions representing workers at Korean Air and Asiana Airlines have announced that their members will refuse to transport anything related to the troop dispatch to Iraq, including Korean soldiers to be stationed in Iraq along with armor and related equipment.

The union representing staff at Incheon International Airport and Kimpo Airport said it would join the boycott. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions has called for the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq.

Workers vowed to shut down all air traffic in South Korea if they were asked to join the war effort.

Iraq's FWCUI union federation embraced the decision. "We call all labor organizations and unions worldwide, and especially in USA and UK, to join this action of Korean trade unions to end the occupation in Iraq."

Although several U.S. unions including the Service Employees, AFSCME and the ILWU (West Coast longshoremen) have called for an end to the U.S. occupation, no U.S. union has taken industrial action to stop the war.

Migrant workers fight for rights in Dubai

Protests by 20 laid-off Egyptian carpenters working in the Gulf state of Dubai won 75 days' back and severance pay and air tickets home, after protests at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The workers had paid a job shark 7,000 Egyptian pounds, but were sacked two months after being hired on a three-year contract. The employer said it sacked the workers because they could not meet production quotas.

Another 3,500 migrant construction workers were left homeless when their labor camp was ravaged by a fire. Workers lost their clothes and other possessions and had to sleep in the open desert next to the burned-out camp and at construction sites. The contractor refused to compensate workers for their losses, but said it would issue them an advance against their salaries in order to purchase new clothing and other personal items.

And 18 Sri Lankan workers remain stranded without electricity, water or food in a Dubai garment factory that closed in May; another 20 were repatriated by their employment agency in July. While the owner has twice promised to pay off the workers, he failed to show up. Immigration authorities are threatening to deport the workers, whose work visas expired while they were trying to collect their wages and the return tickets they were promised on hiring.

Saudi Arabia worker abuse

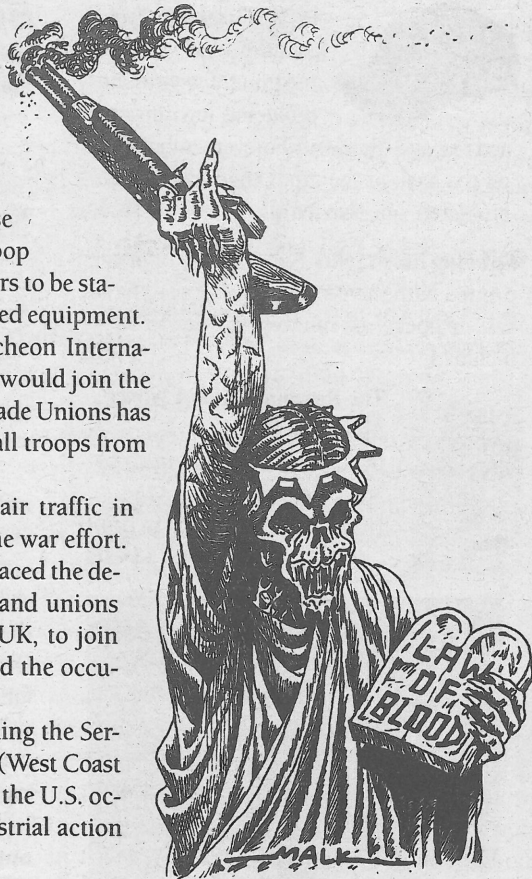
Although Saudi Arabia abolished slavery in 1962, its 8.8 million foreign guest workers suffer horrific labor abuses, according to a new report by Human Rights Watch. Long hours are common, and employers who can not afford to pay workers their wages simply deport them.

Women workers are often subjected to rape and sexual abuse, and even in the best of circumstances are virtual prisoners in their workplaces and dormitories because of the kingdom's harsh restrictions on women.

Workers from Bangladesh were forced to work 10 to 12 hours a day, and sometimes throughout the night without overtime pay, repairing underground water pipes for the municipality of Tabuk. They were not paid for the first two months and had to borrow money to buy food. A migrant from the Philippines worked 16 to 18 hours a day at a restaurant in Hofuf, leaving him so exhausted that he "felt mentally retarded."

Workers who run afoul of the country's draconian criminal system are denied legal representation, tortured, and even executed without notice.

Abuse of workers is so widespread that the country's highest religious authority, Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Sheikh, issued a statement two years ago that "Islam



does not permit oppressing workers," adding that workers must be paid their wages and not subjected to threats or intimidation.

South Korea: Fast food chains cheating teen workers

People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy has filed a criminal complaint with prosecutors charging that several fast food franchises, including McDonald's and Burger King, are violating Korean labor law by not paying thousands of minors their wages and making them work illegal night shifts.

McDonald's and Burger King say the franchises paid the wages in May, after a warning from the Labor Ministry. They said their failure to pay on time was inadvertent.

A survey by the Ministry of Labor found that more than 200,000 teenage workers were exploited by employers last year and 20.5 percent worked over seven hours a day, the limit set by the Labor Standard Act.

At least 4,812 McDonald's workers and 2,142 at Burger King did not receive weekly paychecks and paid holiday allowances.

Byun In-tae, who worked at a McDonald's in Busan, told reporters that although he worked there from November 2001 to February 2004, he did not receive any salary.

Puma workers in record pace

Puma sponsors Olympic teams and star athletes around the world. But it is unlikely that even these finely conditioned athletes could keep pace with Puma's workers in China, who work up to 16.5 hours a day, six or seven days a week, for 31 cents an hour.

These workers are carrying Puma on their backs. The National Labor Committee reports Puma makes a net profit of \$12.24 per hour on each Chinese worker making their sneakers, while denying responsibility for the conditions under which these profits are generated. www.nlcnet.org/campaigns/puma04/

China: Miners protest arrests

Hundreds of laid-off miners from north-east China headed to Beijing in late July to protest the arrest of 23 workers detained after threatening to jump from the roof of a building if their grievances were not addressed. Several thousand workers laid off by the Hegang City Mining Bureau between 1996 and 1998 charge that government funds for their redundancy and retirement payments were taken by mining bureau bosses.

Botswana: No right to strike

Botswana's industrial court has ruled that a threatened strike by 5,000 diamond mine workers would be illegal, because the union had refused to subject the dispute to arbitration. Botswana relies heavily on its diamond industry, which generates 85 percent of export earnings, half of government revenues and 40 percent of gross domestic product.

Solidarity with Israel's port workers

BY DAVID MERHAV, ISRAEL

Dozens of factory owners and manufacturers demonstrated in the Haifa Bay area to protest the (recently settled) strike by port workers in defiance of a back-to-work court order. The workers are determined to fight the government and the bosses as Israel's capitalist government carries forward its drive to privatize the ports.

The fact that the capitalists demonstrated against the Histadrut labor federation's inability to end the strike after 19 days demonstrates the great potential of workers' solidarity in a "wildcat" strike.

The strike continued even though the National Labor Court ordered the workers to return to a complete work schedule. The state-controlled trade unions are doing their best to stop the strike.

Goons, scabs in desert showdown

Several scabs and company goons had to sleep rough in the Western Australian outback in late July after attempts to break a picket line were beaten off by solidarity between miners and construction workers.

In the remote town of Yandi, miners with BHP contractor Henry Walker Eltin are fighting management demands that workers sign individual contracts, foregoing union representation in exchange for higher pay. The company is insisting on the right to only hire workers who agree to work non-union.

The company flew in security guards and scabs, attempting to house them at a nearby Hammersley Iron facility; construction workers refused to allow "scabs" in their camp and the goons spent the night in the desert.

Workers held their ground when a fleet of vehicles attempted to smash its way through the picket of AWU, AMWU and

Haaretz daily reported that the Histadrut admitted it had lost control of the port workers because of Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's legislation to privatize the ports. The law disrupted a balance that had existed for decades in labor relations and the Histadrut thus lost its moderating influence on the workers.

It is time to express international working class solidarity with the port workers. Their determination to fight against the bureaucratic, state-dominated trade unions and against the capitalists reflects their understanding of who is serving their class interest. Workers in Israel, Arab and Jews, need to form their own mass workers' organization and bring forward a victory over the bosses' government – a government which is led by the WTO and the IMF.

CEPU members. The miners have since returned to work, continuing their campaign through regular stop work meetings.

Solidarity blocks scab buses

Solidarity from unions across the UK quashed an attempt by multinational First Group to bring in strikebreakers to break a strike by bus drivers in northern England.

First South Yorkshire drivers struck July 20 for a wage hike and shorter work hours. The strike was settled as we went to press.

First Group had planned to bring in strikebreakers, including managers from other subsidiaries, to run a free scab bus service, but backed down after workers at other branches said they would take industrial action in solidarity with the Yorkshire drivers.

First Group employs 62,000 workers across the UK and North America.



Bangladeshi garment workers win maternity leave

Six months ago, the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity and the National Garment Workers Federation launched a grassroots campaign demanding that the over 3,500 export garment factories respect workers' legal right to maternity leave with full pay. Nearly all factories were ignoring the law.

The campaign included mass distribution of leaflets, marches, demonstrations, educational outreach and seminars, and posterage. Simultaneously, a campaign in the U.S. led 18 of the largest apparel companies, with combined sales of nearly \$200 billion a year, to agree that any woman sewing their garments in Bangladesh would be guaranteed their legal three-month maternity leave with full pay. (Legislation is pending to expand the leave to four months.)

As a result of the growing solidarity, the garment industry has pledged to honor the maternity leave law. Now the NGWF faces the task of ensuring that the pledges are honored, and that the country's 1.5 million women garment workers actually receive their maternity leave with full pay.

Colombia army kills unionists

The president of Colombia's largest labor organization, the Central Workers' Union, condemned the army for killing three union officials in the town of Saraverna August 5. The government claims they belonged to the outlawed National Liberation Army.

The Colombian office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for an investigation, as did representatives of Amnesty International, who met President Alvaro Uribe on Thursday to ask for guarantees for the security of rights workers.

Nigerian unionists freed

The State Security Service arrested two officials of the Nigeria Labour Congress who were distributing the NLC's response to labour legislation proposed by President Obasanjo to the National Assembly, and held them overnight before releasing them.

The proposed legislation would effectively outlaw the NLC and restrict unions' right to strike. Legislators were considering a resolution condemning the arrests when the two were released; a compromise then passed urging the security agencies to educate their personnel on the tenets of democracy.

Zimbabwe arrests 4 unionists

Zimbabwe police arrested four top union officials August 6 in a fresh crackdown on the labour movement. They were released two days later, but must return to court Sept. 8 to face charges of "uttering words which were likely to cause despondence" and other trumped-up allegations under the Public Order and Security Act.

The arrested include the president of the Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council and the secretary general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. They were conducting a workshop in the city of Gweru and initially held on charges of "conducting a riot, disorder or intolerance."

Police had arrested the secretary-general of the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe on August 5 after a talk to final year students who will start work as teachers in January. He was released after five hours.

The arrests came as the Congress of South African Trade Unions planned to send a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to investigate threats and harassment of labour activists as well as other human rights abuses.