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MASS FIRINGS IN NYC

NYC's food warehouse workers unionize Bosses retaliate

by Diane Krauthamer

New York City is home to arguably the most vibrant and dynamic urban economy in the world. Consumption is the basis of this ever-expanding market, and the local restaurant industry shines for its outstanding diversity and culinary expertise. But for every restaurant and every shop there is an unsung yet indisputable backbone—the workers who make sure ingredients reach those restaurants and their staff. Behind the closed doors of the wholesale and distribution warehouses of Brooklyn and Queens' industrial areas, these essential workers suffer under sweatshop-like conditions, pulling shifts that begin before dawn and end well after dusk for less than minimum wage. Meanwhile, bosses continue to push the envelope of exploitation by taking advantage of these immigrant workers' lack of familiarity with United States labor laws through continuous attempts to crush any efforts they make to better their conditions on the shop floor.

Now, workers are taking a stand against corrupt bosses and detrimental conditions, fighting back with the Food and Allied Workers Union of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), I.U. 460, as a wave of union organizing spreads throughout these warehouses.

Unionizing for a better life

There are currently five companies where workers initiated union-

izing efforts: Amersino Marketing Group, Sunrise Plus Corp. (formerly EZ-Supply Corp.), Handyfat Trading, Inc., Giant Big Apple Beer Ltd. and Top City Produce.

Before unionizing, Amersino employees in Queens and Brooklyn often worked in excess of 65 hours a week and received \$300 to \$350 for their labor, sometimes even less. Just down the road at Sunrise Plus, workers complained about long hours with no overtime pay, which amounted to less than minimum wage. Top City workers consistently pulled 72-hour weeks with no overtime and no benefits. At both Handyfat and Giant Big Apple Beer, employers subjected their workers to similar, systematic minimum wage and overtime abuses.

Fed up with mistreatment, the workers found allies in the community and in the workforce to help them launch a campaign to reassert their basic rights.

In June 2005, Amersino employees filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) over the company's wage and hour violations. In the following months, they had to deal with continuous abuse from their boss, owner Yu Q "Henry" Wang, while the DOL dragged its heels on the complaint. But with the help of the Brooklyn-based community center Make the Road by Walking (Se Hace el Camino al Andar), they retained a private lawyer to file new charges in federal court. On March 20, 2006, approximately

20 workers joined the IWW. With full union backing, they were in for the long haul.

Handyfats workers banded together and won a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election on Jan. 17, 2006 to join the IWW. They drafted a contract—the union's first non-majority contract in the industry—outlining basic wage and overtime stipulations as well as a grievance procedure, which owner Dennis Ho agreed to.

After workers at Sunrise Plus also joined with the IWW in February 2006, they put pressure on the company to meet at the negotiating table. For months, the IWW brought more and more heat onto the company through pickets and increased union presence, but owner Lester Wen refused to bargain in good faith. In response, the union strategically appealed to restaurant customers of Sunrise

Plus throughout the area to purchase their supplies through other wholesale companies.

On December 18, 2006, IWW members from Handyfat, Sunrise Plus and Starbucks, along with the newly-resurrected Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), joined Top City workers in a picket to demand that the boss recognize the union and agree to pay minimum wage. The boss agreed to pay back wages and to engage in

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1 in 5 Fired for Organizing Unions

If you've recently been fired for organizing on the job you're in good company, according to a study by Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

The report, "Dropping the Ax: Illegal Firings During Union Election Campaigns", found that 1 in 5 union organizers and activists can expect to be fired because of their organizing efforts, a sharp increase over the past few years.

"Aggressive actions by employers -- often including illegal firings -- have significantly undermined the ability of U.S. workers to unionize their workplaces," said John Schmitt,

CEPR senior economist and lead author of the report.

"With the legal penalties for such actions being so slight, employers can break the law to head-off organizing efforts and face almost no real repercussions."

The report also finds that you have a 1 in 53 chance of being fired just for being pro-union, up from 1 in 87 at the end of the '90s and approaching the record level set in the infamously anti-union decade of the '80s. "The number of successful union elections have significantly declined, partly as a result of the increase in illegal firings."

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Industrial Worker Raises Workers' Voices Time to end the silence of the bosses' media

Capitalists see enemies everywhere.

The government is choking them with regulations and taxes. Small operators are hollowing out big operators. Big shops are killing small shops. CEO bonuses are ripping off shareholders for no good results. Multinationals are destroying local producers. Shareholders are forcing companies to fire workers for bigger dividends. Financiers destabilize nations with a phone call.

Onward goes the circle. Everyone is a competitor. A thief. A spy. In short, everyone is a capitalist searching for the niche that might make them rich. This view is what readers get, just from reading the business media.

The absence of the worker from the business media is no coincidence. The struggles of ordinary people are no match for the 'celebrity' culture of today's global capitalism. More importantly for the advertising managers of the business media, the story of workers' struggle for economic and social justice don't sell products. They inspire hope and resistance.

The Industrial Worker is a newspaper that wants to tell working people's stories and it has told them in 1,692 editions since its founding. Our newspaper is a way of telling the world that the Wobblies are still challenging the big lie - that capitalism is the best way to organize the economy and bring prosperity to the world. We know different.

The IWW holds Organization, Education and Emancipation as our watchwords. For the part of the Industrial Worker, we know our goals depend on Participation, Cooperation and Creation.

As your new co-editors, we are taking on this responsibility with a call for IWWs and our supporters to participate, debate and celebrate the story of the fighting working class across the world. We will be changing the newspaper poco a poco - little by little - and evolving a new look and new content over the next six months. We want your contributions and letters so we can tell the stories of working people from around the world.

That's our challenge to our readers - join us in building a newspaper that expresses the vision of the One Big Union.



Fellow Workers,

I think it would be great if the labor movement had a cable TV network. It could counter the non-labor networks, and would spread labor news and the labor viewpoint to people who would not read about that news. The same would hold for labor history.

In Solidarity,

Raymond Solomon
Editor, Free Voices

Letters Welcome!

Raise issues and debate with your Fellow Workers or just let us know how we're doing.

Send us your letters to iw@iww.org with "Letter" in the subject or mail it to:

Industrial Worker, POB 13476,
Philadelphia PA 19101 USA

in solidarity, Peter Moore & Mike Pesa

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2006 Year of Victory, Courage for SBU

By Daniel Gross

Despite the ferocious union-busting campaign waged by Starbucks, 2006 was an incredible year for IWW baristas and their supporters. Building on multiple victories this past year, the IWW Starbucks Workers Union (SWU) is poised to continue using innovative organizing strategies and exerting shop-floor power in what will be an exciting 2007.

The most gratifying aspect of 2006's accomplishments is the staggering number of Wobblies and supporters from around the world who were active participants in the campaign. For example, the May 17 Day of Action for Starbucks Workers —commemorating the founding of the SWU— saw IWW members at Starbucks stores in 20 cities and four countries reaching out to baristas and protesting for the right to join a union.

Wage Increases

This past Fall, after protracted pressure from the IWW, Starbucks issued yet another nationwide wage increase. While the combination of precarious hours and a still-low wage leaves many baristas in poverty, it's gratifying that more money is ending up in workers' pockets because of the IWW campaign. Indeed, many New York City baristas have seen an unprecedented wage gain of almost 25% in just over two and a half years of Wobbly organizing.

Jobs Won Back

This year also saw a major legal victory for Starbucks baristas around the United States. In the first case filed at the National Labor Relations Board by Starbucks baristas, the coffee giant entered a settlement agreement with the government over massive union-busting against the SWU. The coffee giant had to reinstate two IWW baristas who had been illegally discharged for union activity. Starbucks' blatantly unlawful national policies against wearing union pins and sharing written union information on company property were struck down. The company further agreed to refrain from spying on union activists, bribing workers, and much more.

Healthier Workplaces

New York City baristas also saw management improve sanitation and structural deficiencies in stores to address rat and insect infestation. After Starbucks failed to heed multiple demands from the Union to prevent infestation, IWW baristas assembled video and photographic evidence of the critters and made them available to the public. Although the Occupational Safety & Health Administration predictably did nothing, the resulting media frenzy from the SWU's press conference reverberated around

the world. Baristas were gratified to see District Managers on their hands and knees scrubbing the floor. The power of workers articulating their own independent voice on the job, in the community, and in the wider public arena is tremendous.

Fighting Religious Prejudice

One of the most meaningful victories of the year involved religious discrimination. Suley Ayala, a practicing Wiccan, worked for years at Starbucks wearing a Pentagram without incident. Shortly after she joined the union, management began to harass her about wearing it even though she made it clear that the symbol had deep religious significance to her. Starbucks began sending Suley home without pay for refusing to take off the necklace. The IWW went to work protesting and filing legal charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. But the victory blow came on the shop floor. As Suley was in the process of being kicked out of work for wearing the Pentagram, fellow IWW barista Tomer Malchi defiantly put the Pentagram on himself. Though he was kicked out with Suley that day, the solidarity shown broke Starbucks' will on the issue. The company paid Suley for the hours she missed and didn't send her home again.

Spilling the Fat

The SWU became concerned in 2006 as several members began to complain about weight gain which they suspected was a result of consuming Starbucks products on the job. Along with the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the Union examined the nutritional content of Starbucks products.

Both groups were shocked. A large number of Starbucks products contained an extraordinary amount of calories, sugar, and fat— including extremely harmful trans fats. Trans fats are associated with obesity and related ailments including heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States. The union, in association with CSPI, embarked on a strategic communications effort in an attempt to improve Starbucks' nutrition practices. The result was a global media phenomenon with outlets including CNN and Reuters carrying damning information about the artery clogging items on Starbucks' menu. Just over six months after this effort, Starbucks announced that it was removing all trans fats from half of its U.S. stores and from the remaining half by the end of 2007.

Bean to Cup!

This year also launched the Justice from Bean to Cup initiative. Bean to Cup seeks to link baristas and coffee farmers across the Starbucks supply chain to achieve dignity on the job. Coffee farmers in the Global South are living in brutal poverty selling their product to a profitable Starbucks. The glowing rhetoric Starbucks uses to describe its coffee purchasing practices is nothing but a bunch of hot air. By uniting across borders, workers increased their ability to confront global Capital.

Solidarity poured in from around the world this year. Working people gave up precious family time over the Thanksgiving weekend to condemn the retaliatory firings of IWW baristas. The list of groups who took a stand in 2006 with the Wobbly baristas is too numerous to list here. Check out www.StarbucksUnion.org for the moving and truly global solidarity offered by these groups.

Chicago SBU

In my view, the most significant development for the campaign in 2006 was the expansion of the union to a second city, Chicago. The baristas there worked hard building a strong shop-floor committee and despite extensive surveillance from management they executed a successful going public action.

The expansion outside of New York demonstrated the scalability of solidarity unionism. Avoiding

Continued on p. 9

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 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223, USA.

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.

- o I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- o I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- o I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Fifth Firing Sparks Creative Protests

Boston

By Justin Kelley

On an unusually warm January Saturday, ten wobblies and supporters held a spirited and lively informational solidarity picket at the Huntington Ave Starbucks in Boston.

We gathered early to make fair trade organic coffee to serve for free (drawing attention to the exploitation of Ethiopian and other farmers by Starbucks) outside the store, with a jar to collect tips for the fellow workers in the store.

A wobbly delegation of two fellow workers went into the store before the picket to briefly talk to the baristas, discussing the gains made by Starbucks workers at other stores after organizing with the IWW.

We handed out leaflets to the workers and informed them that the picket wasn't directed against them but rather against the company because of its union busting practices.

What's outrageous? Starbucks Wages! What's Disgusting? Union Busting!

The baristas were intrigued but rather busy.

Brandishing signs and a red IWW flag, an energetic picket took place with many flyers given out to passersby and customers alike.

We sang "Dump the Bosses off your backs" and "Solidarity Forever" and greeted the manager with chants of "What's outrageous? Starbucks Wages! What's Disgusting? Union Busting!"

We talked with a few off-duty baristas and many folks who said they know some of the workers and would pass along information about the union to them.

As part of the Bean to Cup campaign, we were handing out flyers about the bogus "fair trade" policies of Starbucks. We had an interesting conversation with an Ethiopian immigrant, which ended with his promise to tell his daughter still in Ethiopia about the struggle of the farmers and the workers in Starbucks stores as well.

Efforts continue to reach out to baristas throughout Massachusetts.

Pittsburgh



By The Pittsburgh Union Observer

You could hear them before you saw them. About a dozen IWW members and Friends of Labor were chanting, "Hey Hey! Ho Ho! Union Busting's Got to Go!" The sounds echoed off the glassy skyscrapers surrounding PPG Plaza in downtown Pittsburgh as the line of protesters turned the corner and emerged onto the plaza with a thunderous roar. Hundreds of local Pittsburghers and holiday tourists got the message loud and clear: Starbucks, Stop Union-Busting. Stop Paying Poverty Wages. Stop Exploiting Workers. For many, it was the first time they'd heard about the IWW Starbucks Union movement or Starbucks' dark side.

"It's amazing how many Starbucks customers don't know what it's like to work at Starbucks," said Ken Miller, an IWW member and former Starbucks worker.

"Once we explain the hardships of employees, people are sympathetic and supportive of unionization. I've signed up many people as Friends of Labor. That's a good sign for workers. If the company won't pay attention to their own employees, we can always count on the customers and the public." Friends of Labor supporters vow to strike against the corporate boss as consumers until it stops its anti-union practices. It didn't take long before several Friends joined the IWW.

Managers and employees paid close attention to the protesters. Managers were seen frantically making phone calls, conferring with each other, and even contacting the local police in Squirrel Hill and Bloomfield. Union

sources familiar with the local Starbucks structure noted the presence of high-level management—something uncommon on weekends. As for the workers, some baristas came out on the street which was a chance for activists to talk openly and honestly about the union. Managers kept a watchful eye on these curious workers.

"Right here in Pittsburgh we've witnessed Starbucks' dubious and heavy-handed measures to keep the union out of the workplace," said IWW organizer Kevin Farkas. "When the union is around, you can see the way managers hyper-supervise employees and vigilantly guard against conversations about the union. Believe it or not, a Starbucks manager once demanded that I—a paying customer—leave a store after I mentioned the union to another customer."

Determined not to be thrown out again without a fight, Farkas and the IWW serenaded fellow workers and customers with a resounding rendition of Ralph Chaplin's "Solidarity Forever". On this day the union sang a new verse written specifically for coffee industry workers: "It is we who pick the coffee, ship it here and roast it brown. Then we brew it and we froth it up for folks to drink it down. Instead of bloating profits, lift baristas in our town. For the Union makes us strong."

In another counter-tactic, the IWW co-opted Starbucks' stunt of appeasing the public and protesters with trays of coffee and cake. The IWW placed the goodies onto the union's own tray lined with a message that read, "Starbucks Union-Busts."

Leicester UK

Emma Chung, Steve Vallance, Rob Blow

Two days before Christmas, Starbucks Baristas in two busy city-centre coffee shops received surprise gifts from fellow workers of the newly formed Leicestershire branch of the IWW in Central England.

Following an inspiring film-night showing of 'Together We Win – The Fight to Organize Starbucks' about the Starbucks Union in New York, members of the branch agreed that we should give copies of the film as Christmas presents to Baristas in the city. Filmmaker Diane Krauthamer gave permission to the branch to copy and distribute the film in this way.

As 'grateful customers', we visited the two locations in the centre of Leicester on a busy afternoon and distributed the beautifully wrapped gifts to 16 flabbergasted Starbucks workers as a "thank you for all the great coffee!"

We were poised to leave the first shop, which was packed with customers, when one of the Head Baristas shouted over for us to come to the counter.

To our astonishment and delight, the Baristas gave us all envelopes containing a handwritten Christmas card from 'Kirsty the Manager' and a voucher for a free coffee!

Back outside, we laughed that the manager had given us Starbucks vouchers without realising what was in the packages!

We promptly visited the next Starbucks, exchanging our Christmas coupons for a celebratory 'Doppio espresso' before delivering the rest of the gifts.

This was the latest step in our attempts to contact coffee shop workers in the UK, which has also included producing Baristas United newsletters and setting up the website www.baristasunited.org.uk, as a sister campaign to the Starbucks Workers' Union in the US.

By using innovative ways to contact workers in this sector, we hope to learn how to better organize retail and food-service workers in the future.

We hope retail workers who aren't organized will be inspired by the IWW's direct solidarity and democratic activity than the bureaucracy of traditional unions.

Organize with the IWW!

Spanish speakers welcome and needed.

Contact ghq@iww.org

Interested in joining the campaign?

Want to learn more?

Visit www.starbucksunion.org.

Contact Pittsburgh IWW:

PghStarbucksUnion@yahoo.com

Workers Call for Hornblower Boycott

Mike Pesa Interviews
X344543 and Red Gypsy

Boat workers in the San Francisco Bay Area, including several IWWs, are struggling against the non-union Hornblower corporation and its subsidiary, Alcatraz Cruises, which recently took over the lucrative ferry service that shuttles tourists to Alcatraz Island. Hornblower laid off 55 workers organized under the Inland Boatmen's Union (IBU—an affiliate of the militant International Longshore Workers Union) and the Masters Mates and Pilots (MMP) whom Hornblower has refused to hire despite their years of experience.

Union members vowed not to go down without a fight and are putting the heat on Hornblower and its politically connected president, Terry McRae. The *Industrial Worker* talked to two IWW members who belong to the IBU and are personally affected. They asked to be identified as X344543 and Red Gypsy. What follows is a transcript of their December 12 interview:

IW: Tell us about the history of the Alcatraz ferry service.

Red Gypsy: They made Alcatraz a National Park and a tourist destination in 1973. That was really brought about in large part by IBU deckhands who saw the potential for it to be a key tourist attraction. Initially [the ferry service was run by] the Red and White Fleet. At some point it was taken over by Blue and Gold Fleet.

X344543: Blue and Gold was represented by the MMP while Red and White was represented by IBU. After Blue and Gold took over the ferry service the MMP and the IBU were both working there. A New Red and White was created.

IW: And Hornblower?

X344543: Hornblower is a nonunion company run by Terry McRae, an anti-union fundamentalist. They started in Berkeley and as they grew they took over more and more operations. There were some feeble attempts to organize them...but nothing really came of it... They just gobbled up more and more charter business.

IW: How did Hornblower win the contract to take over the ferry service?

X344543: Through the contract bid in 2002-03. [Every 10 years the National Park Service (NPS) opens up its contracted services to bidders.] There were only a few bidders: Red and White, Aramark (they dropped out very quickly), Blue and Gold and Hornblower. Blue and Gold has the equipment, the experience, they've won awards for being environmentally conscious (although they could do a lot more). Red and White also has a lot of experi-



ence but not as much financial resources. Hornblower is from far away and has no experience with this kind of operation. They do charters. What they do have is this reputation for being a "Disneyland" kind of service—supposedly their workers are more likely to have a "Leave it to Beaver" type image.

IW: If Hornblower was less qualified than they other bidders, why were they awarded the contract?

X344543: It is my opinion that the Bush Administration and the Bush appointed NPS are incredibly hostile to labor unions... Bush has been gunning for the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU) since 2002 when the Pacific Maritime Association (a bosses association) locked out ILWU during a very contentious contract fight. Bush ruled that the lockout was an illegal strike against the PMA. That's like declaring a murder victim a murderer. He threatened to use the Taft-Hartley Act against them. In 2003 when the Iraq War started, a community picket line was set up in the port of Oakland and the ILWU refused to cross it. Oakland Police and the California Anti-Terrorism Information Center declared it a terrorist act and shot at the picketers. The NPS had a chance to undermine the ILWU and MMP and so they took it. My contention is that it was their plan from the get go. They claim they're in financial trouble. Of course it's all horseshit because these parks managed themselves just fine before humans came along. This was a fixed deal from the get go. In 2005 the contract was awarded to Hornblower.

IW: How did the union respond?

X344543: The union's response was to hold a press conference and decry the Bush Administration (rightly so) and engage in a legal strategy to block the awarding to Hornblower and argue that it

was illegal and should have been awarded to Blue and Gold. Blue and Gold filed their own lawsuit saying the contract was unfair. The union argued that allowing Hornblower to bid and take \$200,000 a year less than Blue and Gold had in labor costs is a violation of the Services Contracts Act... Also, local residents in San Francisco filed a lawsuit against Hornblower saying they could not operate with their proposed budget and serve 1.5 million people a year. They held rallies that were largely symbolic and lobbied local politicians like Nancy Pelosi and our state senators to block the Park Service and hold up the deal as much as possible. We attempted to get everyone who currently had jobs to apply to Hornblower in the hopes that we could get enough people hired that they would be required to recognize the union.

IW: What was the outcome?

X344543: Blue and Gold's lawsuit dismissed but union's went forward. Later the NLRB ruled against it. The Telegraph Hill Neighbors Association lawsuit was dismissed because Hornblower had somehow obtained a permit to operate Pier 31 and 33 for 5 million passengers.

In Sept 2006 they hired only a handful of people that had worked for Blue and Gold--some of the people who had least experience and mostly people whose commitment to the union was questionable. We filed a lawsuit before the NLRB arguing that Hornblower discriminated against members of the union. Meanwhile Hornblower filed a secondary boycott complaint against us [arguing that the IBU should only have allowed to boycott their subsidiary Alcatraz Cruises.] But the Hornblower logo appears in six places there!

We found out just this week that they dismissed all charges [the ones the union filed and the ones Hornblower filed]... Myself and 54

others are out of work. We contacted [local elected officials]. We hold rallies and give speeches. We hold pickets from 8:30 to 10:30 AM on weekdays and 10 AM to 12 noon weekends, trying to turn customers away...

IW: What strategies are being employed on the rank and file level?

X344543: We launched a website: alcatrazunion.com. It's designed to look just like the Alcatraz Cruises website and have NPS colors. We hoped it would come up in Google searches when people were trying to book a trip and they'd see there's a boycott. It discourages people from buying tickets.

We're talking to union hotel workers and asking them not to refer people to Alcatraz because of the boycott. There is talk of expanding picketing to take place the whole time Hornblower is open. We're getting other unions involved in picketing but it's difficult because of their hiring hall schedules. We go where there are cable cars. We picket Terry McRae's house. We've attempted arrest situations but it hasn't slowed down the port. We try to turn truckers away. We're also working on legal stuff around permits and we're exposing McRae's PR façade...

We should follow the example of Berkeley Honda workers. They hurt the company's business enough to make them realize it wasn't in their interest to fight the union. That's the model we need to be following now. And that's the movement that myself and several other militants have been trying to build.

IW: What can folks do to show their support?

Red Gypsy: I spent 3 hours on the phone one day trying to get wobblers to come to a picket. I'm very grateful to those who have come to the pickets since Decem-

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Continued from p.1

Mass Firings in NYC

further discussion, to avert a pending second strike scheduled for the next day.

Giant Big Apple Beer employees filed a wage and hour complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor in 2006. The DOL again failed to act while the company continued to violate state and federal wage laws. Workers consulted NYC labor attorney Stuart Lichten, who represented members of the Starbucks Workers Union in last year's NLRB settlement, and on December 26, 2006, they filed a class action lawsuit against the company on behalf of all present and former employees.

The bosses retaliate

With the situation heating up at other shops, Amersino owner Henry Wang illegally withheld hundreds of thousands of dollars in wages from warehouse workers and responded to their unionizing efforts with threats and firings.

On March 20, 2006, union workers confronted Wang, prompting him to concede to their demands by reinstating two fired workers and agreeing to give them a fair wage and decent hours. Over the following days, however, he fired two more workers and refused to talk to IWW representatives. Workers marched on the plant again on March 25, and Wang, realizing that his employees were threatening to strike, reinstated two fired workers and agreed to start paying the minimum wage. Yet throughout April, he threatened to fire more union workers, close the warehouse, and even bribed employees to vote against the union in the coming NLRB election. Wang then brought in outside managers and staff from other facilities to vote in the NLRB election against the IWW on April

28, and challenged the votes of union supporters by claiming they did not work at Amersino.

The next day, two union leaders were suspended. No reason was given. Workers walked out in solidarity with suspended union members, declaring that they would not return until the two returned. Wang immediately brought in scabs, and all union workers were locked out. A May Day picket followed, and by May 2, the workers returned, although the five who were fired were not allowed back.

At Sunrise Plus in late November 2006, owner Lester Wen met workers at the negotiating table and tentatively agreed to recognize the union, increase the wage from \$1.70 per hour to \$2.45, create a grievance procedure, give workers paid vacation and sick days, refrain from discriminating against workers based on their immigration status, and purge workers' records of union activities. But then on December 26, Wen went back on his agreement by making threats to workers regarding their immigration status. Such threats increased as workers redoubled efforts to win recognition of their rights on the job. On the morning of December 28, the IWW served Sunrise Plus with a federal complaint regarding back wages and overtime and within hours, Wen fired 13 of the company's unionized workers. In solidarity with those who were fired, workers walked off the job in a wildcat strike and only returned after the union assured them that legal action would be taken.

Similar illegal terminations followed days later at Handyfat. The owner, Dennis Ho, demanded that workers submit their Employment Eligibility Verification form (I-9 Form) to prove that they are legally entitled to work in the U.S.

We aren't going to take this anymore. They have to treat us like we're human beings, not slaves.

Soon after, management fired nine workers in retaliation for their recent unionizing efforts. While told it was because they failed to submit their I-9 Forms, one worker who tried to submit his form was turned away by management. Further, by law and regardless of immigration status, workers in the United States must be paid the minimum wage and have a right to organize. These terminations were just one more step in a clear-cut union-busting strategy.

"This is horrible--we make him money and now he tosses us into the street like we're garbage," commented Pedro Hidalgo Campos, a fired Handyfat union worker.

According to organizers, the firings came after the companies hired a new lawyer known for a no-holds-barred approach. Organizers say they do not know who he is, but this switch may account for the sudden onslaught in firings.

The fight continues

Despite the best efforts of bosses to crush the union, workers remain strong. More than 50 workers and their supporters held pickets in front of Amersino and E-Z Supply on January 2, 2007, to demand unpaid wages and overtime from their boss, and to highlight a civil suit that they will file in federal court with the help of the IWW. This served as a reminder to their

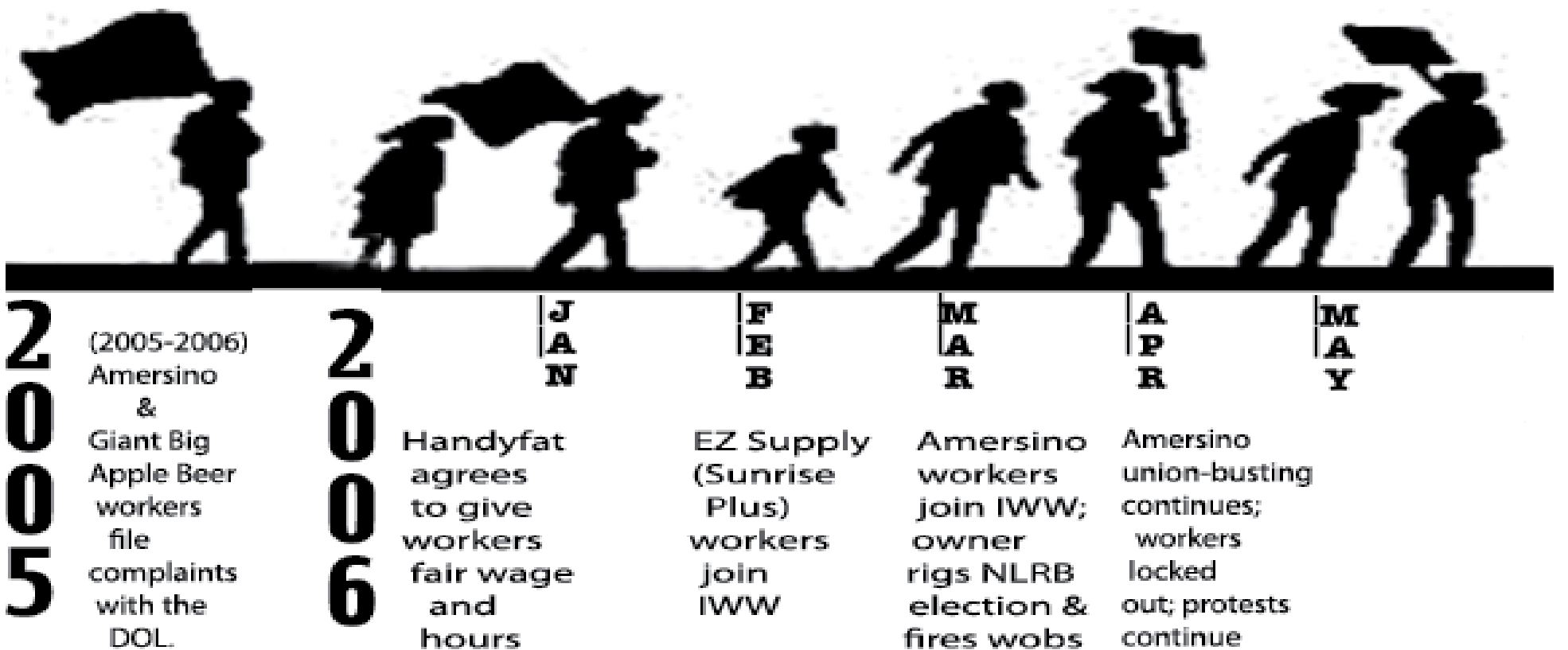
bosses that the New York State minimum wage will be increasing to \$7.15 an hour, a figure that organizers say has "conveniently overlooked in the past." Organizers plan more actions to protest the illegal firings and anti-union activities at Handyfat, Sunrise Plus and Amersino.

Throughout December 2006 and January 2007, IWW members and supporters targeted Sunrise Plus' restaurants by leafleting customers outside and speaking with management. As of mid-January, eight restaurants in Park Slope, Brooklyn have agreed to purchase from other suppliers. These info pickets, combined with a continued protest outside of warehouses, pressure the companies to concede to workers' demands.

Amersino worker Diego Lezama said that once the union had a significant presence in their shop, the support and solidarity branched outward. Recently, he told IWW organizer Billy Randal that after the boss told him "You brought this f--king union in here and I'm gonna get you for it," workers responded by walking out, forcing Wen to apologize for his comments—the first time he had ever apologized.

"We aren't going to take this anymore. They have to treat us like we're human beings, not slaves," Lezama said.

Timeline: What happened when?



Union Sues La Migra

1,200 immigrants arrested at meatpacking plants People 'herded like cattle'

Families ripped apart; Law abiding men and women herded like cattle onto busses and transported to military camps; Women and men sprayed with chemical weapons and manhandled by federal agents; children left waiting at schools and day care centers, their parents forbidden to contact them.

These stories are part of the sworn testimony being brought forth by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in a recent lawsuit against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

The lawsuit challenges the legality of a massive raid on meatpacking company Swift & Co. that resulted in the arrest of over 1,200 immigrant workers in six states.

On December 12, 1,000 ICE agents and other law enforcement officers invaded Swift plants in Grand Island, Nebraska; Cactus, Texas; Hyrum, Utah; Marshalltown, Iowa; Worthington, Minnesota and Swift's flagship facility and headquarters at Greeley, Colorado. The raid comes only eight months after a similar sweep of IFCO Systems workers (a company that makes pallets). Of these 1,200 workers (which make up a nearly 10% of Swift's 13,000 person workforce) only about 65 of them face criminal charges, mostly over "identity theft" issues related to the use of false social security numbers in order to obtain jobs. Only 170 names were issued on the arrest warrants. The other 1,150 or so workers were presumably legal residents targeted simply because of their ethnicity. The display of force by ICE agents is totally outrageous," said Mark Lauritsen, International Vice President and Director of the Food Processing,

Packing, and Manufacturing division of the UFCW in a press release the union issued the day after the raid. "We believe they are victims of wholesale violations of worker rights. In effect, ICE is criminalizing people for going to work." Swift & Co., on the other hand, is not facing any legal consequences from the raid although the company expects a loss of \$30 million in lost production time and employee turnover.

The nature of the raid sparked widespread fear and outrage in the Hispanic community. Many Hispanics resent that the raid was planned for December 12, which is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe a major religious holiday for many people of Mexican heritage. Some see the choosing of that day as a message of intimidation to Mexican Americans and other Hispanics. There is a feeling among many people that the workers were treated as less than human. In a sworn statement, Fernando Rodriquez, director of the Greeley branch UFCW Local 7 testified that federal agents were "degrading the employees and treating them like animals, much in the same manner the cattle are rounded up at the plant," wrote Rodriquez. "They were barking orders at them and shoving people to places they wanted them to go without letting them do so themselves." A number of state and local political leaders also condemned the raids. For example, in a public statement, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack called the events of December 12 "completely unacceptable" and declared that he was "extremely disappointed" in the way things were handled. And according to the American Prospect, hundreds of people (including

a local priest) lined the streets in Greeley during the raid to protest what was happening. Even one of the purported identity theft victims has expressed concern. 23 year old Rachel DeSchepper was interviewed by the Des Moines Register: "Honestly, it makes me feel bad, because I know they're just using it to make money and support their families," DeSchepper said. "I would feel very badly if it causes them to be deported..." On a more positive note, there has been an outpouring of support from local churches and charities in areas affected by the raids, with over 130 groups helping families of the victims in Greeley, Colorado alone. The Catholic Church observes every January 14 as a World Day for Migrants and Refugees and the approach of this date has inspired many Catholics to express concern about the human consequences of the raid. "They are taking mothers and fathers and we're really concerned about the children," said the Rev. Clarence Sandoval of St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church in Logan, Utah. "I'm getting calls from mothers saying they don't know where their husband was taken," he said.

One aspect of this raid bears an eerie resemblance to something that happened to Mexican-American members of the IWW in Bizbee, Arizona in July 1917. At the height of World War I hysteria against radicals and foreigners (of which most southwest wobblies were both), a posse of armed vigilantes raided the homes of striking IWW miners, loaded 1,160 of them onto cattle cars and taken to the New Mexico desert where they were held for 36 hours without food before finally being turned

over to New Mexico authorities. Another load of wobblies was sent to California under similar circumstances.

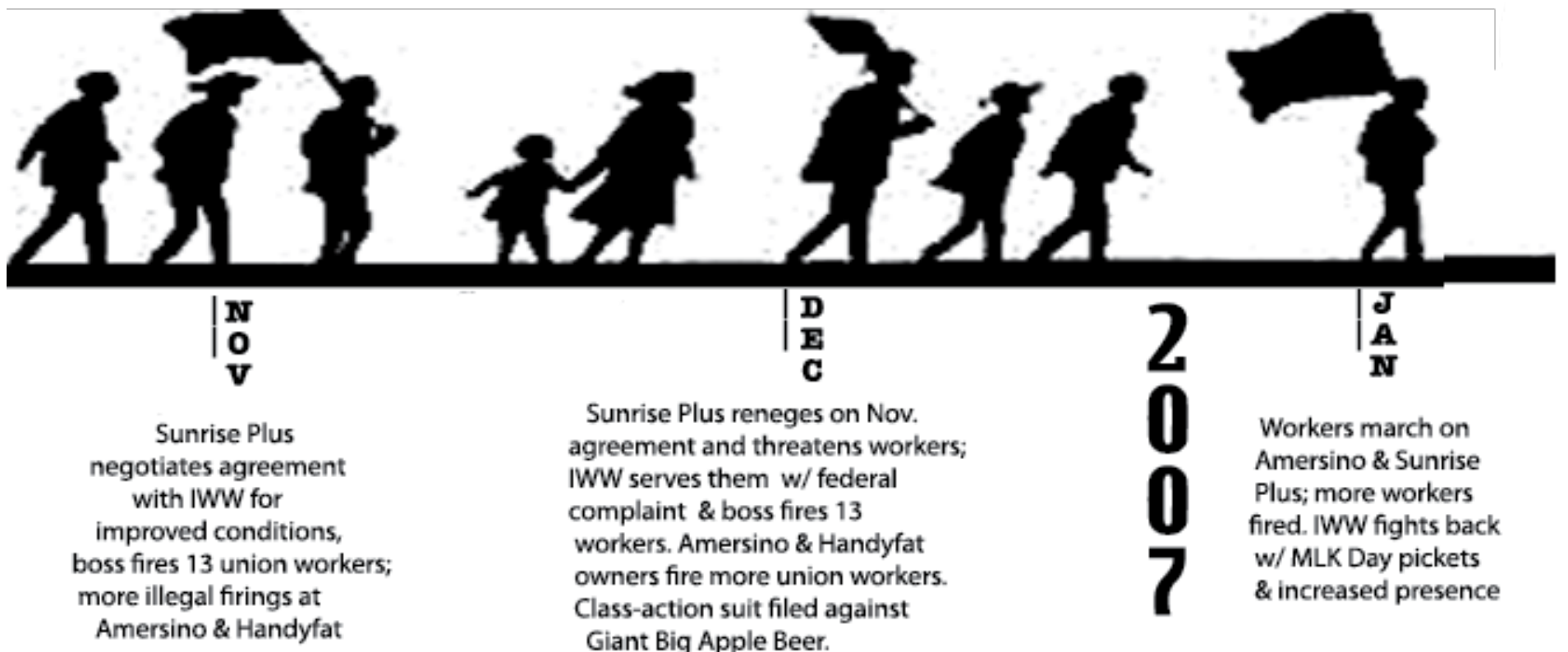
In the case of the Swift raid, hundreds of workers were forced onto busses without any opportunity to prove their legal status or contact family members or lawyers. For example, Swift workers in Iowa were bussed to Camp Dodge in Iowa City where several still remain as of press time. Those who have been released are terrified to talk. "If anybody gets out, they're already afraid and traumatized by what's happened to them," lawyer Michael Said told the Des Moines Register.

"If they say anything against the government, they think they will be re-arrested or denied papers." Anticipating this, Grand Island, Nebraska police chief Steve Lamken refused to help ICE agents drag workers from the plant. "When this is all over, we're still here," he told the local paper, "and if I have a significant part of my population that's fearful and won't call us, then that's not good for our community."

The government's spinning of the raid as an effort to fight identity theft implies that the immigrants were using stolen identities to tap into bank accounts or private information. According to the Associated Press, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff even tried to connect the raid to counter-terrorism efforts, saying that terrorists can use such phony papers to try to get on airplanes. (None of the warrants or pending charges are related to terrorism.)

The meatpacking industry is still mired in dangerous and unsanitary conditions, oppressive work rules and often miserably low wages. By industry leaders' own admission, the high turnover rate that results from the unpleasantness of these jobs is actually being adopted as a conscious strategy to keep labor costs down. Most meatpacking jobs have gone overwhelmingly to immigrant workforces.

Timeline continued: What happened when?



Book Review

Ben Fletcher of Local 8 Docks

Peter Cole, editor, Ben Fletcher: The Life and Times of a Black-Wobbly. Charles H. Kerr Publishers, 2007, 149 pages, \$15, paper.

Available from IWW Literature Dept. and AK Distribution.

Review by Jon Bekken

This long-awaited collection is the first book-length documentation of the life of African-American IWW organizer Benjamin Fletcher (1890-1949). Fletcher played a key role in organizing Philadelphia's dockworkers into the IWW. He was sentenced to ten years in Leavenworth prison for his efforts. He died a Wobbly in good standing after nearly 40 years service to the cause.

Intertwined with Fletcher's life is the story of the IWW's Marine Transport Workers Local 8, which exercised job control on the Philadelphia waterfront for a decade and was the country's first fully integrated longshore union.

Ben Fletcher opens with Cole's 43-page biographical introduction pointing to Fletcher's role in organizing a multi-racial waterfront union that boasted some 3,000 members at its peak, and won Philadelphia's dockworkers job control and the best working conditions and pay in the country for a decade.

Local 8 was decimated by a combination of Communist disruption, employer-government collusion, ILA union scabbing, and a disastrous defeat in the 1922 lock-out. That dispute arose when Wobblies decided to impose the 8-hour work day through direct action. They were unable to maintain the necessary unity in the face of ILA union scabbing and the government's U.S. Shipping Board, which guaranteed the employers' profits during the dispute.

In the aftermath of that defeat, the employers succeeded in replacing the IWW with the AFL-affiliated ILA. Unlike in other ports where it relegated African-Americans to segregated locals, the Philadelphia ILA formed an integrated local with a black president.

The IWW continued to organize on the Philadelphia waterfront through the 1920s, offering an alternative to workers dissatisfied with the ILA's harmonious relations with the employers, its undemocratic structures, and its acquiescence to the employers' reintroduction of segregated work crews (something the IWW had refused to tolerate).

When the IWW was ultimately driven from the docks, Fletcher ceased working as a longshoreman, but he remained a Wobbly for the rest of his life.

The second half of the book consists of 51 brief documents

(some extracts) including all of Fletcher's known published articles, his remarks at the 1913 General Convention, articles from the IWW press and other publications (notably *The Messenger*) about FW Fletcher's organizing efforts, obituaries and reports on Fletcher's funeral, recollections of him by other radicals, and four letters and a short history (separated from the letters here and mislabeled as being from 1920) discussing IWW organizing efforts that FW Fletcher sent historian Abram Harris who was seeking material for his 1931 history, *The Black Worker*.

In addition to his organizing, Fletcher was well regarded as an orator; in 1931 an AFL official wrote of being captivated by his speech during a New York City street meeting.

"I have heard all the big shots of the labor movement... and it is no exaggeration when I state that this colored man, Ben Fletcher, is the only one I ever heard who cut right through to the bone of capitalist pretensions... with a concrete, constructive working class union argument."

I would have preferred more extensive notes placing the documents in context, and source notes for the introduction. As welcome an addition to the literature on the IWW as it is, the book suffers from heavy-handed editing that appears to have introduced extraneous material into the text, inadequate proof-reading, and poor "printing". I believe the book was actually photocopied as it does not bear a union label. There are a number of errors ranging from incorrect documentation in the texts (usually corrected in the separate bibliography) to the claim that only 101 IWWs were indicted in the Chicago espionage trial. Many of these problems might have been fixed had the publisher sent proofs to the author for review before publication.

Despite these shortcomings, Ben Fletcher does important work in gathering the surviving primary sources on FW Fletcher's life and reminding us of the IWW's pioneering work organizing workers across racial lines to build a stable industrial union that, through direct action and solidarity, dramatically improved their lives.

Unfortunately, as the IWW realized at the time and tried to address by sending Fletcher and others on organizing trips up and down the coast, one port, no matter how well organized, could never be strong enough to withstand the employers on its own.

Fletcher and Local 8's story will continue to be told. I look forward to Cole's history of Local 8 slated for publication next year.

IWW Fired up in Florida

By James Schmidt

Members of the Gainesville, FL GMB are actively organizing at a local grocery store, one of a chain of stores along the East Coast of the US.

The IWWs at the store are agitating around the issues they face day-to-day as well as strategizing on various options for approaching workers at other locations around Florida to work together. The grievances include stagnant low wages, a joke of a health care plan, chronic understaffing and lack of respect from the boss for employees on the shop floor.

The Gainesville branch has grown steadily since an IWW Organizer Training was held in October 2005. The training brought together Wobblies from all over Florida for a weekend of workshops on strategy and tactics. The event helped build Florida-wide communications, solidarity and affinity.

The Gainesville Wobs have reached out to our community, too. Members took part in pickets at the USW Goodyear strike and maintained a public presence at local

We're gonna put the red back in redneck.

events, from selling literature and merchandise at the local AFL-CIO's annual labor dinner to tabling at the University of Florida for "Radical Rush" to marching as an IWW bloc in Gainesville's annual Martin Luther King Jr. parade.

Gainesville Wobblies are also taking the IWW onto the airwaves, as part of a local community radio station, 94.7 FM. Working with the Alachua County Labor Party, the Gainesville IWW will begin broadcasting its own "Working People Radio," with news, music, interviews, and commentary from a labor perspective in the next few months. The radio tower has a signal radius of 7 kilometers, which will include a large section of Gainesville, as well as the surrounding areas.

In the words of Gainesville IWW member Kealan Partlow, "We're gonna put the red back in redneck."

A BALLAD OF MY GRANDFATHER

My grandfather was a Wobbly, sirs,
And as such he was banned
And blackballed from his daily bread
Across your promised land.

My grandfather polished metal, sirs,
And ripped his skilful hands
Whenever you allowed him to
Across your promised land.

My grandfather suffered somewhat, sirs,
And worked till he could stand
No more before your wheel; he loafs
Beneath your promised land.

My father walked a picket, sirs,
In nineteen-forty-five,
His son beside, and with them walked
His father, man alive.

That was a bitter solstice, sirs,
The wind complained like ghosts,
The cold struck home, the strikers stood
Frozen to their posts.

The people in the city, sirs,
Sequestered in their hate,
Supped in communal kitchens there
And massed at every gate.

Consider all such service, sirs,
Kindred to your time,
A long apprenticeship to cast
Such mettle into rime:

The pain these fathers weathered, sirs,
The freedom you forsook,
Is polished into pickets here
And winters in their book.

- Thomas Thornburg

Berkeley Recyclers Stand and Win

Management must pay double time on early Saturday work.

Berkeley, California - IWW Curbside Recyclers at the Berkeley Ecology Center won an important victory on January 5 by refusing to let management violate their IWW union contract.

Currently, all Saturday work must be paid at time-and-one-half standard wages, except work performed before 8:00 AM and after 5:00 PM, which must be paid at double-time. The same rules apply for Sunday work. Weekend work is rare and usually scheduled the same week as non-working holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years' Day).

On Saturday, December 30, 2006, work began at 6:45 AM, but

management refused to pay double-time for the hour and fifteen minutes worked. A newer employee noticed the contract violation and informed shop steward Mike Hudgins.

Prior to 2001, the work day began at 8 AM and ended at 5 PM. In 2001, the start time was moved up to 6:30 AM by mutual consent between management and the union, but the Saturday and Sunday work rules remained unchanged as an incentive to schedule weekend work as little as possible.

Fellow Worker Hudgins brought notice of the violation to management. Martin Borques, Chairman of the Ecology Center Board of Directors, tried to argue that the language in the contract is "a misunderstanding", left over from the time when the start time

was changed, and that the double time pay should only apply if work begins prior to 6:45 AM or continues past 3:45 PM.

The IWW refused to give in, knowing that if management succeeded in arguing that weekend overtime language was "a misunderstanding", they could declare any part of the contract they found inconvenient "a misunderstanding". If the grievance were carried out to its logical conclusion, even the Bush appointed NLRB would rule that the union was right and management was wrong.

Attempting to avoid any further double time payments, Operations Manager Daniel Maher declared that work would begin at 8 AM on Saturday, January 6, 2007. Shop Steward Mike Hudgins informed

Management that this violated another contract provision requiring sixty days written notice to the Union (Article VII, Section A, Part 3). Hudgins further declared that he and the rest of the crew would show up and begin work precisely at 6:45 AM, regardless of Management's directive to begin work at 8:00 AM.

After a lengthy and heated meeting between Fellow Worker Hudgins and Daniel Maher, Management agreed to honor both provisions of the contract.

The lesson to be learned from this struggle is that a good contract can be a powerful tool, but ultimately direct action (or the threat of direct action) gets the goods.

Source: www.iww.org

Continued from p. 3

2006 Good for Starbucks Union

entanglements with the government and union bureaucrats, a solidarity union depends solely on the ingenuity and courage of workers themselves. The Chicago baristas have already received a wage increase and they executed a beautiful Direct Action that won them the stepladder they had demanded as workers without a union.

Union-Busting

The SWU achieved these gains in despite Starbucks' escalation of its attack against the union. Again and again the company showed nothing but contempt for the right of workers to free association in the form of a union, ignoring the NLRB settlement with impunity.

Starbucks has fired five of the most active and outspoken Wobbly baristas for protected union activity. Threats and surveillance continued in earnest. The anti-IWW propaganda, especially red-baiting, is relentless. These anti-union firings were a significant setback. It is a testament to the breathtaking courage of my sister and fellow workers on this campaign that Starbucks' union-busting did not break the union. It's an honor to work with people possessing such steely determination. Armed with a deep respect for the dignity of the working class and workers as individuals, the Wobblies have never backed down from a fight.

We will fight in 2007

Through aggressive organizing and outreach, the SWU will continue its expansion. Nothing is more important to the campaign than increasing shop-floor power. At the same time, our comprehensive corporate campaign highlighting the hypocrisy of the Starbucks brand will deliver heavy blows in the fight for a living wage and secure work

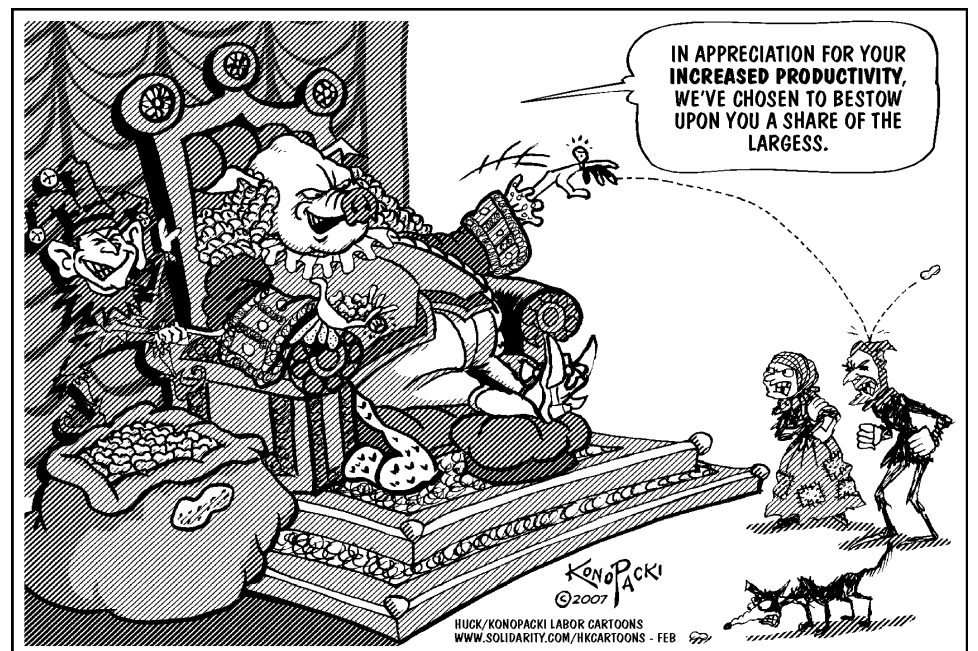
hours.

We are confident that the impressive participation rate of the union at large in the campaign will continue. If you haven't yet gotten involved in the SWU, make it happen in 2007. It's a fight that goes far beyond Starbucks. The struggle goes to the heart of corporate power and the kind of society we want to live in. Will Starbucks, Walmart, ExxonMobil, and Bechtel continue to lord over our communities, destroy our environment, spark immoral wars, and distort our democracy, or will we live free? By organizing these multinationals with a rank and file union, we help build a new society in the shell of the old.

If your IWW branch hasn't done so yet, consider creating a solidarity committee for the Starbucks Workers Union. That's the best way to coordinate outreach, protests, coalition-building, fundraising, and more.

Please mark your calendars for two important SWU dates in 2007. First, baristas, coffee farmer advocates, community members, unionists, human rights activists, and the religious community are uniting for a spectacular protest at the Starbucks Annual Meeting in Seattle on March 21. It is the first time the SWU will have a presence at the annual meeting and we're very excited about it. Next, the SWU will once again rise up around the world on May 17th in a Day of Action for Starbucks Workers. May 17th is a critical day for the campaign and Wobblies who participated last year had a very rewarding experience.

Together we win.



Continued from p. 5

Hornblower Boycott

ber but there are a lot of wobblies in the Bay Area and I'd really like to see them participating in pickets more. This struggle that's going on is a perfect example of why people become wobblies in the first place and I'd like to see more of IWW members come out. We need their help.

IW: How has the arrival of Hornblower affected you personally?

X344543: I had full time work (it was the on Vallejo ferry—which I prefer to the Alcatraz ferry) and health care. Now it's back to working as a "casual" with no health care as of February. San Francisco is very expensive. There's also the threat that the city will turn over more unionized operations to Hornblower and make it even harder to get work.

Red Gypsy: As a lower ranking member of union I have to go to the hiring hall on a regular basis to get work (a lot of people are in the same boat). There are higher ranking workers who have better chance and their numbers increased because of full timers who were laid off from the Alcatraz ferry. This means there is less work for myself and my fellow low-ranking union members. And

we're talking about a ripple effect. If this bastard [Bush] gets away with this than other operations are the next to go, and then Seattle and Portland, the whole west coast. It's a concerted effort of Bush administration to undermine maritime unions, starting on the West Coast.

X344543: We worry that Hornblower will take over other companies and more people will lose jobs. When contracts are up for negotiations in NPS contracts it will be harder to negotiate because Hornblower is driving wages down... McRae wants to pay \$10-20 an hour, which is far below the prevailing wages for those jobs... An injury to one is injury to all and Hornblower's workers are the weak link in chain.

IW: Any closing words?

X344543: This is part of an ongoing attack against transportation unions. The building of the NAFTA superhighway, container traffic from Mexico which has nonunion dockworkers and circumvents entire west coast... This is a major fight. It may not seem like much (only 55 workers) but Alcatraz is one of most visited attractions in the US and if we don't do something about it these attacks will only increase.

Industry Issue: Privatization

UK Postal Union in Lose-All No Strike

By Ian Johnston

Last summer, Labour appointee Allan Leighton, Chairman of Britain's Royal Mail, imposed a 2.9% pay rise on the 180,000 workforce. Is this a sign of over-powering management style or weak leadership of the union? Or a bit of both? After all this isn't the first time that this has happened. An 18 month pay rise was imposed on us two years ago.

So what has gone wrong?

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) a few years back was one of the more militant unions. At this time Royal Mail were enjoying healthy profits filling the coffers of the Labour Party.

Then it all turned sour. The threat of the mail market being opened up to competition and a few bad investments meant Royal

Mail was heading towards the rocks.

The militancy of the union had to be curbed. The Lord Sawyer report (again another Labour Party appointee) decided that the time had come for a new dawn between management and the CWU. A No Executive Action, No Industrial Action Deal was put on the table and the road of partnership between managers and union members opened up before us. It was time to 'work together' to fight off this challenge of the oncoming opposition and get Royal Mail back to the number one

position it once held.

This new strategy meant that people were encouraged to sit down and debate problems instead of heading towards the door. Man-

agement became stronger as they saw the only tool that unions hold, the threat of industrial action, was being taken from us.

The leadership of the CWU became reluctant to even ballot for official action. Management stood and applauded as the days lost through industrial action dropped dramatically. No one, not even the most militant-minded amongst us, was supposed to encourage industrial action for anything and everything.

But when it is the only weapon you possess you have to use it or the threat of it occasionally. To not use industrial action only strengthens the opponent's hand.

The CWU leadership now find themselves at the head of a union membership which has changed dramatically since those days of encouraged partnership. There has been a move away from the union minded, full time, experienced workforce to one which is made up of temporary contracts, part time and those who have to be persuaded that a union is there for their benefit. Sadly, the leaders of our union have done very little over the last couple of years to encourage more input from the membership.

Most now see those at the top as overpaid and out of touch. Most literature sent out by the union is encouraging the use of their new credit card or how to receive cheap loans. The fact that the General Secretary, Billy Hayes, still openly supports the Labour Party after their back door tactics is also cause for concern. While Tony Blair and friends

blatantly move us toward privatisation, the CWU hand them £600,000 (US \$1.16 million) a year in donations. Talk about paying for your own funeral.

This is why we have to get the union back to its roots, have to get the officials back talking to those on the shop floor instead of seeming untouchable and unreachable. The CWU has suffered a lot of setbacks over the last few years and it's starting to look like they may struggle to regain the position they once had. That is why we now have to encourage a union which is more in touch, from the bottom up and not the other way.

If the leadership of the CWU do not heed the warning signs then they should bow out gracefully and allow others in to do the job.

Privatization Eats Extra Money, Dogs UK's Health Workers

By Richard Griffin, IU 610 Healthworker Secretary, United Kingdom

The publicly-funded British National Health Service (NHS) is in financial crisis and health workers are paying the price.

Despite record increases in funding, this year will see 37,000 health worker lose their jobs as hospitals desperately try to balance books following last year's £500 million (US \$967 million) overspend. NHS trusts are already reported to be cancelling operations as they run out of money. Waiting times for treatments are increasing and services including maternity and accident and emergency are under threat across the country.

The root cause of the health services' crisis is privatisation. The influential health think tank Reform reported last month that there is a "clear link" between hospital deficits and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects.

Under PFI, private companies build new hospitals and then lease the buildings back to the health service, often at a massive profit. One company responsible for building a hospital in Norwich made more than a 60 per cent profit. Even though private construction projects are bleeding the NHS dry, the New Labour government plans to spend a staggering £13.5 billion (US \$26.1 billion) on PFI.

Healthcare privatisation goes beyond building new hospitals. The private sector is increasingly providing clinical services and even running hospitals. NHS spending on non-NHS provided services grew by 227% last year to £4 billion (US \$7.7 billion), according to Reform.

Just before Christmas, the first hospital was handed over to the private sector. From July the 60-bed Lymington New Forest Trust in southern England will be run by the private Partnership Health Group. Unions fear that this will be the first of many hospitals to be privatised.

Private companies are guaranteed an income regardless of how many or few patients they treat.

As a result, health workers are facing attacks on their terms and conditions. The government wants to peg this year's pay increase to just 2 per cent, a rate below inflation - effectively a pay cut. The government is trying to dismantle national pay bargaining and introduce regional pay.

Health workers are angry with the government, but some are angry with their unions, too. Despite the scale of the job losses, low morale and the assault on terms and conditions, the unions have organised only two lobbies of Parliament. Many NHS unions are affiliated to the ruling Labour Party. They don't want to rock the boat with industrial action.

Healthworkers are beginning to fight back.

-At last year's Anarchist Bookfair in London, radical health workers, including the IWW, agreed to take action to halt the privatisation of the NHS. We hope to coordinate this action with IWWs in the US where the companies raking in the profits from the NHS are based.

Iraqi labor unions attack US plans for oil privatization

By John Kalwaic

From the first threat of US invasion of Iraq, US-based oil and gasoline companies have talked about privatizing the once state-owned oil reserves in Iraq. In 2004 a subsidiary of Halliburton known as Kellogg-Brown and Root (KBR) tried to privatize the Iraqi oil, only to be thwarted by the resistance of the Southern Oil Company Union (SOCU), Iraq's only non-politically aligned trade union. The workers of this union also occupied the plants when the companies in charge tried to reintroduce Baathist managers.

However, the parliament of Iraq's US-occupied coalition government has now decided to pass a bill that would open up Iraq's currently state owned oil industry to foreign investment. This has happened in part because of strong political pressure from the United States government. Even before the occupation of Iraq rumors abounded of plans to privatize Iraqi oil as a means of "democratizing" Iraq. The Iraqi oil supply has been nationalized by the state since the 1960s revolution against the Hashemite monarchy. When that happened the British petroleum lost its control over the oil industry in Iraq.

Iraq's five largest trade unions are gathering to try to defeat this measure. The major trade unions that oppose the privatization of Iraq are the government-aligned Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), the non-aligned General Union of Oil Employees of Basra, the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions of Iraq (which is heavily influence by the non-authoritarian Worker-Communist Party), the formerly Baathist state-run union the General Federation of Iraqi Workers, and a trade union aligned with the Shi'a Muslim parties in southern Iraq. If this law goes through, it would question the public ownership of oil throughout the Middle East.

Mainstream unions in the United States should show solidarity with the Iraqi unions against the threat of oil and gas privatization. Many of the companies who are trying to re-privatize Iraqi oil are from the same corporate triangle as Halliburton, Enron and other fuel corporations, which have shafted American workers on many occasions. Workers in America and around the world must remember that in Iraq as elsewhere, an injury to one is an injury to all.

For more information on Iraqi oil workers visit www.basraoilunion.org/

ONE BIG UNION: ANSWER THE CALL FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

PAKISTAN Coke Starts New Year with Union-Busting

While Coca-Cola executives in Atlanta celebrated holidays with high third quarter results, management at its subsidiary Coca-Cola Beverages Pakistan Ltd. tried to break the Coca-Cola Beverages Staff and Workers Union. The union represents workers at the bottling plant in Karachi.

Union busting is nothing new to Coke Pakistan. The company has crushed unions in the towns of Lahore and Gujranwala. At Rahim Yar Khan, the union president was fired in 2001 only to be reinstated three years later after a grueling legal battle.

Casualization—the long-term employment of a flexible “seasonal” workforce—is being used to impede worker organizing. With these struggles behind them, Coke Pakistan is now focusing its efforts on Karachi, Pakistan’s most populated city and a major center of union activity.

On December 9, bypassing the union, Coke management sent termination letters to over 150 of its Karachi employees, informing them that their jobs were outsourced. Among the recipients

were the union’s president, vice-president, treasury secretary and members of the union’s management committee. At the same time security at the plant was boosted in anticipation of worker outrage at the firings.

Despite the intimidating security presence, workers rallied at the factory gates and later voted to reject the terminations and the associated compensation packages. After several days of protest and a sit-in at the gates, management increased the terms of compensation for “voluntary retirement” and 153 workers opted to accept this package.

On December 23, the union obtained an interim court order prohibiting management from dismissing any employees until January 8. Defying the court order, Coke continued to pressure individual employees to accept the terms, declaring that December 28 would be the final day the company would accept applications for “voluntary retirement”. The union is preparing to file a contempt of court petition in response to this violation.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopian Teachers Beaten

Police detained two Ethiopian teachers beat them in December. A third teacher disappeared on December 15.

Tihalun Ayalew was “so heavily beaten that he could hardly walk on his own from the police van to the court room,” said the president of the Ethiopian Teachers Association.

For Anteneh Getnet, the experience was painfully familiar. In May 2006, unknown men kidnapped and beat him so badly he will never teach again. On December 29, police arrested him and reportedly beat him, too.

“The ETA leadership knows these three men very well. Their only offence is that they are members of the Ethiopian Teachers Association,” said a union statement.

Education International has launched a solidarity campaign on its web site.

Source: www.ei-ie.org

ZIMBABWE

Jr. Doctors Strike for Pay Raises

Junior Zimbabwean doctors at the Zesa hospital in Harare have been on strike since December 21.

They are attending to emergency patients on a rotational basis.

Patients who cannot afford a private doctor are caught in the middle.

The main issues are the low wages junior doctors in public health institutions are being paid and the lack of clarity for getting full accreditation.

One doctor said they get paid the equivalent of “a pack of beer.”

High rates of inflation, which rose more than 1,000 per cent in 2006 - is a major factor in the doctor’s demands.

The Zimbabwean government has responded to the strike by calling the doctors unpatriotic and demanding they return to work.



US Minimum Wage Hike Passes House of Representatives

On January 10, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 315-116 to pass a bill that would raise the federal minimum wage for the first time in a decade. The bill, if approved by the Senate (as is expected), will increase the minimum wage through a series of incremental increases from its present level of \$5.15 per hour to an eventual \$7.25 an hour by 2009. (The wage would go up to \$5.85 sixty days after becoming law, then to \$6.55 a year later and finally reach \$7.25 a year after that.) The bill is part of the new Democrat majority’s “100 hour agenda” of reforms that are being rapidly pushed through Congress as we go to press.

Although slightly more than half of the 50 states and the District of Columbia require a state minimum wage that is higher than the federal minimum, the new wage hike will nonetheless have a major impact. Approximately 500,000 American workers earn the minimum wage with millions more making somewhere between \$5.15 and \$7.25 an hour.

Democrats are now under pressure from the Bush Administration to make concessions to employers, whose profits will be reduced by the increase in wages. Bush initially opposed the minimum wage bill outright but later changed his position to declare that he supported a raise but only if it’s coupled with tax breaks for businesses. Democratic Party leaders were divided on whether or not to grant this concession to Republicans but after pressure from the AFL-CIO and rank and file Democrats they decided to push the bill through without any strings attached. Despite this, it is expected that at some point in the not too distant future Congress will approve a tax cut with the support of most Democrats.

The bill that was passed on January 10th called for the increase to apply to all U.S. states and territories except the American Samoa. Republicans immediately latched onto this solitary omis-

sion, pointing out that Samoa is the site of a large cannery run by tuna giant StarKist. StarKist is owned by Del Monte foods, which is headquartered in Democratic Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi’s home district of San Francisco. Amid accusations of favoritism, Pelosi and fellow Democrats pledged to extend the wage hike to cover American Samoa, an economically struggling U.S. “territory” (essentially a colony) in the Pacific.

Self-congratulatory Democrats were exuberant about the passage of the bill. “The little guy is not going to be forgotten any longer,” promised Rep. Bill Pascrell, whose district includes Patterson, New Jersey. Pascrell told an Associated Press reporter that the increase would amount to an additional \$4,400 a year for a family of three. Nonetheless, the back-patting frenzy that is currently being indulged in by Democratic politicians may be premature.

Although the minimum wage increase is long overdue, the unfortunate reality is that \$7.25 is still a poverty wage for many workers. According to a study conducted by the AFL-CIO, this increase would not even bring minimum wage up to 50% of the average wage. The average wage in the United States is approximately \$16.00 an hour, which is still considered low for the millions of workers who live in expensive cities like New York City and San Francisco. And according to the Center for Policy Alternatives, a wage that approximates the minimum wage of the 1960s and 70s (which was barely above the poverty line), adjusted for inflation, would be around \$9.12 an hour. Many advocates of a “living wage” have called for significantly more.

The minimum wage increase, if enacted, may provide some small measure of relief to workers struggling to survive life at the bottom. However, politicians will not break us out of the cycle of poverty. Only through organization can working class gain a fair and healthy standard of living.



Greetings, Fellow Workers, from the newly elected members of the International Solidarity Commission. We are John Kalwaic and Mike Pesa of the Philadelphia GMB and Lauren Anzaldo, ISC chair and member of the Pensacola GMB.

Together, we bring our experience and interest in the areas of Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, as well as an eagerness to learn more about workers' movements in other parts of the world.

We anticipate an important, eventful year of building labor solidarity with the global working class. To that effect, your 2007 ISC has held one conference call with the outgoing ISC to divide up responsibilities, decide on accountability and communication procedures and set our goals for the coming year.

We strive first and foremost to carry on the great work of the outgoing ISC in strengthening connections with worker-led unions such as the FAT in Mexico, the CNT-F

and CSR in France, and the NGWF in Bangladesh. Another goal is to make contact with revolutionary unions with which the IWW has not previously been in touch. We also want to develop a fundraising network within the IWW to more easily facilitate solidarity campaigns and to help cover the costs of international travel to meet with our cohorts in other unions.

In all of these goals, the 2007 ISC will need the help and support of the IWW membership. We look forward to working with branches and individual Wobs to make this a banner year for the ISC. Keep an eye on the IW and GOB for regular updates of our activities.

Please also get in touch with us via solidarity@iww.org if you are aware of a workers' struggle anywhere in the world on which you think the ISC should take action.

For the OBU,
FW Lauren Anzaldo
ISC Chair

Goons attack Bangladesh garment workers

At least 50 employees of a garments factory in Tejgaon Industrial Area were injured on January 10 when over 200 thugs, allegedly hired by the factory authorities, attacked the workers. The workers were protesting on behalf of two of their leaders who had been fired.

The attackers beat up the workers, mostly women and held five

workers in an executive office. They were found alive but unconscious. The police team stepped in after the attackers left the factory at around 6:00pm, two hours after the violence started.

Over 2,000 workers and their relatives laid a siege to the factory, responding to a rumor that the five workers were beaten to death inside the office room.

SPAIN

No se vende: Our Union Can't Be Bought!

The Spanish union FECOHT-CC.OO is calling for the reinstatement of a member who denounced dangerous working conditions in Iberostar Hotels.

Antonio Garcia Ramos, who was the union secretary, was fired on December 11, 2006.

Garcia Ramos made his comments after the company refused to implement recommendations issued by the health and safety authorities.

Management offered Garcia Ramos more than € 300,000 (US \$387,000) to drop his appeal.

In response, 600 union members rallied the next day with the slogan: No se vende: Our union can't be bought.

To support this struggle, visit the IUF web site and send a solidarity message.

Source: www.iuf.org

Mercadona strike legal

The Spanish CNT union won a victory in court against Mercadona for violating its right to strike.

The case, won on Jan 9, showed that the supermarket giant had planned to replace the strikers with nearly 200 scabs.

The court heard that Mercadona had recruited the blacklegs with considerable perks, ranging from monthly salaries of € 2,000 (US \$2,500) per worker or more, three-star hotel accommodation for part of the time, their own rental car, and access to flights all over Spain, including the popular holiday destination off the west coast of Africa, the Canary Islands.

Mercadona argued that the strike was illegal and that the CNT had no jurisdiction to organize in its sector.

This is another court victory for the CNT in the Mercadona struggle. In 2006, the courts ordered the reinstatement of two workers fired by Mercadona.

"The strike has not ended nor will it end," said the CNT in a statement on its web site. "In fact, we're going to surprise them."

New IWW Organizing Department Reaches Out To Organizers

By Dan Elgin

In December the General Executive Board of the IWW filled the posts for the Organizing Department. The appointments to the three committees that make up the new department will serve in the interim until all posts are elected at the union's next election. The Organizing Department (OD) consists of the Organizing Department Board, the Survey and Research Committee and the Organizer Training Committee.

The Organizing Department Board will administer the operations, finances and activity of the department, as well as facilitate several projects focused on supporting organizing within the union. Dan Elgin and Jeff Pilacinski were appointed to the OD Board. A representative from each of the Survey and Research Committee and the Organizer Training Committee will also serve on the OD Board.

The Survey and Research Committee (SRC) will gather information for organizing to develop a better understanding of organizing for the organization. Paul Bocking, Jim Crutchfield, and Nate Holdren were appointed to the SRC. They will follow up on the initial work done by a survey completed last year covering many organizers and groups of the IWW. More than a third of the respondents to that survey stated that they wanted the Organizing Department to assist with organizing that reached "beyond the local level."

The Organizer Training Committee (OTC), which has been giving trainings for the last several years, is now part of the newly formed department. John

Farm Workers to Challenge McDonalds

Nearly two years after their historic victory over Taco Bell, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is now demanding that fast food top dog McDonalds require their vegetable suppliers to pay fair wages to farmworkers. The CIW has announced a national day of action in the Chicago area this coming April. Events planned include a major rally outside McDonald's global headquarters in Oak Brook, IL, on Friday, April 13, 2007 and a "Carnaval and Parade for Fair Food, Real Rights, and Dignity" on Saturday, April 14, 2007 in downtown Chicago. For more information, visit www.ciw-online.org

Baranski, Tomer Malchi, and Adam Welch were appointed to the OTC.

IWW groups are already working on giving Organizer Trainings in their areas to continue the education of our members and our effectiveness on the shop floor.

The original proposal for the department outlined several goals for the development of organizing in the One Big Union. First, it is to provide "organizers with the education, resources, and support they need to be successful." Later, it will develop an "analysis, theory, and overview of their successes and failures." And finally, the vision for the Organizing Department is to address some challenges that the union faces, such as retention of members, education for organizers, and funding for campaigns.

Several programs are outlined in the proposal for the department. The OD Board plans to start working on developing several of these programs including organizer mentoring and regional gatherings geared toward networking for more effective larger organizing campaigns.

The first push to get the department functioning will be reaching out to IWW members who are actively organizing. The OD board hopes to create a network of IWW organizers for improving the support for each other beyond local groups.

Contact organizing@iww.org to get involved.

WERDE EIN WOBBLY!

German Speaking IWWs petition GEB to form an organizing committee

IWWs in Germany, Austria and Luxembourg have petitioned the General Executive Board to form a German Language Area Regional Organizing Committee.

The Regional Organizing Committee organizes IWW groups to build the union as a credible alternative for workers in the area.

The Fellow Workers have already established a web site www.wobbles.de in German.

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