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## The power in our hands

International Workers Day, May 1, is a holiday created by the workers ourselves. It is an occasion to remember the Haymarket Martyrs and the mass strikes and marches for the 8-Hour Day that 120 years ago gave voice to our demand for freedom, for time in which to live our lives, for a new industrial order in which there were no bosses and no slaves. It is a time to celebrate our solidarity, and to reflect on our power.

It is easy to lose sight of our power, living in a world where millions of our fellow workers are literally working themselves to death; where millions more face starvation because they are denied access to the means of life even though the capacity to feed and house everyone has long been in our grasp; where thousands die each year in the bosses' wars; where our working lives are controlled by parasites utterly incapable of doing the work, but who nonetheless live off our labor and watch over our every move.

Year after year, we are told we must work longer hours, that we must make do with less, that we must compete with our fellow workers from other lands, that we must kill our fellow workers so that our exploiters may plunder their lands. Everywhere our social safety nets are being dismantled, our environment poisoned, our communities ripped asunder. Politicians of all hues offer only more of the same – some reveling in the brutality of their system, others softening the blow with a veneer of social concern.

And yet, we hold in our hands the power to transform this society. It is our hands that do the work of the world, our brains that keep this system running, our blood that fuels it. A new society is ours for the building, if we just use the power that is in our hands.

In France, workers and students have forced the government to withdraw its law to codify our disposable status, giving employers the right to fire any young worker for any reason (or for no reason at all) during their first two years on the job. This law was not overturned through electioneering or lobbying; no begging of any sort was involved. Rather, working people decided that such conditions (much like those U.S. workers of all ages have long endured) were intolerable, and they shut down the country with massive general strikes. They won, because they put into practice the principle that An Injury to One Is An Injury to All, and made it impossible for the employers to carry on.

That power can turn entire countries, and it can be exercise by individual workers. In California, Michael Morales is alive today because in February two anesthesiologists refused to administer the lethal drugs with which the state intended to kill the convicted murderer. Unable to recruit qualified scabs, the execution has been indefinitely postponed. Think how much better our world would be if maritime workers refused to load and transport the instruments of death to war zones; if workers in factories enforced environmental standards on a daily basis; if each of us joined with our fellow workers to take responsibility for the work we do and the uses to which it is put.

Today, May Day is returning to the country where this great labor holiday was born. Once again the streets will be filled with workers demanding their rights, saying ¡No Mas! to those who declare them illegal and seek to turn our planet into a prison camp of nations. Already, the massive protests leading up to these May Day demonstrations have made it impossible for Congress to proceed with the Sensenbrenner bill. This is but a small beginning. Imagine how much more could we win if we set our minds to it.

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### Immigrant workers fight for justice

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# A May Day fight for workers' rights

Growing numbers of immigrant groups and unions have endorsed calls for May 1 demonstrations across the United States in support of amnesty, full legalization and equal rights for undocumented immigrant workers, including the San Francisco Labor Council which urged its affiliates to participate.

Already, millions of workers have participated in a series of protests in nearly every city across the United States, including a million and a half mostly immigrant workers who joined a National Day of Action April 10, many skipping work for the day.

Now organizers are planning a May 1 "Great American Boycott," urging undocumented workers to flex their economic muscle. "We are expecting that with this national boycott we will be able to further gain some respect, dignity, and improve the lot of the immigrant community," Los Angeles activist Javier Rodriguez told Agence France Presse. "We are everywhere. ... On May 1 ... those people that don't have documents and their families and their allies will show America once again that they are human beings."

AFP's dispatch on the strike movement quoted an IWW organizer saying, "The struggle for immigrant rights is a vital part of the struggle against racism and repression, and for the full rights of all working people."

The movement is strongest on the West Coast, where independent short-haul and port truckers have said they will stop work. The Los Angeles Troquero Collective, which



was active in organizing earlier wildcat strikes by port truckers, has called on truck drivers across the country to stop work on May 1, to support the demand for amnesty, the troqueros' right to unionize, and a 25 percent pay hike. They are calling on drivers to meet at the ports, rails, truck stops and other traditional gathering spots on May Day, and to form local organizations to support struggles at the terminal, port and national levels. The United Independent Truckers of California has also called for a strike that day.

The May Day protests follow on the success of April 10 demonstrations that derailed consideration of the immigration bill in the Senate. Actions were held in more than 150 cities, ranging from a few hundred in some small towns to a 100,000-strong rally rallied at the State Capital in Phoenix, Arizona; similar crowds turned out in Atlanta, New York City and San Diego. Earlier protests in

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# General strike kills French anti-labor law

Some 2.5 million workers and students demonstrated across France April 4, in the second general strike in two weeks against government efforts to strip younger workers of legal protections against arbitrary dismissal, through the CPE (first employment contract) law.

"This is the day to remind that the withdrawal of the CPE is non-negotiable," said Bernard Thibault, secretary general of CGT. Twelve unions had earlier given the government an ultimatum to revoke the law by April 17.

At least one third of school teachers walked off the job, joined by postal, bank, gas and electricity workers. No national newspapers were published and TV and radio was limited, with France's major news station playing classical music all day.

The huge marches had the spirit of a victory celebration, as the conservative government had agreed to withdraw the legislation in response to the mounting protest. However, police attacked smaller groups of protestors in the aftermath of a Paris march that drew more than 700,000 people. Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy had flooded the Paris route with 4,000 riot police, instructing them to arrest "as many people as possible." Police made hundreds of arrests of people they identified as "anarchists" and "troublemakers."

Two days later postal worker Cyril Ferez came out of a three-week coma resulting from a brutal police beating during a March 18 union demonstration. After beating him into unconsciousness, video footage shows police trampling the unconscious member of



PHOTO: WWW.LIBCOM.ORG

the SUD-PTT independent union underfoot before providing medical attention.

The syndicalist National Confederation of Labor (CNT), the first union to call for a general strike, issued a statement March 29, the day after as many as 3 million students and workers joined demonstrations and strikes against the law:

"Both public-sector and private-sector employees realised how important it was to strike, in order to ... express their total rejection of the CPE, and indeed of precarious labour in general.

"But [Prime Minister] Monsieur de Villepin remains inflexible. It is not a question any more of believing that he is acting deaf. How can he be deaf with this tidal wave of voices? So what is Monsieur de Villepin actually saying? That strikes are illegitimate and outmoded? That he cares little about the size of the popular protest? That whatever the number of the strikers, they will be always a negligible quantity?

"In fact, he is taking the risk to state that the only thing that counts is the passing of a

*continued page 12*

## No one is illegal

In the creation, life upon Mother Earth was never told that they could not journey to where the pursuit of needs or desire would take them. Many life forms depended upon the journey for their survival – the caribou, the buffalo, the whale, the salmon, flocks of many types of birds, even the human animal journeyed. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Along came groups of human animals that conquered other groups of once free human animals. The conquerors set marks upon paper that defined the limits of their conquest and these marks became the borders that told all of the boundaries of their authority. The land and all life that lived within the boundaries of their authority were subject to the dictates of the conquerors, who became a ruling class over all within their rule.

The rules of the rulers were set down on paper as laws, defining what was legal and what was illegal based upon what benefited the rulers. Those outside of the boundaries could only cross the borders legally if the rulers felt they would benefit, those who crossed with little or no benefit to the rulers were declared illegal. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The rulers of the unnatural nations saw all lands of indigenous people as unconquered lands. Since within their system of unnatural nations the rulers had, in their view, the divine right of authority, those outside of their system had only the right to be conquered and ruled. Thus the progression of the system of unnatural nations has been that of worldwide conquest of unconquered lands. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Though the ruling classes of the

unnatural nations with their borders sought to control those who crossed their borders, they did not place the same limitations upon themselves. Throughout the history of the unnatural nations, acts of invasion of other unnatural nations have continuously occurred

which has advanced to the state of vast wars of mass death and destruction. Given the rulers' laws of borders that they base the boundaries of their authority upon,

all offensive wars should be illegal, but the laws of the rulers are only for the governed and are not meant for the governors. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Unnatural nations formed alliances with other unnatural nations, signed military pacts and rights of exploitation, which they called trade agreements. The rulers and their exploitation were given free passage across the borders of unnatural nations. Thus the repression and exploitation of the people and the pillaging of Mother Earth became multinational pursuits. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The people who are ruled by the rulers are documented and placed under the ownership of the unnatural nations and called citizens. To be owned by an unnatural state brings the slave's duty to follow the ruler's laws, fight if needed in the ruler's army and to pay part of all that which they make in the form of taxes to the rulers. The ruled may only cross their master's borders with their master's permission or they are declared illegal. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Most of the governed classes must seek out employment from the owning class, for

the owning class has proclaimed resources and the production of needs as their private property. Thus the governed class also became the working class that produces the needs of society which the owning class profits from by selling back to the producers their needs in the form of consumer products. To attempt to change this arrangement is illegal by the rulers' laws, as is crossing their borders without permission to sell one's labor for greater return. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Throughout the world the owning class seeks to accumulate all that they can by keeping as little of produced wealth and needs as possible out of the hands of the people. To back up this arrangement the owning class uses its hired guns, the police and military, its laws, courts and prisons to keep those whom they govern from gaining a better share. The very existence of the unnatural states and their borders is an act to keep the owners rich, the governors governing and the people poor and oppressed. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The people struggle to survive under this system, for survival is the first natural law of all. Sometimes, because economic needs become so great or to get out of the way of the rulers' wars, people find that they must move to new locations to seek work or safety. If that move takes them across the master's borders without permission, they become illegals, even if they are doing nothing more than following the first natural law. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Sometimes with family intact, other times forced to separate from families, the ones called illegals move as they can down perilous paths. Hunted by agents of the unnatural states and sometimes preyed upon

by those seeking vulnerable victims. Cold or hot; hungry; hiding out in the elements; longing for the home they were forced to leave behind; moved by the hope that at the end of the journey they will find something better. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

Declared illegal by those who seek to control the world; hated by those that cannot see beyond their master's deceitful social conditioning. Those declared illegal become the master's blamed ones for everything from driving wages down, to taking jobs away, crime rates and even environmental destruction. All the things that in fact the owners' greed produces. In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The Natural World thrown out of balance. Natural laws becomes outlaws. Nothing makes common sense any more. Where in the laws that govern the existence of all upon our Mother Earth is there found that a few have the legal right to govern and exploit the many? Where does it state that the majority must do without so that a tiny minority can have far more than they will ever need? Where in the Natural laws does it declare those that cross unnatural borders are illegal persons? In the Natural World there are no borders, no one is illegal.

The unnatural system of the greedy few can not go on forever, for our Mother Earth can not withstand that continuous abuse, and the people can give to the greedy ones only so much. Mother Earth is already showing signs of breaking down, things must change. We must restore the natural balance of things, the borders must come down and those who have been declared illegal must become legal once again. For there are no borders in the Natural World, and no one is illegal.

Arthur J. Miller

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Immigrants and supporters rally in Pensacola April 10

One thousand workers took to the streets on a beautiful Monday morning to demonstrate their support for immigrant rights in downtown Pensacola on April 10.

People from as far away as Tallahassee came to Martin Luther King Jr Plaza to march and support this historic rally. Sean Enfinger, a Creek American Indian and hip hop artist who goes by the name “Shadowyze,” said that many Americans seem to have forgotten their heritage. “Immigrants have always been an important part of the social mechanics of America, (at least) since 1492,” he said.

Michelle Zuniga carried a sign that read “Queremos Leyes Justas” or we want just laws. Other signs read “Freedom Must be Earned and We’ve Earned It!” and “We are not Criminals.” Several members of the Pensacola GMB of the IWW joined the one-day strike and marched carrying signs that read “Solidaridad” and “An injury to One is an Injury to All” (in Spanish, of course).

Alberto Marte and Amy Landrum, both members of the Pensacola IWW, were scheduled to speak at the rally. However, the event took on a life of its own as people continued to march through downtown.

“I don’t think too many people are here to stop and listen to speakers. I think they just want to march,” Landrum said. “And that’s all right with me.”

Protesters plan to march again on May Day in what could be one of the largest demonstrations in recent Pensacola history.

1916 British IWW Songbook

A 1916 edition of the *Little Red Songbook* issued by the British IWW is available online at [www.musicanet.org/robokopp/iww.html](http://www.musicanet.org/robokopp/iww.html). It features lyrics to 66 Wobbly songs, several of which also have instrumental versions of the tune so you can sing along.

London May Day events

The London IWW will host a Workplace Organising session at 4 p.m. with Executive Board member Adam Lincoln, followed by an 80th anniversary commemoration of the 1926 General Strike featuring a presentation by NUM and Wobbly veteran Dave Douglass. Saturday, 29 April, at 21 Russell Square, London. details: [www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk)

A May Day programme on the 1926 Miners’ Lock-Out and General Strike will be held at the Woolpack Pub in Doncaster, beginning at 3 p.m. with “The Miners Film,” followed by a talk by David Douglass and a folk music social. This program is organised by Mining Communities Advice Service in conjunction with the National Union of Mineworkers, the IWW and Doncaster Class War.

Midwest Wobfest 2006

Midwest Wobfest will be hosted by the Twin Cities General Membership Branch July 14-16. Wobfest events will be organized around building solidarity and community within our union through art, music, spoken word, comedy, a labor tour, and of course the sing-along battle between the Chicago and Twin Cities GMBs. Wobblies from around the country are encouraged to attend. For info or housing, email the Twin Cities GMB at [jpila@iww.org](mailto:jpila@iww.org) or leave a message on the branch voicemail at (612) 339-4418.

MAY DAY GREETINGS

“The liberation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves.”  
(No intermediaries needed)

Harry Siitonen,  
San Francisco Bay Area GMB

Brooklyn warehouse workers winning with direct action

On March 20 at 5:30 a.m. workers at Amersino, a produce distribution warehouse in Brooklyn, N.Y., met in a deli to sign IWW membership cards and prepare to stand up to an abusive boss. On that chilly Monday morning close to 20 Latino workers along with a diverse IWW contingent – including workers from Handymen, Starbucks and Mayday books – marched on the boss demanding the immediate reinstatement of fired workers, an end to violations of minimum wage and overtime laws, and respect from the boss.

As the boss drove up in his new Mercedes Benz, workers marched with bikes in hand ready to demand justice. The showdown between the workers and their boss is just one example of the class conflict that exists in New York City. The workers organized to end the harsh treatment from the boss who would yell racist remarks at workers while paying them far below what they earned. Meanwhile the boss used the money he was stealing to build a collection of trucks he is using for his long haul operations and other business endeavors.

The workers surrounded the boss as IWW organizer Billy Randel negotiated. After exchanging some words and laying out the demands two fired workers were immediately reinstated. In addition the boss agreed to temporarily agree to all demands. Although that did not mean much, it was enough to prevent a strike. Workers returned to work proudly wearing their IWW buttons.

Within the same week the boss began to engage in his anti-union campaign. In an attempt to intimidate workers the boss fired two workers claiming that since he rehired the other two workers he now has to fired these two. In addition, the boss refused to talk to IWW representatives and made it clear that he was not looking to negotiate.

On Saturday, March 25, Amersino workers once again met at 5:30 a.m. with the intention of going on strike unless their demands were met. With the help of IWW organizer Bert Picard, workers engaged in a consensus-



Boston Wobblies joined tens of thousands of workers April 10 in an immigrant rights protest, part of national Day Without An Immigrant actions that saw more than a million workers join protests and walk-outs in hundreds of cities across the United States.

based decision-making process. Workers decided that unless the boss reinstated the fired workers they would strike.

The workers then marched on and confronted the boss. The boss claimed he did not have the money to pay everyone, the boss asked workers not to be influenced by outsiders, the boss red-baited and declared his passion for America. Workers stood their ground as the boss rambled nonsense. Finally, after seeing that the workers were ready to strike, the boss rehired the two fired workers.

The boss at Amersino is still violating the law and stealing from workers, however the workers are backed by the IWW and Make The Road by Walking who together are building power for an underclass of undocumented workers in Brooklyn. Immigrant workers in Brooklyn are standing together and organizing in demand of an end to the abusive con-

dition of work, an end to disrespect, and an onset of having their voice heard. An NLRB election is set for April 28.

Ottawa Wobblies aid Panhandlers Union

The Ottawa GMB is working with the Panhandlers Union of Ottawa in its campaign against criminalization, assisting with legal defence and advocating with social service and housing authorities.

For a time, Wobblies produced an edition of the *Dominion* newspaper for distribution by the panhandlers for donations. The city shut this successful venture down with a bylaw prohibiting street vending. The panhandlers are demanding an end to prosecutions and more humane solutions to homelessness. The union holds monthly meetings, and is negotiating with local authorities.

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.*

# Learning as we fight: AMFA & IWW

BY JEFF JONES, TWIN CITIES GMB  
What better way to celebrate April Fool's Day than with fellow Wobs? On April 1 the Twin Cities GMB hosted a forum at Macalaster College entitled "Lessons from the Northwest Airlines Strike." The event went well, with nearly 100 people who came to discuss the six-month-old struggle against the bosses at Northwest Airlines.

A fellow worker from the Twin Cities GMB opened the evening with a few remarks about the IWW and its involvement in the strike, and then introduced each speaker.  
First up was Ted Ludwig, president of Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association Local 33. He started by saying that he will not call this "lessons learned" because the strike is ongoing, though many workers have been forced to look for new, lower-paying jobs.

Without placing blame on any one person or organization, FW Ludwig lamented the lack of solidarity from other unions. He also spoke about how NWA has a tight grip on the strings of state legislators (not a surprise to Wobblies). FW Ludwig then went on to explain how the mechanics could have accepted pay cuts at the beginning of the strike, following in the wake of massive downsizing among the union's ranks. Facing these terms, workers "must draw a line in the sand and stand up for their rights." FW Ludwig ended by announcing his run for a seat in the Minnesota senate (not a lesson this Wob would have learned, but to each their own).

The second speaker was Peter Rachleff,

a labor historian and activist. FW Rachleff opened with jokes about the thousand and one uses for duct tape, as the proud banner of the Twin Cities GMB was affixed to the wall with duct tape. He called the outcome of AMFA's most recent vote to reject NWA's settlement offer as one of the most amazing union votes in recent memory. The bosses' settlement offer would change workers' status from "on strike" to "off payroll, on layoff" – in effect allowing them one month of "layoff pay," to recuperate cost of accrued vacation pay, and uncontested unemployment benefits (which one state judge already denied).

With almost 73 percent of the members voting, the final tally was 965 in favor of the settlement and 1,258 to continue the strike. The workers voted on principle, passing on vacation pay and other bread and butter incentives. FW Rachleff then addressed the international framework of neo-liberalism and how this view represents the capitalist imagination of "the strongest will survive, as the rest of us will have to fight for crumbs." Rachleff concluded by noting that the bosses at NWA were allowed to flee the Minnesota courts for New York, and that the local media wouldn't draw any connections between Vance Security being professional strike breakers as well as hired goons for the Bush-Cheney 2004 election machine.

The moderator from the IWW then introduced media clips covering two days of direct action where strikers and supporters attempted to stop scabs from going to work.



carry out four tasks: Distribution of workers' media; Co-operative production of new media; Development of new cultural forms and tools in the new media; Training in the development of skills and confidence.

Having attended a number of labour and technology conferences over the years, mostly in Britain and North America, I have to say worker-activists in the developing world – not usually participants in such events – are not even remotely lagging behind. In some areas, they are actually far ahead of those in the developed countries.

Nevertheless, one major theme of the conference – possibly because its location in Africa and the presence of activists from Nigeria, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Angola, Tanzania and elsewhere – was the so-called "digital divide." Conference participants were constantly being reminded of the fact that in many parts of Africa, it was not so much a question of Internet access as access to electricity.

In light of that, it was particularly interesting to hear the WWMP report that in creating its weekly radio show, which could be heard on battery-powered portable radios in the most remote areas of South Africa, they always choose three local news stories and three global ones. The global ones are taken off the LabourStart website. This was one example of many showing how the technologies, both new and old, could be merged and how something utterly new could be created. Workers living in villages without electricity, possibly unable to read or write, are benefiting from a global website created by other workers using the very latest in the new communications technology. This does give one hope.

The ruling ideas of our age may well be the competitive and individualistic values of our ruling classes – but this group of determined media activists and educators give hope that alternative ideas might well reach audiences too. I was honored to be elected a member of the preparatory committee, so I should be able to report in a few weeks and months on progress. Until then, stay tuned.

At one of the hotels where scabs were being housed, their bus transport to the airport was immobilized by a flat tire. A loud round of applause came from the audience after viewing these clips of workers taking matters into their own hands.

The program continued with FW Mike Klemm, Local 33 vice president and regional strike coordinator. He said that if workers are going to strike, they must have a full strike fund built up. FW Klemm then talked of not being able to tell who is going to cross the picket line. The person who you think is least likely to scab might be a person who crosses the line, and the person you think might scab could be your tightest comrade.

Karen Schultz of the Professional Flight Attendants Association followed. She began by stating that it's imperative to support our brothers and sisters when they're engaged in a struggle, be it a strike or a fight for civil rights. Part of this support includes talking to our neighbors about the truth behind the struggle, for from these conversations widespread solidarity will happen. This FW talked about the economic power we wield as workers. Every time we go into a store to purchase something we need to ask the workers, "Is this company supporting you?" She ended by stating that NWA is a predator and "this strike will go down in history because AMFA drew a line in the sand and said no more."

Kip Hedges, an 18-year member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, then spoke on how solidarity could be built upon self-interest. When the bosses go after one craft union at your work place, one can bet that they will target your own craft soon after. FW Hedges discussed how the AMFA strike has helped expose the fault lines in the current labor movement and how divided we really are. He noted that the AFL-CIO fakers blocked solidarity efforts from the state federations and internationals, down through the regional labor bodies.

This FW very pointedly said that we are all pieces of meat to the employing class. He continued by explaining how the bosses create a social construct where workers are led to believe that we can't win, as things that happen to us are inevitable – "that is just the way things are." Yet, the FW gave some solid examples of how workers under harsh conditions are fighting back, both here in the United States and abroad. He concluded by saying that if we keep fighting back, we will win as the desire to fight back is growing at home and overseas.

A second IAM member spoke about how solidarity is our primary weapon as working people. This FW stated that our focus should center on organizing the rank-and-file instead of bringing the big union fat cats in line. He talked about the importance of linking our struggles with those happening around immigration, mine safety and young workers in France. He ended by speaking on our need to build confidence as a class, as the bosses know how powerful solidarity can be.

The final speaker was Jeff Pilacinski from the Twin Cities GMB. FW Pilacinski started with the one main lesson that seemed to flow through every speaker, which was, "an injury to one is an injury to all." He read from an IWW publication from 1923 that highlighted the faults of the craft union system – a system that serves the bosses and encourages one group of workers to scab on another.

The AMFA strike, like so many to others in recent memory, has made it painfully clear that workers must look towards an industrial union model. FW Pilacinski encouraged all of us to be leaders on the shop floor and in the streets by forwarding the idea that "direct action gets satisfaction." He ended by saying that only through solidarity and direct action can we can build a world without bosses where the workers are in control.

After the final speaker, audience members posed questions on the strike's progress, the need for a labor party (or no party at all), and the role of media in different labor struggles. The event lasted three hours and in the end many folks commented that they wished we had more time.

## Scabbing pilots to get stock

Scabbing Northwest Airlines pilots will trade concessions for \$888 million in stock when the carrier emerges from bankruptcy, under a deal being voted on by union members as we go to press. The ALPA union says that will amount to 13 percent of the reorganized company. Pilots would also get bonuses for meeting goals for on-time flights, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. ALPA would also keep its seat on Northwest's board of directors.

Other scabbing unions have not received similar terms, though all have accepted deep concessions. The Machinists' union, which used to represent mechanics, and the Teamsters, which used to represent flight attendants, both surrendered their board seats under their new agreements for the handful of members in other crafts that they still represent. Those unions refused to turn over the seats when workers replaced them with independent unions in protest against an earlier round of concessions.

**On the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
1916 Iron Range Miners Strike...**

**May Day Greetings**  
from the



**Twin Cities GMB**

**The Struggle Continues.**



# Work injuries significantly undercounted

FROM CONFINED SPACE

The current U.S. system for tracking work-related injuries and illnesses may miss two-thirds of the total number of occupational injuries and illnesses, according to a study led by Michigan State University, East Lansing Professor Kenneth Rosenman and reported in the April *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

“Based on the results of our analysis we estimate that the number of work-related injuries and illnesses in Michigan is three times greater than the official estimate derived from the BLS annual survey,” Dr. Rosenman and colleagues report. Whereas BLS statistics suggest that work-related injuries affect 1 in 15 Michigan workers per year, the new results suggest that the true rate is closer to 1 in 5.

Rosenman blamed the problem on several factors. First, the BLS system excludes government workers in the 26 states where they don’t have OSHA coverage. In addition, BLS excludes the self-employed and farms with fewer than 11 employees. With occupationally related diseases, employers may not know that employees have contracted occupational diseases years after they had left their employment.

One of the most significant reasons may be “the perception by employers of financial and regulatory disincentives for complete reporting.” Herein may lie not only the main problem with reporting, but also the most dangerous effect of under-reporting.

OSHA currently bases its inspection targeting on employer self-reporting. In other words, a low number of reported injuries and illnesses mean a smaller chance of being inspected. The study’s “perception” of regulatory disincentives for complete reporting is, therefore, more of a reality. While it is illegal for an employer to refuse to list a reported injury or illness, we have seen employers use a variety of means to discourage workers from reporting injuries and illnesses.

Behavioral and safety incentive programs that reward workers or groups of workers who don’t report injuries is one way to use peer pressure to keep reporting down. Disciplining “unsafe workers” who report injuries is another method used by employers to discourage workers from reporting injuries.

We saw both methods used most recently when the *Oakland Tribune* reported last year on the amazingly low injuries and illnesses record of KFM and their lead firm Kiewit Pacific Co in the repair of the Oakland Bay bridge. The company had a “Foreman Safety Incentive Program” in which they doled out \$100 to \$2,500 bonuses, depending on the number of worker hours logged without a recordable injury. Crews were given cash bonuses for not having any “recordable” injuries for a month’s worth of work. KFM also suspended workers who reported injuries.

It doesn’t have to be this way. The BLS responded to a 1987 report by the National Academy of Sciences which showed that

the BLS missed 50 percent of work-related deaths by launching the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries. Instead of relying on employer reports, CFOI data is derived from sources including coroners, and medical examiners; state departments of health, labor and industries, and workers’ compensation agencies; police departments; and state farm bureaus. However, no such system has ever been implemented to improve national injury and illness reporting.

Not only are the methods of collection different between CFOI and the BLS injury and illness reporting system, but so are the results. Using CFOI, BLS reports that workplace fatalities have gone up two years in a row. But using the traditional injury and illnesses employer self-reporting method, injuries and illnesses continue to go down year after year.

## \$562, or 6 months?

The owner of the Bronx Auto Venture junk yard has been sentenced to six months in jail, and his company fined \$16,000, for nearly killing a worker in April 2004. Anselmo Alfaro was overcome by toxic fumes and lost consciousness when he was sent into a tank filled with thousands of gallons of petroleum waste without any protective equipment. The company was also convicted of endangering public health and ordered to clean up the site. OSHA had cited the firm for a “serious violation” of safety regulations in killing, and fined the company \$562.

# New York fines transit union \$2.5 million, jails leader

A state supreme court judge has ordered New York Transit Workers Union Local 100 to pay the state a \$2.5 million fine, revoked the union’s right to collect dues from workers’ pay checks, and sentenced President Roger Toussaint to 10 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine for refusing a court order to cancel the December mass transit strike. Subway and bus workers have also been docked several days’ pay for joining the strike.

Toussaint called off the transit strike on its third day without an agreement; in January union members voted down the concessionary settlement the Metropolitan Transportation Authority offered when workers were back on the job.

TWU members are now revoting on the concessions deal, as union officials bully workers with the threat that the state might impose an even worse deal. The state has ordered binding arbitration, and the MTA has pulled the offer off the table, saying they will seek a better deal from the state arbitrator.

Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, seeking labor support in his gubernatorial bid, joined the MTA in seeking the fines and jail time.

Local 100 can not afford the fines, and says it will appeal; the state has suggested the local sell its headquarters. Some TWU members have suggested a work-to-rule beginning when Toussaint reports to jail.

When the transit workers shut down New York City’s mass transit system, they showed their power; when the union ordered them back without a contract it showed it was afraid to fight. Now workers, and the union, are paying the price for that fear.

## Whose hand is picking your pocket?

In calendar year 2004, CNN reports, the profit-per-worker at U.S. companies was \$68,655, up 55 percent from the year before, according to a survey of 133 large companies. For every \$100 spent on salary and benefits, the average company enjoyed \$42 in profit.

According to U.S. Census data, wages and salaries averaged \$37,154 in 2004. However, half of all workers made \$27,494 or less – just 40 percent of the average per-worker profit being hauled in by the largest firms.

Meanwhile, the April 5 *Los Angeles Times* reports that U.S. insurance companies raked in their largest profits ever in 2005 – \$44.8-billion, even after accounting for the claims of policyholders wiped out by Hurricane Katrina and other disasters. Nonetheless, the industry insists it’s in a state of crisis that requires either substantial premium hikes, withdrawal of service from higher-risk communities, and/or greater protection against lawsuits.

Besides boosting profits, the industry raised its surplus more than 7 percent to nearly \$427 billion, according to an analysis of company filings by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

The *Times* says this “remarkable performance” is the fruit of a long campaign to “shift risks previously borne by companies to policyholders and the public.”

After some hefty pay-outs in the early 1990s, insurers rewrote policies to limit coverage for natural disasters, blacklisted huge sections of the country, and dramatically increased premiums. “There’s not going to be much left that they do insure by the time it’s all over,” warned former Nixon administration official George Bernstein.

## Blue Diamond violates rights

The NLRB has ordered Blue Diamond Growers, a global supplier of almonds, to rehire Ivo Camilo and Mike Flores and reimburse them for back wages. Administrative Law Judge Jay R. Pollack ruled that managers violated federal labor law through threats of plant closures, firings, and interrogating employees about their union activities.

# Waking up might be a class act

I was supposed to finish my article on the Coorsie twins in this issue, but that can wait until June. I woke up at 3:00 a.m. this morning with a fire in my belly about the racism I am hearing from many in the white working class over the exploding immigration issue. A Navajo friend of mine said to me recently, “I wish all you immigrants would all leave. You have messed up my country.” But, he forgets, his people are also immigrants.

My wife and I travel frequently down to old Mexico, deep into the Indian country of Oaxaca, Chiapas and the Yucatan. We see the devastating results of what U.S. capitalists call NAFTA, especially in the ancient Maya areas. Families have been living on their little 10 acre plots of land for centuries down there, subsisting on a vegetable garden, a few fruit trees, milpas of corn, and a hunting trip for deer, iguanas, parrots or monkeys now and then. I have lived with them on exactly that diet and found it quite comfortable.

But NAFTA is uprooting that ancient way of life, destroying the close family traditions that accompany that way of life, and shattering a culture that survived even the Spanish invasion. The men of these families are forced to leave home to find work and are swelling the unemployed barrios of the large cities of Merida, Villahermosa, Mexico City, etc. The

poverty in these barrios is destined to spill hungry Mexicans trying to find a way to feed their children across a phony border into Texas, Arizona and Califas. Here in Colorado we see the browning in our neighborhoods and panic as the competition for work heightens. This competition is a problem, but it is a problem we workers can solve by organizing. I want *all* hungry children fed.

My great grandfathers came here from the potato famine in Ireland for the exact same reason; to feed hungry children. The Mexicans have a much rougher time getting legal citizenship, however. One, they are not white, and two, capitalism finds Mexico a handy reservoir of cheap temporary labor when our vegetables, fruit and cotton get ripe, and to use as a tool to hold down rising labor costs when our unions get too cocky. But U.S. capitalism wants them to go back to that handy reservoir in Mexico when they have served their purpose here, so that Mexico will support them until we need them again. Capitalism is *so* efficient – and heartless.

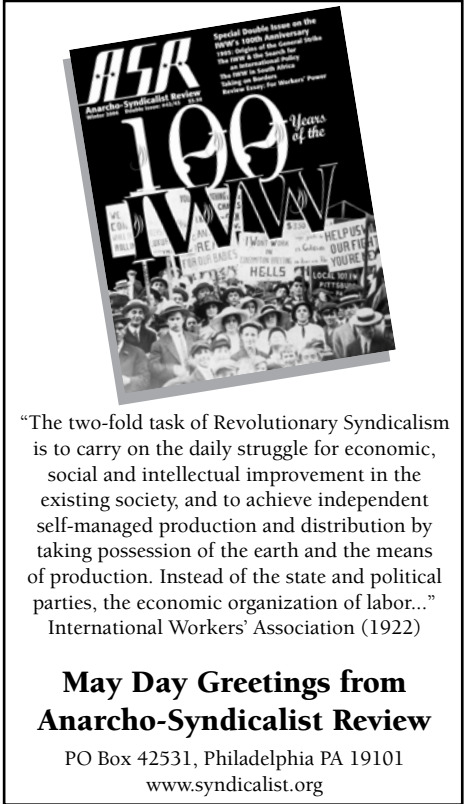
And while all attention is directed at our southern border, at our Mexican brothers and sisters brave enough to cross waterless deserts and face redneck militias with rifles in order to feed their children, the capitalists are exporting 250,000 high-tech jobs *per year* to



Asia. These are very high-paying jobs which will no longer pay income taxes or social security taxes into our treasury; jobs that will not be waiting for your children. You don’t have to be a brain surgeon to see where this new world order is leading us. India is the new silicone valley and our manufacturing jobs are disappearing. Ford says that they are “closing” 14 plants— how about “moving” 14 plants?

Come on white worker. Will you let racism blind you to the fact that the capitalists have created a new world order and you aren’t included in their plans? We no longer have the option to exist as a privileged “white middle class” protected by U.S. borders and racist unions. We either organize internationally or starve. Don’t worry about Mexicans crossing a phony border created by Andrew Jackson in 1846. There won’t be any work here for Mexicans either unless we wake up.

— Gary Cox



“The two-fold task of Revolutionary Syndicalism is to carry on the daily struggle for economic, social and intellectual improvement in the existing society, and to achieve independent self-managed production and distribution by taking possession of the earth and the means of production. Instead of the state and political parties, the economic organization of labor...”  
International Workers’ Association (1922)

May Day Greetings from  
Anarcho-Syndicalist Review  
PO Box 42531, Philadelphia PA 19101  
www.syndicalist.org

# The Plight for Freedom

## Bay Area Wobblies join April 10 National Day of Action

BY DEAN DEMPSEY

It is estimated that over 2 million people participated in marches, walk-outs, demonstrations and other forms of expression as part of the National Day of Action in support of immigrant justice and to eminently oppose anti-immigrant legislation. The bills presently under debate in the U.S. Senate promise to charge the roughly 12 million undocumented migrants as felons and criminalize churches, day labor centers, humanitarian aid organizations and other individuals who help or have established relations with those without papers. HR 4437 alone has been considered one of the most repressive anti-immigrant legislation in over 70 years, attacking not only community groups in association, but primarily workers of color.

Actions occurred all across the country, from Arizona to New York, from Alabama to here in California's Bay Area. Momentum for this new movement for immigrant rights and amnesty to all those undocumented is growing, and is being called the next civil rights movement.

An example of the daily resistance in the San Francisco Bay Area was on March 21, as approximately 50 people gathered outside the San Francisco Federal Building to take part in a week-long hunger strike in protest of HR 4437 (which declares all undocumented immigrants and those who assist them felons).

Camped outside for 24 hours a day, one participant was an IWW member displaying the Wobbly banner outside her tent. When fellow worker Patricia Nuno was asked why she joined in this hunger strike, she said, "I have been inspired by the IWW and our historic and current organizing for a more dignified reality for immigrants and all the workers of the world, and I still want to take it even further. I participated as a first generation in this country, and as a Wobbly, showing my solidarity to all the immigrants who live without rights and are fighting for equality."

Following weeks of walk-outs, hunger strikes and protests, the Bay Area was another

contingent in the National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice. The local April 10 event was organized by Compañeros Del Barrio (or Friends of the Community), a local organization in the Bay Area. We began to congregate at the 16<sup>th</sup> street train station, in San Francisco's heavily Mexican, Central and South American working class Mission District, in a rally with various public speakers.

At the starting rally, the crowd stood at about 1,500 people (over a dozen of whom were Wobblies), pouring onto the streets that we would soon take for our march.

The crowd was heavily enthusiastic, and among their various chants was: "¡Las calles son de la gente, la gente donde esta, la gente esta en las calles demandando libertad!" ("The streets are of the people, and the people, where are they? The people are on the streets, demanding liberty!") People of all ages, races, genders and industries attended the event, carrying American, Mexican, anarchist and various Central and South American flags, along with thoughtful and straight-forward signs that expressed both the frustration and will of immigrants and their allies.

The overwhelming demand of the crowd was for the general amnesty of all those undocumented, and for some, the abolition of the border, seeing it as an arbitrary division that divides working people.

The message was clear: No to all forms of repressive anti-immigrant legislation; No to the militarization of the U.S. and Mexican Border; and No to the assertion that any people be deemed "illegal." The public response was overwhelmingly positive. On this movement for immigrant justice, fellow worker Walter Parenteau says, "I think there's a great comparison to be made between the civil rights movement and what seems to be happening today. In both situations we have a silenced and frustrated minority. As in the civil rights movement, undocumented workers are finding their voice through solidarity and organizing."

When reaching our destination, our

numbers had swelled to well over 2,500 people, as those in the busy Mission street decided to join us. We ended at another train station, entirely occupying the intersection for over two hours during rush-hour traffic. An entertaining alternative to the speakers platform was provided by Aztec dancers, who moved rhythmically to a drum's intonation. Inside this circle of dancers were not only those who were well-practiced (seniors and children alike), but others who simply wanted to participate. This ceremonial dancing provided an optimistic air, energizing the crowd into chants and discussion.

Shortly after 7 p.m., the police dispersed the crowd with threats of arrest. However, Fuga, a cumbia-influenced music group, spontaneously converged on the street corner, carrying on the celebratory atmosphere of music. Their music dealt with issues that were personal to the crowd, many of whom were immigrants themselves. They played moving songs about the struggles faced by the international worker, the deadly border and the life of the migrant. The crowd made up of marchers, *jornaleros*, and those lucky enough to be walking past, clapped their hands and sang along to the poignant but empowering music.

The next National Day of Action is being led by a coalition of immigrant right's groups, and will occur May 1, the international day of worker's struggle. They are calling for "A Day Without an Immigrant," a day in which immigrants and their allies are encouraged to boycott work, school and the economy, to demonstrate just how important the immigrant communities of America are. Updates can be found on [www.immigrantrights.org](http://www.immigrantrights.org).



A woman holds a sign that reads "Borders equal Racism!" on the San Francisco April 10 march. Photo by Walter Parenteau

As this new civil rights movement continues to materialize, it is developing in different directions. A conflict in the Bay Area, and perhaps elsewhere, has been over the use of flags, particularly national flags. For some, the Mexican, Central and South American flags create potential conflict, fearing that it can be seen as proof of the alleged "invasion" to anti-immigrant fundamentalists. The same people generally encourage demonstrators to carry American flags. Although this particular use of the American flag is much different than the way in which for example, the Minutemen, have used it, it is still problematic to some. But the U.S. flag remains a symbol heavily utilized in the immigrant rights movement, and is clearly not used to demonstrate imperialist sentiment, but rather to express how such a large number of American people (with or without papers) have a vital role in the American economy and want to be treated as full citizens with full rights.

However, many groups, such as Deporten a la Migra (Deport the INS/ICE) based out of San Francisco, do not ask their supporters to carry a U.S. or other national flag. Other groups have supported the red and black workers' flag to represent not a nation, but rather a people united through their class for the liberty and self-determination of all workers, regardless of the land they call home.

## May 1st: Defend the rights of immigrant workers

Whereas the working class knows no borders or races, but exists wherever workers are exploited for the benefit of capital; and

Whereas all human beings are entitled to the means of obtaining the necessities of life for themselves and their families, regardless of any artificial barriers created by government; and

Whereas the nature of capitalist economies is to draw workers from all over to the centers of capitalist investment, while at the same time drawing wealth out of less-developed economies, thereby eliminating opportunities to earn a living within such economies; and

Whereas the recent rise in immigration to the United States of America is directly attributable to this process, as exemplified by the destructive free-trade treaties forced upon Latin America by the United States government, as well as the insatiable lust of North American employers for a dependent, immigrant work-force that can be compelled to labor under sub-minimum wages and deplorable working conditions and used to undermine the working conditions of all workers; and

Whereas all workers, wherever economic necessity may force them to seek work, are entitled to organize and take concerted, economic action for the defense and aid of their class, for which purpose the Industrial Workers of the World has sought to unite the workers of the world in One Big Union, regardless of nationality or place of origin; and

Whereas the struggle of immigrant workers is connected and integral to the struggle of all workers for industrial freedom and economic security, which demands the solidarity of all workers, in every industry throughout the world;

Now, therefore, be it Resolved,

That the General Executive Board of the Industrial Workers of the World declares its opposition to efforts to prohibit or criminalize the crossing of national borders by workers, and opposes efforts to prohibit the giving of aid and comfort to immigrant workers; and be it further Resolved,

That, in order to advance the solidarity of all workers, and to demonstrate to the employing class that an injury to one worker is an injury to all, the General Executive Board of the Industrial Workers of the World hereby endorses the popular call for a general strike and protest in defense of immigrant workers in the United States, and calls upon all Branches and members of the organization to participate in such a strike and protest, as local circumstances shall permit, on the first day of May 2006, the International Workers' Holiday.

General Executive Board, Industrial Workers of the World



PHOTO: INDYMEDIA



**"No to the criminalization of our  
immigrant fellow workers!"  
"Yes to World Labor Solidarity!"  
"An injury to one is an injury to all!"**

*Chicago General Membership Branch  
Industrial Workers of the World  
PO Box 18387, Chicago IL 60618*



# May Day strike for immigrant workers’ rights

*continued from page 1*  
Dallas and Los Angeles drew crowds reported at a half million or more. Tens of thousands joined April 10 demonstrations in Houston, Los Angeles, Madison, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Scores of cities saw smaller demonstrations, ranging from a few dozen to several hundred people. In Mississippi, workers sang “We Shall Overcome” in Spanish.

Participants were largely immigrant workers from Mexico and Central America, but other immigrant communities from the Chinese to the Irish were a major part of several demonstrations and organizers are distributing flyers for the May Day actions in Chinese, English and Spanish. Several unions and other human rights organizations also joined the actions.

There were demonstrations in nearly every state, and most cities of any size. Although no reliable count of the participants is available, it is clear that more than a million workers joined in the April 10 Day of Action, and that as many as 3 million have participated in the wave of protests that have been sweeping the United States. Since most of these demonstrations happened on work



days, these protests – or paros (stoppages), as they are called in Spanish – have in effect been general strikes.

Several meatpacking plants shut down production lines or closed entirely April 10 because so many workers went to the rallies. A number of restaurants and ethnic businesses also closed, sometimes out of solidarity with the movement and sometimes because workers were not available.

Other bosses agreed not to discipline workers who missed work that day. But while many employers recognized that the movement was so widespread that they could not stop workers from participating, other companies employing large numbers of immigrant workers tried to re-establish the shop-floor terror they are accustomed to with firings or threats of firings, fines, and turning workers in to immigration authorities.

Among the fired were restaurant workers in Bonita Springs, Florida, and Milwaukee; welders in Tyler, Texas; Indianapolis asbestos removal workers; Detroit meat packers; and many more.

Many employers responded to the protests by firing workers. “I have no problem with the demonstration, but this is a business,” said Charley Bohley, an owner of

Rodes restaurant in Bonita Springs, who fired 10 workers who missed work for a rally. “Couldn’t they have protested in the morning before work? Couldn’t they have protested in their hearts?”

As a result, the Day of Action was followed by several job actions as workers fought to protect themselves and their fellow workers against firings and other discipline.

Nearly 200 fired workers in Wisconsin were reinstated after organizers met with employers, discussed the significance of the protests and threatened to identify the companies publicly.

Six hundred workers struck an Excel meatpacking plant in Dodge City, Kansas, April 11 after managers disciplined several workers for missing shifts to participate in the protest. Workers occupied the cafeteria, refusing to resume production until the discipline was withdrawn. Dozens of highway troopers assembled outside preparing to evict the workers, but after several hours of negotiations with UFCW Local 2 officials, managers agreed to the workers’ demand.

After activists complained, Wolverine Packing in Detroit invited 21 fired workers to return to their jobs with back pay, but warned

that it would recheck workers’ immigration status. The workers decided they would rather not return to such a lousy job.

Some fired workers have filed formal complaints with the National Labor Relations Board, charging that they were penalized for engaging in concerted activity.

The April 10 Day of Action followed a wave of protests March 20 to 25, which saw more than a million immigrants demonstrate in cities and towns across the United States. Hundreds marched in Providence, Rhode Island. More than 20,000 immigrants and their supporters flooded the streets of Milwaukee March 23, prompting the City Council to pass a resolution 11-1 condemning the anti-immigrant legislation pending in Congress.

In Atlanta, turnout for March 24 actions was bolstered by a bill passed by the Georgia House (and pending in the Senate) to deny state services to immigrants, tax their wire transfers sending money to their families, and send state labor department inspectors into workplaces to verify workers’ legal status.

The May Day demonstrations promise to expand what has become the largest mass protests in the United States in many years.

The struggle to protect immigrant work-



PHOTOS: INDYMEDIA

ers’ rights is inextricably tied to the survival of the U.S. labor movement, and to the construction of practical labor solidarity among workers throughout the world. We IWWs are proud to stand with our fellow workers in this struggle.

For information on actions near you: [www.IndigrantSolidarity.org](http://www.IndigrantSolidarity.org) or [www.iww.org](http://www.iww.org)

## Si Se Puede to Si Se Pudo: Changing a Moment into a Movement

BY ADAM WELCH, DEBUG

In this profound moment of worldwide doubt in leaders and governments, a wave of day laborers, cooks, janitors and high school students have suddenly become a powerful force.

This past week of marches and walkouts in protest of HR 4437 was as beautiful as it was significant. Optimism was high returning from the March 25 journey across San Jose and back. The chant was no longer “Si se puede,” but “Si se pudo” or “Yes, we did it!” Over the next week students made their own mark as they defied administrations, marching from school to school to spread their walkouts as well.

May 1 will be the next day of protest, boycotts and even worker strikes – a tradition called “paros civicos” in Mexico’s social movement. But as we ready for the next storm of protest, could the fire of the movement leave as quickly as the spark was lit?

Many are taken back seeing thousands of ordinary people marching in the streets and parents chuckle as they hear of high school students organizing through myspace.com. But being a labor organizer over the years, I’ve had the chance to find myself standing side by side in everyday people’s movements – though never one with such attention or numbers.

Whether it was Vietnamese newspaper delivery drivers in San Jose or Mexican and Sikh Indian truck drivers who spread their work stoppages across the West Coast using

Nextel walkie-talkies, all took brave risks and were expressions of fleeting moments of collective power. Sometimes they’ve known this taste in distant homelands, but often never on the soil of their new home in America.

But as soon as that charged moment passed, and quicker than a victory could be celebrated, the powers that be would begin working to whittle the gains away. Leaders would not be fired right after a successful strike, but eventually pushed out once things returned to what passes for normal.

As hundreds of thousands and maybe more will be taking to the streets, right now victory looks within reach. The result of the battle could be the opening of the door to millions gaining the rights of citizenship but it could set the stage for even further anti-immigrant reaction. Or maybe worse, though the laws are changed, the movement comes to an end and the people become a footnote



Hotel workers marching in San Francisco April 10.

to the day when a politician signs a bill in Washington, D.C.

The people have the spotlight now, but will the movement be able to move beyond this moment? What has been unleashed is something new, powerful and which previously was just as invisible as the people who make up the movement – but these actors need to decide what is next.

## May Day: International Workers’ Day

May Day – Our Labor Day! May Day, when nature, herself in revolt against the trammels of the ice and cold, with sun and earth in harmony, preaches the gospel of progress! .... True, our masters have given one day a year as a day for Labor. We, the militants of labor, want no day contaminated and disgraced by legal sanction.

Your Labor Day means the perpetuation of capitalism; ours means its overthrow. Your Labor Day symbolizes the enslavement of the workers; ours their approaching liberation. Your Labor Day .... means nationalism, division of the workers; ours means internationalism – the solidarity of the workers of the world. Your Labor Day shadows the past of tears and blood; ours is the future. ...

The songs we sing ... sound the might of a class. We are confined to no country, no flag. Our songs herald your overthrow. This is Our Day. We are the forgers of revolution – the destroyers of the old and the outgrown. We are the nemesis of idlers – the doom of masters – the emancipators of slaves. We are revolt. We are progress. We are revolution.

(*Industrial Worker*, May 1, 1917)

May Day, originally a rural holiday to celebrate the coming of Spring..., is now a day of internationalism. ... All the predominating characteristics of modern social systems are international... The ruin of the American farmers is due to the competition of Canada, Russia, Argentina and other countries, in the markets of the world. ...

Undoubtedly, no nation lives unto itself alone, especially the United States... Ideas lag behind events. We still have the ideas of nationalism with us... But it won’t be long before it will be recognized as obsolete...

A recognition of modern world tendencies will do much to promote working-class internationalism. ... It is a noteworthy fact that workers in many nations must be suppressed in order to prevent expressions of fraternity with one another. For instance, oppression is planting its iron heel on the necks of the workers in many lands in order to prevent international organization against war. But, in view of the underlying tendencies of capitalism to world unification, this is not likely to prevail long.

Let it be soon! Help along this consummation by promoting fraternal relations with the labor organizations of the world. For, as capitalism is internationally organized, so also must labor be. Labor can not stand alone, no more than the nation can, in these, the days of international dependence and unification.

(*Industrial Solidarity*, April 22, 1923)

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# WIDE, WIDE WORLD OF SWEATSHOPS

## 2006 SweatFree Communities Conference

BY KENNETH KILLER

At the 2006 International SweatFree Communities Conference in Minneapolis, organizers and workers drove the discussion with descriptions of the incredible obstacles faced by workers struggling to organize. Celeste Taylor and I represented the Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance, joining 140 individuals representing diverse organizations with long-term commitments to workers in the global apparel industry and, in some cases, starkly different approaches to international solidarity work. While collegiate codes of conduct and government sweatfree procurement policies offer some hope, huge steps are needed to support workers struggling to organize.

Yannick Etienne of Batay Ouvriye in Haiti spoke about a number of organizing drives. Factories continue to close in Haiti – without the tax incentives of the Multi Fiber Arrangement, workers in Haiti who make 21 cents an hour cannot compete with workers in China who make 8 cents.

While there have been precedent-setting victories, winning contracts and resolving large grievances, few of the victories are sticking because of unrelenting threat of plant closings and the lack of consistency on the part of international solitary activists needed stop the union busting. Only sustained relationships, a civil rights bridge between “SweatFree Communities” and the people of Haiti, can provide the consistent critical mass required to tip the scales.

There are at least six Gildan Activewear plants in Haiti and despite targeting this company in Honduras and the fact that nearly all of our schools and governments source from Gildan, the anti-sweatshop movement has not been able to provide any union organizing leverage. Gildan remains the number one option for a regional organizing drive in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Barbara Briggs, director of the National Labor Committee, represented members of the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh and Kimi Lee represented the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center Organizer. Both groups have come to understand that traditional union and contract relationships

between garment workers and their employers are not the next step for most organizing campaigns. Both build organizations that involve workers in many different factories and process grievances on a case-by-case basis.

Chinese workers from the Los Angeles Garment Workers Center traveled back to China to connect with sweatshop workers in their home county. Workers in China were shocked to learn that the streets of the USA are not paved with gold. We have to struggle with the fact that there are thousands of worker protests in China every year that we are almost completely disconnected from them. Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior, based in Hong Kong, seems to be a credible developing link.

It was very discouraging to hear some of these tremendous organizers say they think it will take 20 to 30 more years for garment workers to organize labor unions. That means that despite their best efforts and the apparent policy victories of the anti sweatshop movement, the rubber is not hitting the road. We are not effectively using our solidarity to expand the space workers have to organize labor unions on the floor of the global sweatshop.

Jessica Rutter of United Students Against Sweatshops described the new “Designated Supplier Program” that university affiliates of the Workers Rights Consortium are trying to implement. The DSP aims to shift work through designating some licensing agreements into the fist full of factories that have a union or have responded to international pressure to improve working conditions. These factories are no longer able to compete in the market where they struggle against factories next door that pay less. One factory in Haiti where workers had a victory is down to 500 workers from 2,500 before unionizing.

It is unclear how the sweatshop procurement policies being enacted by cities, state and school boards will impact the industry. As we implement disclosure requirements, we have to expect companies to lie about factory conditions. Then we'll begin a process of inspection and verification. Will the result be that factories are barred from bidding on contracts or that we find new ways to support worker organizing in these facilities?

What will change the dynamics are organizing drives that we respond to workers instead of factory monitoring initiated as a result of the policies. It is so important that principled *internationalists* who believe that workers can organize be intimately involved with implementation of these policies.

The Wage Disclosure recently won by activists in the San Francisco sweatshop law is a very hopeful development. Wage Disclosure, more specifically a requirement that they disclose payroll records, gives us something to verify directly with workers on the ground. Wages are a universal language – is the company lying or telling the truth, is this enough money to live on? In the near future we will be able to empower union organizers and international travelers with lists of factories and the payroll records that the companies provide though the anti-sweatshop policies for worker-to-worker verification.

The capacity that anti-sweatshop activists have to work with is still so small, a small portion of garment procurement dollars, a small portion of university licensing agreements. We are still trying to do so much with so little and the rate that we are increasing this capacity is not very impressive.

If we are going to use these tools at all we have to have two tracks: on one track we have to use the tools that we have *agressively* and set new precedents by collaborating with union organizers all over the world and on the other track we have to *radically* increase the total capacity the anti-sweatshop movement has in procurement dollars and licensing agreements. That's why we are targeting the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club and through them all of the major league teams and leagues at the 2006 All Star Game. Notes from the All Star Sweatshop workshop are available on the IU410 section of [www.iwww.org](http://www.iwww.org).

The Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance is pleased to invite anti sweatshop activists from all over to the All Star Game here on July 11 to confront a concentration of Major League Sweatshop bosses with the testimony of workers in Haiti and Bangladesh. We are asking other



### Garment workers protest

BY AMIRUL HAQUE AMIN

As part of International Action Day, the National Garment Workers Federation organized a “Garment Workers & Mass Token Hunger Strike” on 11 April at Central Shaheed Minar in capital city Dhaka. This started at 4 p.m. and was finished at 5:45. This was a working day and the time was also working time but more than a thousand garment workers took part in the program. Seriously injured workers from Spectrum and some family members of the dead also participated. The demand was “Safe workplace for the garment workers in Bangladesh.”

communities to begin leveraging and making demands on their own home teams. It is not that hard – you just demonstrate that baseball fans do care about the people who sew their clothing.

Some people worry that international solidarity actions like this are a distraction from union organizing on the ground in our own communities. SweatFree Baseballers say, “If we could win here without reaching out to workers in China we would have already. We're losing here, we need to concretely engage workers all over the world.” Our collaboration with the United Workers Association of Baltimore, the workers who clean Camden Yards, and other initiatives here during May and June will attempt to demonstrate what international solidarity looks like alongside our struggles to organize at home.

Members of the Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance are grateful for the efforts of Bjorn Claeson and Liana Foxvog of SweatFree Communities. They work hard to build an inclusive movement and create situations where organizers and activists can ask the tough questions of one another.

## Why “Buy American” won’t work

BY KERTES, UNITED WORKERS ASSOCIATION OF BALTIMORE

The UWA is a human rights organization. We seek to secure the human rights of all, including the right to freedom from poverty. Human rights, as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights vision statements, are by their nature, “universal.” This is important. Things universal can transcend traditional barriers, such as barriers between races, between language groups and between national and religious divisions. But human rights are not the UWA's only organizing framework. The UWA is also, at our core, an organization led by the poor themselves. While all are welcome to work with the UWA, priority is placed on developing leaders from the ranks of the poor. And this requires class identity.

This combination of focusing on universal rights for all and building a leadership base of the poor themselves makes it possible for us to tackle some of the most divisive issues related to immigrant rights. This is no small achievement, as poor-on-poor attacks over immigration act as an important division used by the advocates of oppressive immigration policies.

The UWA is an historically African-American organization. Our leadership is currently comprised of English-speaking black and white day laborers. As a human rights organization working to unite the poor across color lines, we are currently working hard to break down our internal language

and cultural barriers. We do this to become a truly multi-racial human rights organization. But becoming such an organization requires more than just translation, multi-lingual outreach and working with immigrant rights allies. We must overcome our own divisive beliefs, such as “America First,” and some of the traditional divisions and cultural tensions that exist within the urban black and urban Latino communities.

Ignoring these differences will not work. But so won't dwelling on them. Instead, we confront the differences by focusing on what the poor have in common. First, the poor share a common opponent and face common struggles. Second, most people share the belief in the universal dignity and sanctity of all persons. Through class identity and human rights values we create a space to talk about why it is just, moral and pragmatic for our historically African-American membership base to work with other low-wage workers, including undocumented immigrants in the U.S. and low-wage workers in the world's poorest countries.

When the UWA started organizing the cleaners at Camden Yards, Baltimore's largest employer of day labor, our opponents' first tactic was to shift from primarily African-American day labor agencies to agencies that primarily hired Latino day laborers. This tactic not only required an immediate expansion of our language resources, but also challenged our members to consider the rights of Latinos as no different (and no less worth fighting for)

than those of other workers.

The bulk of American labor organizing has relied on “us first” organizing. The “us” have been the workers at one factory, or in one trade, or in one industry, or in a single region or nation. Popular expressions of this kind of organizing are “Buy American” and the fight to stop “off-shoring.” Rather than focus on the human rights and working conditions of all workers, labor has worked to keep jobs with those currently hired at union factories in the U.S.

“Buy American” will not work. That's because capital will go, if left on its own, to where profits will be maximized. So long as labor can't move as freely as can capital, products, profits and production, capital will move to where labor is cheapest. This race to the bottom produces unjust wages for everyone, everywhere. Appeals to nationalism won't work to save jobs or to keep wages just. These appeals will only work to divide workers.

For workers to secure just wages and their other economic human rights, including the right to freedom from poverty, workers must start by fighting for the rights of all workers. The fight for workers at a U.S.-based textile factory is no different from the fight for workers at a factory in any other country.

This is true because what happens to workers at one factory, no matter where in the world, can happen to workers at any other factory. And it is also true because all workers are persons. All deserve just wages, to be treated with dignity and to have their

human rights respected.

Pitting workers against workers will only weaken the movement to end poverty. It plays into the hands of those who seek to exploit other human beings by extracting labor for the tiniest amount of payment possible. If we are to secure the human right to freedom from poverty, we must unite all persons behind the just cause based on the inherent dignity of human life. We cannot fight amongst each other, working to hold onto our own small piece of the pie.

The UWA knows that this approach works. It is what allows us to unite with other workers when jobs are shifted from African-American cleaners to Latino cleaners. Since we are all in the same boat, such a shift requires us to reach out to more cultural and language groups, to expand who we directly work with. It forces us to stand with workers once believed to be our opponents, or our competition.

We know it works to organize around shared human rights values because our belief in the inherent worth of all persons is why we consider the recent immigration struggles as being no different from our own struggles. And that's why the mostly U.S.-citizen membership base of the UWA goes to rallies and marches for immigrants, why we speak out to our fellow black and white Baltimoreans on behalf of workers' centers for mostly undocumented Latino immigrants, and why we have made it a priority for our leadership and membership to communicate in both English and Spanish. The only way to end poverty is by working together for the rights of all, without exception.



**Opera workers strike against longer hours**

Striking theater workers are forcing German opera houses to cancel performances or stage them without sets, as stagehands, technicians, mechanics and workshop employees join protests against a longer workweek.

Public employees from hospital staff to street cleaners have been protesting regional governments' plans to increase the working week to 40 hours from 38.5 hours and to reduce or abolish holiday bonus payments.

"We are not the responsible party," says Klaus Zehelein, Intendant of the Stuttgart State Opera and president of Germany's Bühnenverein. "The workers are employed by the state government. They refuse to negotiate, and that isn't fair."

Hans Kraft of the Bavarian branch of trade union Ver.di, says theater workers have no alternative. "If the politicians had their way, outdoor swimming pool workers would strike in winter and snow removal workers would strike in midsummer."

"It is all very well to say that they should work out of love for the art form," says Kraft. "Our members do identify with the theaters where they work very strongly. But ... their main interest is to support their families and maintain at least basic standards of living. Art cannot replace unpaid rent or the future of one's children. It's a matter of survival."



**The origins of May Day**

May Day's origins in the 1886 general strike for the 8-hour day are almost forgotten today. So frightened were the bosses that they framed several of our fellow workers, sentencing the Haymarket Martyrs of Chicago to death. It was that legacy which led the labor movement to commemorate May 1 as International Workers' Day in 1890.

Since then, international solidarity and the struggle for shorter working hours have been inextricable intertwined. But even as our productivity and inventiveness has created the means for abundance for all, the employers have seized this wealth to support an ever-growing caste of parasites, to throw millions of our fellow workers onto the industrial scrap heap and to force the survivors to work ever-longer hours lest we be consigned to the same fate.

The IWW has long been on record for a six-hour or even shorter day. But today, the pressing issue for many workers – in the United States and around the world – is to cut work hours back to 8 (or 10).

This is the result of 100 years of leaving control of industry to the bosses.

# The price of our future

BY TODD JORDAN

*[General Motors and its former subsidiary Delphi, now the U.S.'s largest auto parts maker, have reached an agreement with the United Automobile Workers to offer buyouts and early-retirement packages of \$35,000 or more to all of their 137,000 UAW workers.*

*[Delphi's U.S. operations are in bankruptcy court; its 115,000-worker foreign factories are not. The company is trying to slash its U.S. workforce from 32,000 to 7, 000 workers. Other auto parts companies, several already in bankruptcy court, are expected to follow suit.]*

Enough is enough. We should refuse to accept an offer that will impair the person working next to us and that could eventually endanger our own security in retirement.

The membership as a whole should have been allowed to vote before this "buy-out" agreement was brought to the membership to accept or refuse on an individual basis. We are being denied democracy by our union officials when an agreement is made without our input, especially when it is an agreement vital to our future and seriously undermines our future. Negotiations in dark boardrooms are destroying the United Auto Workers union.

UAW Local 292 officials have been all over the factory trying to push people out the front door. Fear is the driving force for Local 292 leaders and the union bureaucracy as a whole that works with corporations to pit older workers against younger workers to get whatever they need.

We should refuse these buyouts, defend our jobs and fight for our future – not sell out. We can stand together now in solidarity before it is too late for all of us or we can walk away, betraying 70 years of struggle and our futures.

The president of United Auto Workers Local 292 was quoted in the *Indianapolis Star* saying, "There's a very good reason to do this. If the company doesn't survive, none of us has jobs." She has accepted defeat and refuses to fight to save our jobs, our wages, our benefits and our future.

Auto workers around the world deserve a raise, not concessions, not to be pitted against each other and not to be bought off. Millions of dollars have been vested into training and skills for American workers who are now being sold out by an Attrition Agreement that the bureaucratic officials of the UAW

support. Instead of defending these jobs they are working with management to cut them. Meanwhile, our factories are being robbed of investment and our profits sent overseas to build billion-dollar factories so the company can pit us against workers overseas to drive everyone's wages down. Remember their slogan "Buy American"? That has worked real well for the membership, hasn't it? Wrong. It has only destroyed our ability to build solidarity with other workers across the world.

These "buyouts" are simply a way to mitigate membership resistance to concessions and lost jobs. How much is your future worth? Will retirement really mean security for anyone? Not everyone is willing to be bought off and not everyone is eligible to retire. What happens to those left behind?

The UAW has accepted defeat and is negotiating a peace agreement that will further degrade younger workers.

The only way to halt this corporate offensive is through mass direct action. The model must be built in the spirit of the great general strikes and direct action of Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco in 1934, the great sit-down movement in 1936/37 and the great civil rights movement of the 1960s.

This is not an end of an era as the corporate mouthpieces like to claim. We must work to rule in the plants, hold mass demonstrations in the streets, engage in mass occupations of the plants.

These are the roots of the UAW and what the entire labor movement was built on. It was not built by cooperation, selling out or by giving up. Working people should resist and refuse to go back to the poverty of the past. We should fight for what is ours and for what is justly right. <http://futureoftheunion.com>

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# Organizing the education industry

The Pittsburgh Education Workers Industrial Organizing Committee has issued a second issue of their *Education Worker*, a 36-page newsletter. This issue focuses on strikes and other direct action tactics. "Labor peace is what many unions prefer," the introduction notes; "after all, it's polite, safe and professional. ...

"Across the board, the big education unions are very willing to mind the labor peace, preferring to deal with issues through polite and professional labor relations, despite the fact that the entire education industry faces perennial issues such as federal oppression from the NCLB Act; the racist, classist and immoral political priorities that underfund schools in our poorest minority communities; the slashing of liberal arts and fine arts curricula; the corporatization and 'for profit' privatization of all aspects of education...; the hyper-certification racket...; the right-wing assault on academic freedom, tenure and critical pedagogy; and the massive casualization of academic labor in higher education. And still the labor peace continues."

This "peace" does not serve the interests of education workers or of our students, the *Education Worker* notes. "We must advocate for the return of workers' direct action within the industry and a more aggressive use of the education strike."

Other articles discuss the strike wave of the 1960s and 1970s that forced school districts to recognize teachers' unions and won the dramatic improvements in pay and working conditions that are now under attack.

However, the benefits of unionization never reached many education workers – those at the bottom of the education hierarchy, in states that outlaw public sector unions or restrict the right to strike, and the increasingly large contingent labor force. These exclusions have undermined education workers' power as workers fight bargaining unit by bargaining unit against industry-wide forces that are national in scope.

Pennsylvania is one of only nine states that "allow" teachers the right to strike, but under severe restrictions (passed in 1992, after a wave of bitter teachers' strikes) that require advance notice and mandatory arbitration and limit strikes to a couple of weeks. These restrictions have emboldened school districts to demand givebacks on health benefits, increased administrative control, etc. And yet, conservatives are fighting to outlaw strikes (and even the wearing of union buttons) in the state altogether.

Other articles discuss direct action tactics in the industry, and the need to build toward a general strike. Copies are available from PO Box 90315, Pittsburgh PA 15224.

**Hawaii owes subs \$22 million**

A Hawaiian Circuit Court has ruled on behalf of thousands of substitute teachers in Maui. As a result of a class-action lawsuit by substitute David Garner, the state owes these teachers \$22 million dollars in back pay.

When Garner reported the pay discrepancy in January 2002 in accordance with a 1996 law to bring substitute salaries up to the rate of entry-level full-time teachers, the local department of education made an adjustment to the teacher classification system moving all substitutes to a lower pay level. Garner then filed the class-action asking for back pay to the day the 1996 legislation passed.

**Dowling College adjuncts demand job security**

Dowling College adjuncts are asking for the right to reassignment guarantees after reaching sufficient seniority. The 115-member Association of Dowling Adjuncts is confronting administrators at the small, private Suffolk County, NY, college that didn't rehire 79 adjuncts last year, while hiring 90 more at a lower salary. After affiliating with

New York State United Teachers in 2003, the ADA got agreements for office space, meeting space, telephone lines, and computers.

The low pay at Dowling, a meager \$2,100 to \$2,700 for a three credit course, has not gone unchallenged as the ADA has attempted to get an accurate assessment of Dowling's finances. Anticipating an NLRB ruling of unfair labor practices filed for adjunct and union vice president Kathy Levine, who claims that she was not rehired as a result of union activism, the adjunct association has asked for retention rights for all adjuncts.

**Prairie State adjuncts union**

In February, 115 out of 183 adjuncts at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights voted to affiliate with Prairie State Adjunct Instructors United, IEA-NEA. Both credit and non-credit instructors teaching at least three hours are in the bargaining unit. The IEA has been successful in organizing Columbia College, Roosevelt University and, last winter, Chicago City College where the vote came down to 87 for IEA and 63 for IFT.

**San Fran schools seek scabs**

The Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District has voted 4-3 to hire replacement workers in case of a teachers' strike. The scabs won't need substitute teacher credentials, the California Basic Skills Test, or any other licenses to be hired.

Members of the 6,000-strong United Educators of San Francisco held placards against scabs, sang labor songs, and protested while the vote was cast. The union voted to strike at the end of March, and a couple of days later ads appeared on the school district web site for special strike substitutes to be paid twice the rate of regular subs.

Teachers have been working without a contract since July 2004 and had their last raise in 2002. UESF wants a 10 percent raise, the district is offering 7.5 percent. San Francisco teachers are also asking for health and safety improvements.

**NY court blocks privatizing substitute teaching services**

The New York state Supreme Court has ruled that educational employers, such as the Board of Cooperative Educational Services of New York state, can not contract out work with a private company in order to hire substitute teachers. A per diem substitute contract between Erie 2 BOCES, which include upstate New York counties, and Kelly Services was annulled.

The ruling is an important victory in the fight against privatization, keeping educational services out of the hands of profiteering temp agencies, such as Kelly Services. Kelly Educational Staffing got into the substitute teaching service business in 1999, and claims its substitute temp services have been used by hundreds of school districts.

The Southern Adirondack Substitute Teachers Alliance and the Kingston Federation of Substitute Teachers are pressuring school districts to offer salaries and basic benefits that attract qualified workers who will no longer have to be temps.

**No strike at Western Oregon**

The faculty union and administrators seem relieved that a strike was called off and contract terms agreed at Western Oregon University. In March, before the strike threat, WOU president John Minahan maintained the college was having financial difficulties. Now the administration has agreed that raises teachers lost during a statewide salary freeze will be paid. The settlement includes an agreement that should enrollment levels increase, so will salaries.

Western Oregon is one of seven colleges in the Oregon system; 238 full-timers, associates and adjuncts teach 3,917 students.

# A rebellious historian’s challenge

BOOK REVIEW BY LEN WALLACE  
David Roediger, **History Against Misery.** Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., Chicago, 2006, 184 pages, \$17. Available from IWW Literature Department.

*History Against Misery* is not the usual left-wing or radical treatise from the halls of academia. It is a challenging book precisely because it challenges slavish obedience to rationalist thought, everyday logic and so-called “common sense.” David Roediger counts himself amongst those who desire to “create a new common sense.”

He does just that in a series of 38 articles of different proportion and strength on subjects ranging from country music, sports, the practice of the IWW, the role of revolutionary thinkers, activists, poets, artists and events to his subversion of the concept of race and “whiteness.”

Roediger is clearly influenced by, draws upon and acknowledges a Marxist tradition of critical thought which includes Antonio Gramsci, C.L.R. James, W.E.B DuBois and utilises the concept of “miserabilism” first coined by the surrealist Andre Breton. Miserabilism sums up in one word the dull greyness of Statism, the glorification of wage labour and work (as against creative labour), the hypocrisies and mystifications surrounding Religion, Property, Law and Order and how human beings are seduced to produce and reproduce their own misery through the repression of real desires. The result is a partisan spirit that sets it apart from other academic radical studies which, despite initial rhetoric, often end up in the rut of the reformist politics they were meant to criticize.

David Roediger himself is an academic, an historian teaching African Studies at the University of Illinois. He is known for his

work editing the papers of Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass and has written several books including *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day*, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, and *The Wages of Whiteness*.

The articles are laid out in three main sections. The first is a thoughtful and original reconsideration of modern sports, consumerism, art, country music, HipHop. The depth of his analysis and the critique he presents on various aspects of capitalism in our daily lives goes beyond the formalistic and often formulaic approach often given by those who consider themselves part of “the Left.”

Music is not simply entertainment. Country music is not simply the cry of a defeated white working class. It can be also be a barometer of political protest. HipHop can be both subversive and commercial. Major league sports is not simply a commercialised bread and circuses for the masses, it too contains an art and beauty in the work and mind of the player.

The second chapter reviews notable historical and intellectual individuals, writings, music and events often forgotten and perhaps deliberately “disappeared” not only by official history books, mainstream education, but by “the Left” itself. The most extensive is his commentary and analysis of anarchist Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons in Parsons’ meaningful and sophisticated role as activist and revolutionary in the then existing trade union movement. He reintroduces us to Paul Lafargue’s classic biting critique of the bourgeoisie and his table-turning, entertaining Marxist argument in favour of laziness.

The last chapter is a rigorous critique of “whiteness” and how the identification of being “white” has debilitated, divided and

become a dead weight on the working class ideologically masking issues of social class and power. Here he lays bare the poverty of thought in the deliberate mystifications by media, politicians, preachers and academics and in the accepted daily arguments of an uncritical “common sense” from his own students. This is not just a consideration in terms of thought or theory. Roediger reminds us of the active fight to unite all workers and the anti-racist direct actions of the IWW in the Southern states.

Roediger doesn’t have much use for modern “rationalist” thought. Following the dictum of the philosopher Hegel that “The truth is in the whole,” he gives a penetrating look at the intertwining all aspects of life, of individuals, and power to reveal the insanities of capitalism in order to consider those moments of rebellion and subversion against it. This is a work that engages us to rethink our ways of thinking. In a tone and style that is almost conversational Roediger has the reader critically question all aspects of modern capitalism.

Workers, especially young workers, should lay their hands upon this book precisely because the reading of it is a challenge by making one use one’s critical faculties to reveal the possibilities of fundamentally radical thought and action.

### Disunited Brotherhoods

Rank-and-file union carpenter Gregory Butler has published *Disunited Brotherhoods: Race, Racketeering and the Fall of the New York Construction Unions* (\$22.95, www.iUniverse.com). Butler is founder of the Gangbox construction listserv, and a vocal critic of the myopic vision that has long crippled the construction unions.

“The power our unions had at one time could have been used to make this city a better place for working class people,” Butler writes in *Disunited Brotherhoods*.

“Instead, the construction unions wallowed in a pit of nepotism, organized crime and bigotry. This led to the situation construction workers face today, where the industry has finally become integrated – but at the price of deunionization and the low wages, off-the-books employment and horrendous safety conditions that went along with the collapse of the building trades unions.”

### A just minimum wage

Holly Sklar and Paul Sherry, *A Just Minimum Wage: Good for Workers, Business and Our Future.* American Friends Service Committee and National Council of Churches, 2005, 72 pages, \$5 (www.letjusticeroll.org).

This report is part of a religious-led campaign to increase the U.S. minimum wage, which has been losing ground to inflation for many years. Since 1968, its buying power has fallen 41 percent, even as retail profits rose by 159 percent. It would take more than \$9 an hour (instead of the current \$5.15) to match the buying power of 1968’s minimum wage. This condemns millions to dire poverty, and holds down wages for everyone.

Earning \$10,712 a year for full-time work (before taxes) presents workers with choices: if paid under the table so taxes aren’t taken out, there’s just about enough to rent a small apartment with utilities in most cities; after taxes, there’d be about enough for food and clothes and bus fare (perhaps there’s a bridge handy for shelter); or one could panhandle for a few more bucks and use the entire sum to buy health insurance.

The report quotes Ecclesiasticus 34, “The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a murderer.” Sklar and Sherry are more tactful, trying to persuade the bosses that paying higher wages is actually good for them (clearly false) and for the economy as a whole (probably true). The evidence is clear that past increases in the minimum wage have not had the dire effects on employment that capitalist economists predicted. Nor can a low-wage strategy succeed in today’s global economy. The U.S. economy, they argue, is headed toward a cliff, and we urgently need to increase wages in order to shore up our economic foundation.

Since 1997, when the minimum wage was last increased, Congress has raised its pay by \$28,500 a year. But is it reasonable to ask the politicians – so busy cutting taxes on the rich and social programs for the rest of us – to act in behalf of the working poor?

The authors’ conclusion that low wages and poverty are immoral and unChristian seems irrefutable. But one might do better to look to the social upheavals of the 1960s, rather than the consciences of our rulers, to understand why wages were higher in 1968. There is much useful information in this report, but readers will have to look elsewhere for practical solutions.



The patrons of this establishment aren’t picky about the grub. Just hand us a tray with piping hot stew, a dab of garlic-laced salad (“with some tomato, please”), a slice of buttered bread (as long as the butter holds out), a Dixie cupful of water. Lemonade if we’re lucky. Now for a sheltered spot on the street where we can hunker down...

Welcome to the Los Angeles Catholic Worker soup kitchen, jocularly dubbed the Hippie Kitchen. “They don’t waste our time praying over us while we set about hungry.”

At 10:30 sharp the door of the yellow brick building opens. Depending on the season, it’s prime time for 600 to 1,100 hungry men and women when they amble through the hall, tray in hand.

They all wear deep-settled poverty like the sweaty and grimy coats clutching their bodies. The dull and spiritless no employer would hire. The flamboyant, sporting pink and green ribbons in their hair. The sly, with simple tricks. The blind and broken with arms in slings. Alcoholics between sprees. The shamed and defeated elderly hobbling about on crutches or easing themselves along in wheelchairs. The young and clear-eyed temporarily down on their luck. Homeless street denizens shoving bulging plastic bags as they inch along on the chow lines. The one-in-ten women with downcast or brazen eyes. Children’s faces tilted hopefully upward toward the steaming stew.

Old Dan has lost his stocking cap. His wild hair points east and north. Maisie’s had her baby. They now live on a park bench. Elmer has lost a front tooth. Just how, he won’t say. Kate showers the room with cuss words. This early in the month she hates everybody, what with rent due and no money to pay. Pablo’s had an earache for three days. Tom

shuffles in, peevish and barefoot. His roomy has made off with his shoes.

The day is off to its usual start. Watch the answering smiles, the fleeting gleam of intelligence that lights up these dull faces. For one moment in their day they’re persons seen and heard from when they demand a second piece of bread. But what aggrieved torment or headlong impulse may slumber behind that easy smile. A dispute arises over who first laid his hand on the spork canister. A principle is involved: a man’s place in line, his priority and rights. Fist strikes jaw. But experienced Catholic Workers quickly shift the disputants to opposite ends of the room.

Not all days are commonplace on Gladys Street. Jesse sidles to the table where workers are slicing lettuce. Swift and cunning, his fingers snatch a knife. Before the day is over workers are scrubbing blood from the wall.

Panic in the street! Voices clash with the metallic clatter of a city dumpster. Gun-toting police are ordering tattered bags and bedrolls to be disposed of. It’s all in a day’s work for trash disposal units. Grab the bundle. Heave it into the dumpster’s great maw. Press the lever. Snap the huge jaws shut, grinding, crushing, pulverizing a man’s few belongings.

Tragedy strikes. Harry has died in a squalid street brawl over an abused dog. Catholic Workers are stunned. How can you piece together these broken lives with stew and friendly greetings?

But somehow the job of feeding the city’s destitute must go on. So just grab a big spoon to stir the stew, and keep smiling. ...

Those readers who are staunch supporters of the Bush administration will be relieved to note that the Los Angeles Catholic Worker has been declared a terrorist organization.

— Dorice McDaniels



*We Hope to See You Labor Day Weekend !*





## Health care ‘reform’ only a boss could love

Massachusetts’ new universal health care plan has received a lot of praise for its “innovative” approach. But in fact, the plan does little to address the reasons why millions of workers lack access to health care. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney is right when he blasts the legislature for taking “a page out of the Newt Gingrich playbook” by “forcing uninsured workers to purchase health care coverage or face higher taxes and fines.”

Under the plan, which takes effect in July 2007, everyone who files a state income tax return will have to indicate if they have health insurance. (Those too poor to file taxes will presumably escape the law’s purview.) Insurers will also be required to provide the state with lists of their enrollees.

The uninsured will face penalties beginning with losing the ability to claim a personal exemption on their tax return (\$189 a year for an individual, \$378 for a couple). The second year they will be assessed half the annual cost of one of a low-cost health plan -- a fine that would easily top \$1,000.

Workers who can not afford insurance could appeal; the state’s lowest-income workers (for individuals, \$9,800 a year) would get free bare bones coverage, and subsidized plans would be available for many others. Even with those subsidies, many workers will be unable to afford the thousands of dollars a year to purchase insurance and will be at the mercy of state bureaucrats who will review their ability to pay. Workers who win those appeals would not receive coverage.

Massachusetts’ Governor vetoed a provision fining employers who do not offer health insurance \$295 per employee, saying the fee would make the state less competitive. Gov. Romney also vetoed a plan to provide dental benefits to those covered under the state’s Medicaid program.

The state has compared the individual mandate approach to mandatory auto insurance laws, which however only cover those who drive cars.

It seems unlikely that the (now abandoned) threat of a \$295 fine would cause any employer to offer health insurance. Nor will many workers who have held off buying insurance because they needed the money for Massachusetts’ sky high rents or food for their children suddenly reorder their priorities. Instead, the law seems likely to increase taxes on the state’s poorest workers while leaving hundreds of thousands without access to health care.

### Labor fakers’ luxuries

U.S. Labor Department disclosure forms show some union officials show as little regard for their members’ dues as corporate fat cats do for the social wealth in their hands.

The AFL-CIO spent nearly \$250,000 for its 50-member executive council meeting in 2004 at Chicago’s Drake Hotel. (This year they met at San Diego’s posh Hotel del Coronado, behind Carpenters’ picket lines.)

Indiana-based Boilermakers Lodge 374 spent more than \$10,000 at Wal-Mart in the most recent year reported, while Iron Workers Local 40 in New York City gave its retiring president a \$52,000 Cadillac. One local spent \$10,000 on a “golf outing,” another invested \$670,000 in a bingo parlor.

The reports have been seized upon by the misnamed Center for Union Facts, established earlier this year to mount a well-financed assault against the labor movement. And one would of course find much worse extravagances if the bosses were required to report their expenditures in the same level of detail imposed upon unions.

Nonetheless, union leaders who insist on leading the lifestyles of their corporate counterparts are not only stealing from the rank-and-file workers who are entitled to have their dues money spent only on legitimate and necessary union business, and at the same time handing the bosses a club with which to attack us.

## Dubai workers take revolt to the beaches

Immigrant construction workers in Dubai are holding illegal union meetings to organize protests against low wages, unsafe conditions, poor housing, and pay checks that are sometimes months late in arriving.

Dubai is the largest construction site in the Middle East, home to luxurious hotels and three of the largest shopping malls on the planet. The building frenzy is supported by an increasingly disgruntled immigrant labor force.

A recent report by Human Rights Watch found that bleak living conditions, long working hours and unacceptably low pay had led to rising suicide rates among immigrant workers in the emirates. In 2005, 80 Indian residents took their lives, and an estimated

880 foreign workers died in accidents on UAE construction sites.

In recent months, the UAE's vast population of immigrant workers have staged sporadic strikes. Thousands of unpaid construction workers rioted at the construction site for the Burj Dubai Tower, which by 2008 will become the world's tallest building.

In a sympathy strike a day later, thousands of labourers working at Dubai International Airport laid down their tools.

The authorities insist that workers' complaints are overblown. And so workers are planning to take their protests to the malls and beaches, confronting Dubai's tourists with the invisible workers who fuel the emirate's boom.



means more advantages to employers to the detriment of workers' rights.

On May Day the CNT will again be in the streets, this time with demonstrations all over the country, to denounce once more every legal manoeuvre to undermine workers' rights solely in order to increase profits.

## Spain: Thousands march against labor reforms

As millions fight new employment laws in France, 5,000 workers marched in Madrid April 1 against proposed labour reforms. The Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT, organized the demonstration, which drew workers from all over the country.

The proposed employment law allows for the reduction in redundancy payments, makes mass sackings easier and increases the power of temp agencies – who are currently trying to enter sectors such as public administration and construction. They were opposed most of all because every new reform

## Korean strikes fight labor ‘reform’

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions launched a five-day rotating general strike April 10 in an effort to block passage of legislation on temporary workers. The country's largest umbrella labor group, representing more than 800,000 workers, staged massive rallies across the country to launch a series of short strikes.

“We have decided to stage the full-fledged strike this week to pressure the Assembly not to pass the bill on temporary workers, which would only increase the number of temporary

workers and worsen their working conditions,” said Cho Joon-ho, KCTU head.

The labor federation has been demanding the government scrap the temporary workers' bill and draw up a new one that guarantees workers complete job security, regardless of their period of employment.

Current law requires companies to hire non-regular workers on regular terms after two years of continuous employment. Employers can dismiss workers if their employment periods are less than two years.

## Hundreds arrested in Nepal’s general strike for democracy

Hundreds of unionists have been arrested in Nepal, and many more injured, as troops sought to break a nationwide general strike demanding the restoration of democracy. On April 15, the tenth day of the strike called by the country's three main union federations and all major political parties, GEFONT executive committee member Danish Kumar Rai and 30 other unionists were arrested and placed under 90-day detention orders.

Factories and enterprises across Nepal had been closed since the general strike began April 6. Many government workers joined the strike despite a royal decree imposing the essential services act on all public employees.

Brutal attacks against unions began when strike plans were announced April 4. In addition to mass arrests, police have opened fire on strikers causing many casualties.

GEFONT Secretary General Binod Shrestha issued a statement strongly condemning police brutality and insisting that the union would continue the general strike until the royal regime was brought down.

## Austrian union bank scandal

Austrian Labor Federation head Fritz Verzetnitsch has resigned from his position and from parliament following exposure of his role in covering up €1.2 billion in losses at the union-owned Bank Fuer Arbeit und Wirtschaft AG. The union federation now says it will sell the bank.

Austrian authorities have approved an arrest warrant for Phillip Bennett, head of bankrupt New York commodities brokerage Refco Inc., who borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars to cover speculative losses. Other losses came through currency speculation. Verzetnitsch allowed the bank to draw on the union's strike fund to cover its losses.



## Support Mercadona workers in struggle for union rights

*The IWW’s International Solidarity Commission issued the following resolutions in solidarity with Spanish CNT-AIT members and members of the French CNT fighting global outsourcing:*

The IWW stands in solidarity with the workers at Mercadona who are demanding that three militants fired from their jobs be rehired. The workers at Mercadona demand that their rights to affiliate with the union of their choice be respected, and we join them in this demand. The IWW is committed to a grass-roots resistance to corporate autocracy, and we will work with others to build a movement that can defeat the corporations and construct a new world based on cooperation instead of cutthroat competition.

## Colombia: DAS intelligence agency tied to death squads

Human Rights Watch has blasted Colombian President Álvaro Uribe for attacking the news media for reporting allegations of criminal activity in a Colombian intelligence agency. “Uribe’s aggressive response raises suspicion about whether he actually wants the truth known,” said José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch.

Colombian media have extensively reported allegations of paramilitary infiltration of the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, targeted killings of labor union leaders and academics, and fraud in the 2002 presidential elections. The charges were made by a former senior official at the DAS, Rafael García, who is under investigation for allegedly laundering money and other crimes.

According to García’s statements to prosecutors and journalists, for three years the DAS worked in close contact with several paramilitary groups, particularly the “Northern Block” led by paramilitary commander “Jorge 40.” He claims that these links were established by Jorge Noguera, then director of the DAS and currently the Colombian Consul in Milan.

García says that the DAS provided the paramilitaries with lists of labor union leaders and academics, many of whom were subsequently threatened or killed. García also said that the DAS collaborated with paramilitaries in a plot to assassinate several Venezuelan leaders, including President Hugo Chavez and a prosecutor, Danilo Anderson. More than 100 alleged paramilitaries were arrested near the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, and a few months later, Anderson was killed.

Noguera has denied the allegations, but has admitted to having met with paramilitary commander Jorge 40 “for institutional reasons.” Uribe, too, has admitted that he twice met paramilitary commander Salvatore Mancuso, who has been convicted of human rights abuses and is wanted for extradition to the United States for drug-trafficking.

Noguera resigned as head of the DAS as an investigation into corruption was launched, and was appointed consul to Italy.

## IT unionists in cyber protest

An IT labor union affiliated to the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions said its members joined efforts to paralyze the home pages of the U.S. Department of Defense, the White House and President George Bush by sending a flood of e-mails at 6 p.m. on April 12.

The union said it took the action to protest negotiations for a free trade agreement between Korea and the U.S., adding, “In this cyber battle, a minimum of 10,000 individuals will participate.” The e-mail sent to Bush blasts the U.S.’s “lopsided” demands, and says that despite government policy “the majority

## Solidarity with CNT-F strikers at Besins Laboratories.

The IWW stands in solidarity with the workers of the Besins Laboratories (who have been on strike for two months, ed.). We demand that Besins drop its plans to cut its French workforce in half and to shift these jobs to Belgium.

We live in an era when multinational corporations continually shift work to other countries looking for tax loopholes, cheap labor and lax environmental controls. The IWW is committed to a grass-roots resistance to these corporate maneuvers...

*The ISC has also written the governments of Iran and Nepal protesting brutal assaults on workers exercising their right to strike, and is meeting with Mexican unionists to discuss prospects for joint activities.*

of Koreans are resisting the Americanization of Korea in the name of globalization.”

## Bolivia: army attacks strikers

Bolivian military and police forces have dislodged strikers who were occupying the country's four main airports, aiming to break an airline workers' strike. Workers from the country's main airline, Lloyd Aereo Boliviano (LAB), are demanding its re-nationalisation and the removal of the company's president.

Recently elected “socialist” president Evo Morales has rejected the demands, and instead of negotiating is turning to the army to break the strike even as he claims to sympathize with the workers.

## Pickets won’t face cannon

BY WORKERS ONLINE

New police water cannons won't be aimed at striking workers, thanks to a Unions NSW - Police Association agreement. The New South Wales Police Association Executive has endorsed the use of the water cannon for incidents of public disorder but not in cases that involve union protests.

The Australian province is spending \$700,000 to buy a water cannon, to be used by the public order and riot squad.

## Swedish unionists want political independence

A new survey finds that most LO members oppose the union's financial support to the ruling Social Democrats. The LO gave the party 20 million kronor last year, and also spends union funds on advertising supporting the party. The survey conducted by Sveriges Television found that only 24 percent of workers were in favor of the subsidy.

## French general strike...

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law by a handful of parliamentarians, who, as is well known, have no intention of stopping the process of precarization, obsessed by their desire to reinforce capitalist exploitation. And this contempt is evident in the only concrete answer they have given young people: hundreds of arrests, hundreds of cases of police custody, prison sentences and police violence. We denounce all of it. ...

“Let the prime minister and all governments know that the legitimacy of the workers is not just rhetoric! That the means of production are in our hands. That trains, schools, food, buildings, books, and everything that makes these ministers' days, is not the result of a mouse click but the fruit of the labour of millions of workers. It seems that the prime minister, from the dizzy heights of his ivory tower, has forgotten this.

“It is up to us to remind him – by bringing the country to a halt!

“No one else does our work for us, so let no one else make our decisions for us!”