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US Workers and Communities Reject 'Surge' Demand Peace and End to Occupation

Half a million people from every background imaginable, including delegations of over 150 labor unions, converged on Washington D.C. January 27 to protest Bush's planned "surge" of over 21,000 new troops to Iraq and demand a swift end to a war that has cost many thousands of lives and billions of dollars that could have been spent on jobs and education. Similar protests were held in San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities.

Washington, DC

The massive rally and march in D.C. featured many prominent speakers including half a dozen congressmen, several Hollywood stars, and Jane Fonda—speaking at a protest for the first time in over 30 years. The event may have been the largest anti-war protest in the US since the record-setting February 15th global day of action against the invasion—that shook the world in 2003. Current figures show over 70% of the American public against the war, and it is widely acknowledged that November's landslide victory for the Democratic Party was a result of the anti-war vote. Despite this, most Congressional Democrats have refused to use their power to cut off funding for the war, instead opting for a symbolic non-binding resolution registering their criticism of Bush's strategy. The protest is in part a challenge to these elected officials to fulfill their mandate by preventing the escalation of troop levels.

Scotland IWWs Fight to Save Campus

Scottish Wobblies are fighting the closure of the Dumfries-based Crichton Campus of the University of Glasgow, which only opened eight years ago.

The Principal of the University, Sir Muir Russell, claims that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has never provided sufficient funds for the running of the distant campus, and as a result, the campus is running at a £870,000 deficit. In turn, the SFC claims the university should use the £2 million operating profit it makes from the £150 million provided by the council.

As a result of this stand-off between two rival bureaucracies the Dumfries campus of the University is to close,

At the same time, many voices in the crowd expressed their belief that the occupation of Iraq won't be stopped by Congress but by the concerted action of workers around the world. Speaking to the crowd, Maryland AFL-CIO President Fred Mason declared, "Our democracy provides us the opportunity to express the peoples' will in electoral processes. However, when there are questions as to whether those elected are heeding the people's will, we have a responsibility to speak with a louder voice and we do that in the streets and communities of America." Echoing this theme, IWW members from across the country marched alongside other unions and labor groups including US Labor Against the War, UNITE HERE, SEIU, CWA, USWA and the Teamsters.

San Francisco

In San Francisco, anti-war protesters joined with maritime workers to support a boycott against the anti-union Hornblower Yachts, Inc., and its subsidiary Alcatraz Cruises [see interview in February 2007 IW]. Members of the Inland Boatmen's Union and the Masters, Mates and Pilots union led demonstrators to Pier 31 for the largest picket of the company to date. As the last demonstrators arrived at the pier, a raised flatbed truck served as the sound stage for a brief rally. A former ferry-boat deckhand and member of the IBU, Robert Irminger, thanked the crowd for coming out to demonstrate against "the

depriving the region of its own Higher Education institution offering courses in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and risking the jobs of 47 members of staff, including two IWW members.

Staff and students at Crichton started an active campaign against the closure, with massive popular support. There has been a large demonstration on the Crichton campus, a demonstration outside the SFC offices in Edinburgh, two pickets of the Scottish Parliament building and two demonstrations on the main campus in Glasgow. The IWW has been amongst the most active in the campaign, co-ordinating with staff and

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Republican-donating, union-busting" Hornblower owner, Terry MacRae.

"We must use our power of withholding our labor to end this war. Hooking up the union movement and the anti-war movement is the strongest power in the world", Irminger declared, leading the crowd in a chant of "Shut down the union busters! Shut down this war!"

Alan Benjamin, an Executive Board member of the San Francisco Labor Council and a member of OPEIU Local 3, also spoke at the rally, drawing parallels between the war in Iraq and Hornblower's takeover of the Alcatraz ferry, which resulted in 55 layoffs and transfer of the ferry service from a union to a non-union workforce.

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Starbucks Union Expands to Maryland Workers defy anti-union bullying

By Starbucks Union

Employees at a Starbucks store in Rockville, Maryland announced their membership in the IWW Starbucks Workers Union (SWU) on January 20 and served a list of demands on their manager including a living wage, secure work hours, and the reinstatement of union baristas illegally fired for organizing activity.

The action marks the expansion of the SWU to a third state. The union first took root in New York City in 2004 and spread to Chicago last August.

"No worker should have to deal with understaffing on one hand and the inability to get enough work hours on the other," said Seth Dietz, one of the Maryland baristas who declared his union membership. "Only an independent voice on the job will win baristas the respect we deserve and that's why the expansion of the organization to Maryland is so gratifying."

The union believes that consistent pressure applied against the company at Starbucks locations, in the community, and in the public arena has resulted in higher wages and more steady work hours for baristas. After about two and a half years of organizing, many NYC baristas saw their wage increase by almost 25 per cent. The SWU has also remedied individual grievances with the company in areas as diverse as sleep-depriving work schedules, unsanitary working conditions, and abusive managers. The campaign has received solidarity from unions in Europe, Korea, and New Zealand, among other places.

Despite the union gains, Starbucks workers still start at a poverty wage

in the \$7 or \$8 per hour range and no baristas are permitted full-time status. While Starbucks frequently touts its health care offering, the company insures just 42 per cent of its workforce, less than Wal-Mart, a company notorious for its poor health care benefits.

"Starbucks' public relations prowess won't change the fact that many baristas live in poverty and the majority are not covered by company health care," said Laura De Anda, an SWU member recently fired from an NYC Starbucks for union activity. "As members of the Industrial Workers of the World, baristas are not silenced anymore by Starbucks' fake socially responsible image."

Starbucks and its Chairman Howard Schultz have come under increasing criticism from unions and human rights groups over labor abuses against baristas and coffee farmers. In March 2006, the company entered into a settlement agreement with the National Labor Relations Board over unfair labor practice charges from the SWU. The company had to reinstate two workers discharged for organizing activity and rescind national policies against sharing written union information and wearing union pins.

After the settlement agreement, the coffee giant has continued union-busting with impunity in a bid to destroy the SWU. Six SWU baristas are currently out of a job in retaliation for their union activity. Company threats, surveillance, and propaganda continue full steam ahead. Instead of moving toward substantive respect for workers, the company has responded to its increasingly vocal critics with more public relations

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Dear Editors,
I am writing to suggest that we change the name of the IWW paper from The Industrial Worker to something else. The criteria for a successful name would be that it would appeal to a non-wobbly audience, be fun and enticing to a non-activist audience, and would be concerned with the present rather than the past. I'm well aware that in Wobbly parlance "industrial" means "unity of all workers", but to the average Joe (or Jane, or Jamal, for that matter) it just means "boring". It comes off as an old left term that has everything to do with the US' past as a factory-driven economy.

My suggestion for a new name is the "Disgruntled Worker". I think that if you put a newspaper in the hands of the average coffee shop employee that had the word "disgruntled" in the title, it would elicit an out-loud laugh and might even get them to read the paper. I'm open to other suggestions too.

Perhaps the paper could have a contest to decide a good new name?

Sincerely,
FW Jim Kennedy-Hennessey,
Philadelphia, PA

Letters Welcome!

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

Send your letters to iw@iww.org with "Letter" in the subject or mail it to: Industrial Worker, POB 13476, Philadelphia PA 19101 USA

Dear Editor,
Recently I attended a "rank and file" labor conference in St. Louis (Nov. 5).

Naturally, among other subjects of concern to labor, the question of immigration came up.

Now this is a complex issue. But the other delegates were shocked when they learned the truth of the US government's simplistic solution. Just build a fence along the US-Mexico border.

The proposed "fence" is to be built by a major military contractor, the Boeing corporation. And is in fact military technology.

Go to Palestine and you will find "fences" along the borders. You will find fences along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In fact wherever military conflict occurs, you will find a "fence". Naturally, resolutions against the proposed fence were adopted.

Robert Rice, St. Louis, MO

SweatFree Communities Conference NYC April 27-29

The Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance has been a part of SweatFree Communities for nearly three years.

This is a dynamic and well-positioned organization in the Anti-Sweatshop Movement. Celeste Taylor serves as our representative on the board and the board has been responsive to numerous issues that we have identified. The board has helped us have a meaningful dialogue with other labor organizations in the State of Pennsylvania. The staff played a key role in the development of SweatFree Baseball... and came through in a big way to make the most of our action at the 2006 All Star Game.

There will be many exciting workshops and speakers at this year's conference. Professors at Columbia Law School have played a key role in developing the local anti-sweatshop legislation that we are working to implement and we have lots of questions for them.

Representatives from the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation have been invited.

We are going to meaningfully assess the state of a global apparel industry

organizing drive and the role that union workers and community activists have to play.

HumanRightsBaseball.Org and SweatFree Baseball activists will be hosting at least one workshop. Both PASCA and the United Workers Association of Maryland (the workers who clean up Camden Yards) are confirmed.

We are figuring out how to meaningfully connect organizing in our cities with effective international solidarity. That's the name of the game. It is the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance's great pleasure to invite like-minded folks to join us.

REGISTER: Visit www.sweatfree.org

SHARE IDEAS: Please help us prepare the most effective workshop by talking to us and sharing ideas before you get there... nosweatshopsbucco@yahoo.com or 412-241-1339.

DONATE: If you can donate money... now is a great time to do that because we need scholarships to attend this conference and money to carry on our Community Collective Bargaining with the Pittsburgh Pirates throughout the 2007 baseball season at PNC Park.

INDUSTRIAL WORKER

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

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Post Office Box 23085
Cincinnati OH 45223 USA
513.591.1905 • ghq@iww.org
www.iww.org

GENERAL SECRETARY-TREASURER:
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GENERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD:
Mike Bell, Patrick Brenner,
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CO-EDITORS:
Peter Moore & Mike Pesa
iw@iww.org
Contributions welcome.
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US IW address:
POB 13476, Philadelphia
PA 19101 USA

Canada IW address:
PO Box 52003, 298 Dalhousie St,
Ottawa, ON K1N 1S0

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IWW directory

Australia

IWW Regional Organising Committee: M. Payne,
Secretary, PO Box 1866, Albany W.A. roc@iww.org.au,
www.iww.org.au

Sydney: PO Box 241, Surry Hills. sydney@iww.org.au

Melbourne: PO Box 145, Moreland 3058. melb@iww.org.au

British Isles

IWW Regional Organising Committee: PO Box
1158, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE99 4XL UK, rocsec@iww.org.uk,
www.iww.org.uk

IWW London: c/o Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel
High Street, London E1 7QX. londoniww@iww.org

Leicestershire: PO Box 7903, LE3 0WT. klas-batalo@aol.com
www.leicestershire-iww.org.uk

Manchester: www.iww-manchester.org.uk

Scotland

Clydeside GMB: iwwclydeside.mahost.org.

Edinburgh IWW: c/o 17 W. Montgomery Place, EH7
SHA.

Canada

Alberta
Edmonton GMB: PO Box 75175, T6E 6K1. edmonton@lists.iww.org,
<http://edmonton.iww.ca>.

British Columbia

Vancouver IWW: PO Box 4755, Stn. Terminal, V6B
4A4. 604-682-3269 x8493. gmb-van@iww.ca
<http://vancouver.iww.ca>.

Manitoba

Winnipeg GMB: IWW, c/o WORC, PO Box 1, R3C 2G1.
winnipegiww@hotmail.com. Garth Hardy, del., garth.hardy@union.org.za.

Ontario

Ottawa-Outaouais GMB: PO Box 52003, 298
Dalhousie St. K1N 1S0, 613-225-9655 Fax: 613-
274-0819, ott-out@iww.org French-language del:
Mathieu.Brule_ott_out_fr@yahoo.ca.

Peterborough: c/o PCAP, 393 Water St. #17, K9H 3L7,
705-749-9694, ptboiww@riseup.net

Toronto GMB: c/o Libra Knowledge & Information
Svcs Co-op, PO Box 353 Stn. A, M5W 1C2. 416-925-
7250. torontogmb@iww.org

Finland

Helsinki: Reko Ravela, Otto Brandtintie 11 B 25,
00650. iwwsuomi@helsinki.net

Germany

IWW Kontaks: Lutz Getzschmann, IWW c/o RMB-
Infoladen, Hamburger Allee 35, 60486 Frankfurt am
Main. iww-germany@gmx.net

Frankfurt: iww-frankfurt@gmx.de.

Koeln: iwwcologne@yahoo.de.

Munich: iww-muenchen@web.de

United States

Arizona

Phoenix GMB: 1205 E. Hubbell, 85006-1758. 602-
254-4057. Aaron Rothenburger, del., 480-303-9580.

Arkansas

Fayetteville: PO Box 283, 72702. 479-200-1859,
nwar_iww@hotmail.com.

California

Los Angeles GMB: PO Box 65822, 90065.

North Coast GMB: PO Box 844, Eureka 95502-0844.
707-725-8090. BST Angie Hart: angstink@gmail.com

Oakland: Evergreen Printing, 2335 Valley Street,
Oakland, CA 94612. 510-835-0254 dkaroly@igc.org

San Francisco Bay Area GMB: (Curbside and
Buyback IU 670 Recycling Shops; Stonemountain IU
660 Job Shop) PO Box 11412, Berkeley 94712. 510-
845-0540. Meetings first Thursdays at 7 p.m. (2022
Blake St., Berkeley)

San Jose: Adam Welch, del. 408-795-9672. email:
adam_freedom@yahoo.com

Santa Barbara GMB: PO Box 23008, 93121. 805-
689-3086, sbgmb@iww.org

Colorado

Denver GMB: c/o P&L Printing Job Shop: 2298 Clay,
Denver 80211. 303-433-1852.

Four Corners (AZ, CO, NM, UT): delegate: 970-903-
8721. 4corners@iww.org

Florida

Gainesville GMB: 1021 W. University, 32601. 352-
246-2240, gainesvilleiww@riseup.net

Pensacola GMB: 610 E Wright St., 32501. 850-429-
0336. www.angelfire.com/fl5/iww iwwpensacola@yahoo.com

Hobe Sound: Peter Shultz, 8274 SE Pine Circle,
33455-6608, 772-545-9591, okiedogg2002@yahoo.com

Georgia

Atlanta: Keith Mercer, del., 404-992-7240, iw-watlanta@gmail.com

Hawaii

Honolulu: Tony Donnes, del., 808-547-2042.
donnes@hawaii.edu

Illinois

Chicago GMB: PO Box 18387, 3750 N. Kedzie, 60618.
phone: 312-638-9155.

Carbondale: Jason Leonard, Southern Illinois
delegate. chachieldiablo@hotmail.com.

Central Ill.: PO Box 841, Charleston 61920. 217-
356-8247

Champaign: David Johnson, 217-356-8247.

Waukegan IWW: PO Box 274, 60079.

Iowa

Cedar Rapids: Drew Robertson, del., 206-290-9072.

Iowa City: Seamus Mulryan, del., 319-248-3589.
iowacityiww@riseup.net

Maine

Norumbega: Barry Rodrigue, del., PO Box 57, Bath
04530.

Maryland

Baltimore IWW: c/o Red Emma's, 800 St. Paul St.,
21202, 410-230-0450, iww@redemmas.org.

Massachusetts

Boston Area GMB: PO Box 391724, Cambridge
02139. 617-469-5162.

Western Mass. Public Service IU 650 Branch: IWW,
Po Box 1581, Northampton 01061.

Western Massachusetts GMB: 43 Taylor Hill Rd.,
Montague 01351. 413-367-9356.

Michigan

Detroit GMB: PO Box 08161, 48208. detroit@iww.org

Grand Rapids GMB: PO Box 6629, 49516. Cole
Dorsey, secretary, 616-881-5263.

Central Michigan: David Finet, 5007 W. Columbia
Rd., Mason 48854. 517-676-9446, happyhippie65@hotmail.com

Minnesota

Twin Cities GMB: PO Box 14111, Minneapolis 55414.
612-339-1266. twincities@iww.org

Missouri

Kansas City GMB: c/o 5506 Holmes St., 64110.
816-523-3995.

Montana

Construction Workers IU 330: Dennis Georg, del.
406-490-3869, trampiu330@aol.com

New Jersey

Central New Jersey GMB: PO Box: 10021, New
Brunswick 08904. 732-979-9973 xaninjurytoallx@yahoo.com

Northern New Jersey GMB: PO Box 844, Saddle
Brook 07663. 201-873-6215. northernnj@iww.org

New Mexico

Albuquerque: 202 Harvard SE, 87106-5505. 505-
331-6132, abq@iww.org.

New York

NYC GMB: PO Box 7430, JAF Station, New York City
10116, iww-nyc@bari.iww.org. Jim Crutchfield, I.U.
650, classify@iww.org.

Upstate NY GMB: PO Box 235, Albany 12207,
518-833-6853 or 861-5627. www.upstate-nyiww.org.
secretary@upstate-ny-iww.org, Rochelle Semel,
del, PO Box 172, Fly Creek 13337, 607-293-6489,
rochelle7@usadatanet.net.

Ohio

Ohio Valley GMB: PO Box 42233, Cincinnati
45242. IU 660: PO Box 317741, Cincinnati 45231,
iu660cincy@hotmail.com.

Oklahoma

Tulsa: Karl Howeth, P.O. Box 213 Medicine Park
73557, 580-529-3360.

Oregon

Lane County: 541-953-3741.

www.eugeneiww.org

Portland Industrial District Council: 311 N. Ivy St.,
97227, 503-231-5488. pdxiwwhall@riseup.net

Pennsylvania

Lancaster GMB: PO Box 796, 17608. membership@LancasterIWW.org
<http://LancasterIWW.org>

Philadelphia GMB: PO Box 42777, 19101. 215-
222-1905. phillyiww@iww.org Union Hall: 4530
Baltimore Ave., 19143.

Paper Crane Press IU 450 Job Shop: papercrane-press@verizon.net, 610-358-9496.

Pittsburgh GMB: PO Box 90315, 15224.
pittsburghiww@yahoo.com

Texas

Austin GMB: PO Box 650011, 78765. waterloowob@monkeywrenchbooks.org, 512-320-8427.

Utah

Salt Lake City GMB: PO Box 520835, 84152-0835.
slcgm@iww.org.

Washington

Bellingham: P.O. Box 1793, 98227. Bellingham-IWW@gmail.com 360-920-6240.

Industrial Transportation Project: Arthur J Miller,
PO Box 5464, Tacoma 98415-0464.

Olympia GMB: PO Box 2775, 98507. 360-956-9256.
olywobs@riseup.net

Seattle GMB: 1122 E. Pike #1142, 98122-3934.
877-815-5684, www.seattleiww.org.

Spokane: Tim Hill, 509-218-9622.

Wisconsin

Madison GMB: PO Box 2442, 53703-2442. www.madisoniww.info. Lakeside Press IU 450 Job Shop:
1334 Williamson, 53703. 608-255-1800. www.lakesidepress.org. Madison Infoshop Job Shop: 1019
Williamson St. #B, 53703. 608-262-9036.

Two Degrees Coffeeshop Job Shop: 307 W. Johnson
St., 53703. 608-257-7888. Just Coffee Job Shop:
www.justcoffee.net.

GDC Local #4: PO. Box 811, 53701. 608-262-9036.

Railroad Workers IU 520: Ron Kaminkow, PO Box
3010, Madison 53704, 608-358-5771. eugene_v_debs_aru@yahoo.com.

Milwaukee GMB: PO Box 070632, 53207. 414-
481-3557.

Anti-Sweatshop Activists Crash PiratesFest 2007

By x361200

On January 28th, IWW members and Friends of Labor infiltrated the Pittsburgh Convention Center floor during Pirates Fest 2007, announcing April 14th as Union Solidarity Night at PNC Park and informing fans, employees, and press about sweatshop exploitation in factories sewing our hometown logo. Pirates Fest is the annual kickoff for the baseball season, a staged media spectacle for the family designed as a promotional vehicle for ticket sales. Through skillful coordination and superior cunning the Pittsburgh IWW rendered the event a textbook example of the Wobbly tradition of creative direct action, education, and international solidarity.

Members of the Pittsburgh IWW and the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance have been talking about sweatshops at PNC Park for years.

"Fans tell us that they expect their team to be accountable for the factories sewing our hometown apparel, but they want to know more," said IWW organizer Kenneth Miller. "It's about time that labor unions combined a night out at PNC Park with some education about the Pirates' sweatshop profiteering. We are confident that local manufacturing workers will understand the need to create solidarity relationships with workers in other parts of the world. We cannot be competitive with people whose human rights are systematically violated at work."

Creating a diversion

Pittsburgh Pirates and Convention Center officials were informed that leaflets regarding sweatshop exploitation in Major League Baseball's supply chain would be distributed to fans entering Pirates Fest. Despite the advance notice, event security threatened participants until the authorities were forced to back

down after realizing that IWW unionists and supporters were unwilling to negotiate away their constitutional rights. This diversionary tactic lulled officials into a false sense of security, providing cover for those inside the Convention Center who did not believe that the Pirates had any right to protect the die-hard element of their consumer market from unpleasant realities regarding the home team's profit margins.

After casing the event floor inside, activists set out to distribute media releases to ticketing staff, Pirates employees, and press organizations, the whole time watching each other's backs and giving away anti-sweatshop 'baseball cards' to fans. Having yet to encounter any unwelcome scrutiny, we made our way to the merchandise booth to gather data on Pirates apparel produced in Vietnam, Bangladesh, Peru, Thailand, and elsewhere. While performing this reconnaissance the effectiveness of the diversionary tactic became apparent, as the merchandise staff proceeded to have a loud conversation about the activities outside without noticing the not-so-discreet behavior of those of us right in front of their face.

"The diversionary tactic worked brilliantly. The Pirates thought they had the situation under control, but we were smarter than that," said Fellow Worker Laney Trautman.

Confronting officials

Following some anti-sweatshop photo-ops, the inside team attempted to deliver a letter to Patty Paytas, Vice-President of Communications for the Pittsburgh Pirates, recent recipient of the Renaissance Communicator of the Year award and PASCA's Human Rights All Star. By this time the Convention Center floor had been subjected to an hour of sweatshop education, and sympathetic employees had warned us that

officials were hunting the Wobblies.

Charging into the private staff area, we found Patty Paytas. Visibly enraged at our presence amongst their precious core consumers and displaying what can only be described as an occupational pettiness, Patty announced that we were not permitted to discuss the daily brutalities inflicted upon workers in the supply chain connected to the Pirates profits in general and her salary in particular. Friend of Labor and community organizer Crystal Gamet graciously thanked Patty for the "small, small steps you have already taken for Human Rights," while instructing her that it was time for "some larger ones." IWW action participants held their ground admirably, inviting the award-winner to join them at the ballpark on April 14 and delivered to her and other team officials a letter requesting information about group ticket prices and an anti-sweatshop message on the jumbotron.

As we were congratulating Patty for being the "Communicator of the Year" and taking our leave, Friend of Labor Hannah Thompson said "We hope you will be as diligent in investigating and correcting workers' rights violations in the Pirates supply chain as you are upholding the rules of distributing materials to fans on the Convention Center floor." With that Patty turned tail, no doubt furiously pondering how she could have been so easily outwitted.

Pirates Fest 2007 was a brilliant tactical success and alerted our home team that the IWW will be coming to the ballgame on April 14th, demanding answers about sweatshops. During the All-Star game in Pittsburgh last year the Pirates committed themselves to "devote serious and proper attention" to evidence of sweatshop exploitation in their supply chain. Their follow up has been unacceptable.



No Sweatshops, Bucco!

Members of the Pittsburgh IWW are now signing up baseball fans for Union Solidarity Night @ PNC Park April 14 when the Pirates play the Giants. A possible theme for the nights is "Sweatshops: The Global Economy on Steroids." Members of the IWW invite Pirates Fans to "register" their favorite items of Pirates apparel for us to research using the Workers Rights Consortium factory database.

Union officer salaries compete for organizing funds

Organizing funds are being stifled by massive salary increases for union officers, according to information filed under the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act.

Between the years 2000 and 2004 (the latest year where complete data is available) the number of union officers and staffers making more than \$100,000 a year more than doubled and those making over \$150,000 increased by 84 per cent.

According to a table compiled by Labor Notes, the four highest paid union officials in the U.S. (excluding pro sports and film production unions) are Donald Doser of IUOE (\$775,279), Douglas Dority of UFCW (\$633,793), John Bowers of ILA (\$568,023) and Terence O'Sullivan of LIUNA (\$457,120).

These figures are for salary alone. When other forms of compensation are factored in, the price tag is even higher.

With so much of members' dues going to line the pockets of bureaucrats, little is left over for organizing expenses. Labor Notes reporter Mark Brenner found that "based on the 2004 data, a \$100,000 salary cap coupled with a ban on multiple salaries would free up \$170 million a year, while a cap of \$150,000 would save \$51 million. Capping total compensation at \$100,000 would free up close to \$300 million, while a \$150,000 cap would save \$86 million."

Added together this money could triple the AFL-CIO's organizing budget at a time when union membership continues to decrease.

IWW Publishes Spanish Newspaper

The IWW published the first issue of Solidaridad, the IWW's new Spanish-language newspaper, in late January. Stories include the IWW warehouse workers' struggle in New York, news from the CNT union in Spain and an update on the situation in Oaxaca, Mexico.

This first issue was a great success. The editorial collective of Solidaridad is seeking writers for the next issue, deadline March 18.

Articles in Spanish are ideal but translators are available so non-Spanish speakers are also welcome to submit articles. In general, limit submissions to 500 words or less.

Please send email submissions and subscription requests to paulbocking@gmail.com .

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.

- 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 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.

Preamble of 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.



A new online battleground for union campaigns

Several years ago, shortly after it was launched I looked into Google's key-word-based online advertising as a tool for trade union campaigns.

I thought it seemed a really good idea, tested it, and promoted its use to unions.

Today, I think that more and more unions and campaigning organizations recognize that by using Google ads, we can send out a subversive message about corporations at a very low price to a very large audience.

But if we think of Google ads as the final word in using the net to promote our campaigns, we are kidding ourselves. Using our imaginations, we can find many more ways, often free of charge, to counter the dominant pro-corporate message and to tell the workers' side of any story.

Yesterday I was demonstrating the use of Google ads to a union which needed to focus attention on a giant transnational corporation which is attempting to smash a local union in south-west Asia. (I won't give any details here for reasons that may become readily apparent in a moment.)

We went to Google, placed our ad, and were delighted to see within minutes that anyone searching for that company, or its flagship product, or even the name of the country where they were attempting to smash a union, would see our ad appearing on top of the Google search results.

But we noticed one other thing too. The first three search results reported by Google were official, company-owned websites. But the fourth was the listing for this company on the Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia.

In other words, anyone looking for information on this company or its well-known products would likely visit the page on the Wikipedia. If only there were a way we could put our own message there ...

I smile as I type this. Anyone who knows anything about the Wikipedia knows that unlike more traditional encyclopedias, this one is based on the technology of Wikis – meaning that anyone who can read a page can write to it. It's entirely user-controlled.

So while demonstrating the use of Google ads to my colleague yesterday, I suggested that we click on the link to the Wikipedia page about this company – and that we include our own subversive

message there.

You don't need an account on the Wikipedia to do anything – you can make changes anonymously – but it helps and adds some credibility if you do sign up and, in essence, sign what you do. So I signed in, having earlier set up an account there.

We went into a section of the page about this company, and entered a single paragraph, filled with links to the union website, pointing out that this company has been engaged in union-busting in this country in 2007.

A second or two later, our account of what had happened was live on the Wikipedia. If you were looking up this company or its most famous product on Google, this is the first page you'd find in its listings after the official company pages.

The story doesn't end there, however. As this is a very well-known company, the pages on the wikipedia are constantly being edited and reviewed by volunteers. Within 24 hours, our change had disappeared – not because the company censored it, but because we'd put it on the page devoted to criticizing the company's product, not the company itself.

That, it turns out, is another page entirely – now updated with the original text we used.

I learned a few things from this experience.

First, we should always incorporate the Wikipedia into any online campaigns we wage – and even into organizing

campaigns that are waged offline. People checking out Starbucks on the Wikipedia, to choose an example relevant to this union, will find exactly the kind of effort we are looking for. The sub-section of Wikipedia's Starbucks page entitled "Labor disputes" includes a paragraph which begins, "Since 2004, Starbucks employees at several locations in New York City and Chicago have joined the Industrial Workers of the World labor union, calling themselves the IWW Starbucks Workers Union." And the Starbucks Workers Union is, in turn, a separate page on the Wikipedia. All unions and campaigning organizations should follow this model.

Second, we should be aware of, and sensitive to, how a free, open-source, volunteer-based project like the Wikipedia works. We should create accounts and make our changes under our own names, not anonymously. We should pay attention to Wikipedia's unique syntax, making sure that our change and additions to pages are written as they should be, with proper links. No other volunteer should have to come in a clean up our mess.

Third, we cannot simply post and forget, as the first example I gave showed. Either because we've made a mistake (for example, posting to the wrong page) or because someone is trying to censor us, we have to monitor regularly whether the change we made is still there.

continued on P. 10



The game of Credit is a sport actively participated in by most Americans today. In some of its aspects it resembles a duel of wits. In other respects it's a blind gamble, elevated to a plain of respectability by common practice.

The game is indulged in by grown-up children with a nostalgic yearning for pampered nursery days when they yelled for immediate gratification of all their whims. Now, instead of yelling for candy, they stock their homes with furniture, hang new clothes in their closets, park shiny deluxe autos in their garages right now—and pay later.

Like chess and poker, Credit adopts a set of rules, an elaborate formula which the players apply most studiously. There are two contestants, Business and the Consumer. One of the parties in this contest lays down the rules of the game for the other party. This appears a bit unfair to the spectator. Most players, however, accept this as a normal arrangement.

Rule #1 is Psychological Conditioning. In order to lure the prospective customer into the store and induce him to consent to play this one-sided game, Business must plant all kinds of snares. Subtle advertising in press and TV, alluring window display aesthetically arranged under soft violet lights inveigle him inside where experienced clerks and credit personnel take him in hand. From them he learns the apparent advantage to be derived from shopping without paying cash, of paying later, month by weary month. A charming girl presents him with a metal charge account plate or attractive card—his membership on the team playing Credit. Now he is in, he becomes a regular fellow, a Solid Citizen.

Rule #2 is the Concealed Penalty. It is a slightly veiled factor not stressed in the suave circles of the credit office. The service charge is an appendage attached to the convenient lump sum Customer pays at the end of the month. Even

more subtle is the higher price he pays for each item in the credit store than he would pay elsewhere. Some customers don't play a fair game, you know, so all the other customers must compensate for the consequent loss to Business. Besides, all of Business' little helpers—the typists, file clerks, phone clerks, correspondents, interviewers, checkers—must be paid a token for their services. That is, Customer must pay.

Rule #3 is the Rule of Forfeiture. Now the game of Credit gets rough. The artful dodge is a maneuver tried by a few customers when they (1) lose their jobs and (2) become fully conscious of what has happened to them in steps #1 and #2 of the game. They moved to another address—with partly paid-for furniture, clothes, auto—and refuse to answer the doorbell.

But Business is also resourceful. The climax of the credit game is the most dramatic, the most challenging to skill. While this lively contest between Business and Consumer is in progress, many minor functionaries are busy behind the scenes. An elaborate intelligence system gathers facts, reports data. Paper work stacks up. Phones jingle. File clerks, those guardians of the secret archives of Business, track down personal information. The skip tracer, and finally the sheriff join the contest on the side of Business. The chase is close, with Consumer darting around corners and Business in hot pursuit. There comes the day when Consumer feels a tap on his shoulder. Someone whispers, "The game is up".

Business has one last ploy: Credit rating. This little device delivers the coup de grâce. It marks Consumer forever as a bad risk, a cheat. He is odd man out. Nobody will play Credit with him. Now, are you ready to play?



Leicestershire IWW Joins Protest Against Deporting 50 Kurds to Iraq

By X352032

Leicester, U.K. – Saturday, February 10, 2007 – Between 250-300 Iraqi Kurds, supporters and curious spectators gathered in front of the historic clock tower in Leicester's bustling city centre in a spirited rally, chanting slogans, waving placards and heating up an otherwise damp, chilly afternoon.

The demonstration, organized by the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees in conjunction with protests in London and Manchester, denounced New Labour's plan to forcibly deport over 50 recently detained Kurdish asylum seekers back to war-torn Iraq on a "charter flight", scheduled to depart on February 12. The detainees are being held at Royal Air Force Brize Norton military base in Oxfordshire.

Aside from the obvious danger of living under the U.S./British occupation, the asylum seekers also face sectarian violence by various extremist groups and political factions, food and water shortages, a lack of proper medical facilities, and an uncertain existence in a politically unstable region characterized by

"I never hear them complaining about the politicians and capitalists who get rich from the misery they've caused in those same countries."

increasing numbers of displaced people, unemployment, and inadequate housing.

Members of the Leicestershire IWW General Membership Branch joined the demonstrators in solidarity, condemning the callous policy of deporting refugees from England to a country that the British armed forces helped to destabilize.

Branch Secretary Rob Blow gave a rousing, well-received speech, linking the plight of the asylum seekers to the neoliberal economic system that allows capital to move freely across borders while severely restricting the free movement of people. "Politicians and the newspapers complain about asylum seekers and are keen to send them back to countries devastated by dictatorship,

war and terrorism," said Blow, "but I never hear them complaining about the politicians and capitalists who get rich from the misery they've caused in those same countries." Meanwhile other members of the branch, situated around the IWW banner (the only union banner present) distributed 200 bilingual English/Arabic IWW leaflets to the crowd.

Like many ethnic groups and newly arrived immigrants in Leicester, Iraqi-Kurds are often employed in low-wage,

precarious service sector jobs. According to one local IWW organizer with contacts in the Kurdish community, some workers routinely are earning below minimum wage.

The Leicestershire IWW will continue to organize amongst the many ethnic working class sectors of the region in order to improve wages and working conditions by building workers' power on the shop floor through solidarity unionism.

NYC warehouse workers need solidarity

Immigrant warehouse workers at Sunrise Plus, Top City, Handyfat, Amersino and Big Giant Apple in New York City are waging a courageous battle against poverty wages and sweatshop-like conditions. Despite the bosses' best attempts to crush the union, the struggle continues. Recently the union has organized three large demonstrations and is picketing and leafleting on an ongoing basis. After December's mass firings, there is an urgent need for financial support. Many people have given generously, but so far the union has only raised only about one tenth of the money they had to pay out. The shortage has been made up out of some individual workers' pockets and we'd like to pay them back. The NYC General Membership Branch of the IWW is asking everyone who hasn't yet made a donation to step up and give whatever they can.

Please show some solidarity for our fellow workers in New York.



Send financial contributions to:

New York City Industrial Workers of the World, P.O. Box 8266, J.A.F. Station, New York, NY 10116.

Or, you can contribute on-line through PayPal by making a payment to iww-nyc@iww.org, at www.paypal.com. You can also sign up on PayPal for a monthly, automatic payment in any amount that's manageable for you.

Thank you for your support!

General Strikes in Guinea, Zimbabwe

Guinean president orders crackdown

The Guinean president has ordered martial law in response to a general strike by the country's union movement.

The unionists want the president's resignation.

This latest strike follows an 18-day strike in January that forced the president to promise he would hand over power to the prime minister. He broke his promise, said union leaders, by naming a man too close to him. More than 50 people died when troops opened fire on protesters in January.

So far, clashes between the army and strikers have reportedly killed nine people in the capital, Conakry.

Corruption allegations and a perception the president is too sick with diabetes to rule are factors in the unrest.

Zimbabwean unions set deadline

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has given the government until February 23 to address workers' grievances or face a nationwide general strike. The government has a history of using military force to crush strikes. Last September ZCTU Secretary General Wellington Chibebwe and about 30 other union leaders were severely beaten and tortured by police for attempting to organize peaceful demonstrations. Yet the threat of repression did little to quell the mounting pressure for a general strike. Doctors are already on strike, refusing to work for wages that are worthless thanks to inflation. State-employed electricians and tobacco workers are also threatening to strike. The teachers union has announced a slow-down, which organizers warn could escalate into a full-scale strike. The government has yet to reply.

Smithfield Meatpackers Walk Out For MLK Day

Immigration raids against undocumented workers continue to reinforce an atmosphere of fear and repression in the meatpacking industry. One month after a massive raid on nearly 1,300 workers at Swift & Co., Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has arrested 21 immigrant workers at Smithfield Foods in Tar Heel, North Carolina.

Many workers believe the raid is in retaliation for a walkout staged by workers on Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day.

On January 15, 400-500 Smithfield workers—who are engaged in a long-standing unionization struggle—refused to work, protesting the company's decision not to give them the day off in honor of King. Many of the workers also attended a rally the same day.

Many other workers signed a petition demanding that the company honor MLK day but refrained from walking out because the company publicly and privately threatened to fire them if they did. After the walkout Smithfield recanted this threat, lending credibility to the union. Smithfield workers continue to organize and assert their right to form a union.

These workers have withstood illegal firings, beatings, threats, racist epithets

and other attempts to crush their United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)-affiliated organizing committee.

Jesus or King?

The MLK Day dispute was the latest chapter to unfold in this ongoing struggle. On January 9, Smithfield Vice President Larry Johnson refused to accept a petition by workers to have King's birthday off as a paid holiday. According to Smithfield worker Keith Ludlum, Johnson argued that workers already made their choice when they were recently told to vote on whether they could have a paid holiday for Martin Luther King Day or Easter. The workers chose Easter. This explanation, however, did not satisfy the workers.

"What we're telling the company," said Ludlum, "is they're asking us to choose between Jesus and Martin Luther King. We think they're both important and we should honor both of them."

During the lead up to the MLK Day action, organizers worked to mend the rift that existed between Smithfield's black and Latino/a workers (the latter of whom make up the majority of the workforce). Spanish-language leaflets were distributed to educate recent immigrants about the legacy of Martin Luther King

and his commitment to workers rights. The leaflets explain that King was assassinated while supporting a sanitation workers strike in Memphis, Tennessee.

According to UFCW organizer Eduardo Peña, the educational work paid off.

"We've got Latino workers here ready to walk out for the holiday," Peña told journalist William Johnson.

"I hear them saying things like, 'People assume that we don't know who King was—his struggle was the same struggle we're going through now'."

For their solidarity, the Latino/a workers were rewarded with an immigration raid, which took place on January 24.

Although ICE spokespeople told the Associated Press that the workers were arrested on "administrative immigration charges", Peña and others suspect that Smithfield Foods colluded with the government to orchestrate the raid in retaliation for the walkout.

Breaking the silence

The Smithfield struggle poses a serious threat to meat industry bosses because it represents a break from the longstanding tradition of submission among meatpackers. According to a 2001 article in Mother Jones magazine,

these workers are "unlikely to complain or challenge authority, to file lawsuits, organize unions or fight for their legal rights. They tend to be poor, vulnerable and fearful. From the industry's point of view, they are ideal workers: Cheap, largely interchangeable and disposable."

If Smithfield workers get their way, they will establish a historic precedent and usher in a new era of hope for others in their situation. To do this, they must face not only their bosses but also the might of the federal government. Only through solidarity will this be possible.

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SEIU Stern Wants Wal-Mart as Partner

Strange bedfellows or dream match?

In a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, SEIU President and Change to Win co-founder Andy Stern dismissed the idea of organizing Wal-Mart workers in the United States.

"We have not been trying to organize them but to change their business model," said Stern.

Going back on earlier statements made when he was still part of the AFL-CIO, Stern argued that a traditional organizing drive at Wal-Mart would be destined for failure, citing the company's incredible size and rabidly anti-union management team.

His solution? If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

"I think Wal-Mart has the opportunity to create an entirely new model of worker representation," Stern said in the January 22 interview. "The question is, do they want partners?"

Removing any doubts about what this meant, Stern explained: "We must try to be partners with our employers, who have told us we should change and

understand their competitive issues and try to add value, not create problems." He added: "Unions need to appreciate there are ways in which we add value and can be helpful. This is especially the case in relation to healthcare. The employer-based healthcare system is dead. It's a relic of the industrial economy, and it makes corporations unable to compete fairly when America is the only country that asks its employers to put the price of healthcare on the cost of its products."

To execute this plan, Stern and Wal-Mart have announced a health care "partnership" along with Intel Corp., AT&T and Kelley Services Inc. The goal of the partnership is ostensibly to push for universal health care coverage, presumably by placing the financial burden on taxpayers.

Wal-Mart, notorious for its expensive and inadequate healthcare plan (which many of its employees cannot even afford), has proposed "no specific policies...to achieve this goal", according to a February 7 report by the Associated

NEWS ITEM: WAL-MART CHARGED IN LARGEST SEX-DISCRIMINATION CASE IN HISTORY



Press. According to the AP, "Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott said that Wal-Mart is not committed to spending more on health care or making any immediate promises to provide health coverage to more workers."

Labor activists are criticizing this plan as little more than a PR gift from Stern to Wal-Mart, the world's largest union buster. Stern's statements are a shocking about-face from the strong anti-collaboration stance that SEIU took toward Wal-Mart less than two years ago. On May 15, 2005 the Washington Post reported that SEIU leader Anna

Burger had written a public letter to the Congressional Black Caucus, blasting them for participating in a joint fundraiser with Wal-Mart. According to the report, Burger wrote the letter "to express SEIU's disappointment that the Congressional Black Caucus has given Wal-Mart an opportunity to fashion a false image as a friend of African Americans and of working people generally by organizing the April 27 joint fundraiser."

Now Stern and his cohorts have a lot of explaining to do. The key question he must answer from the labor movement is: "Which side are you on?"

Harley-Davidson Workers Locked Out

By x355028

Union workers at a Harley-Davidson Motorcycles plant in York, Pennsylvania went on strike on Friday, February 2nd. The strike was scheduled to begin Friday at 12:01am.

On Thursday morning workers were surprised to find that they were locked out when they arrived to work. When the company heard the union was preparing to strike, they locked the gates and shut down the plant. And so begins yet another story of corporate greed in America.

In the 80's when Harley-Davidson was going through tough times, the union stood by the company and helped create what is now a very profitable

enterprise. Now the company wants concessions from workers while it is making record profits. They want to start new employees at a lower wage and make current employees start paying for health care. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 175 voted to strike. The strike passed by a 98 percent margin.

The Lancaster General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World visited these hard-working women and men at the picket line. When we arrived at the gate we were greeted by friendly workers toughing it out in extremely cold weather. Some made little shelters from plywood and tarps to contain the heat from kerosene heaters. All were very friendly and anxious to talk

about the situation. They talked about how top CEOs are making astronomical salaries but won't even provide their employees with free health care.

Harley is making more money than ever and they want to start taking away from their workers. That's a slap in the face to the workers. Workers are the backbone of any industry. They do most of the work and reap less of the profits. If you work for a company as large as Harley-Davidson there is no reason in the world that you can't give your employees health care without making them pay for it.

People that work for Harley love the product. They put their heart and soul into it. Harley is as American as apple pie, as one striker put it.

And it is true: Most Americans love Harleys; it is part of our culture. I wish the company could see that and understand they are making themselves look bad when they are not supporting their employees.

What kind of image are they setting for themselves? Is this American to have a profitable business and not offer a fair wage or free health care to your employees? I am proud of the workers of Harley for standing up for themselves. You put a lot on the line when you decide to strike. Workers and their families suffer. It also takes a lot of strength to stand outside in freezing cold temperatures to make your point. Solidarity to all the workers. Stand strong! Don't settle for a contract that isn't fair.

Volkswagen to close factories in Brussels

By Workers Initiative, Poland

Volkswagen has decided to move the production of the Golf from Brussels to Mosel and Wolfsburg in Germany. This means that 4,000 out of 5,400 jobs in Brussels are threatened by redundancy. A similar fate may await 1,000 jobs in VW Pamplona, Spain and VW Palmela in Portugal.

The VW workers started a spontaneous strike in response. The Workers' Initiative organized the leaflets action in solidarity with the workers' struggle in December, distributing more than 2,000 leaflets.

The strike began on November 17. On November 21 the workers started a sit-in in the factory in order to prevent the transport of products and machines. In the talks with the trade unions, VW refused to make any promises. The unions solicited good conditions for the early retirement of over-50-year-olds without success.

On a meeting on November 23 VW workers in Brussels decided to continue the strike until the middle of December. On December 2, there was an international union demonstration in Brussels with between 15,000 (police numbers) and 30,000 (organizers' numbers) participants.

The employees interpreted the consortium's actions as an attack on their life conditions. However, the media shows that struggle as a desperate act against fatality. The background to the conflict in Belgium is an agreement of the German trade unions to extend the official working week from 28.8 to 33 hours for the same wage.

Currently, the trade unions in the consortium do everything to make the radical fight impossible. They focus discussion on trivial items at the negotiating level, thus revealing their acceptance of the pending job cuts.

On a company-wide, transnational scale, the rhetoric of the trade unions shows only a narrow national concern and not a focus on the welfare of all Volkswagen workers internationally. Certainly, such politics lead to nowhere and allows the closing down of one factory after another. Taken in a long term perspective, the company's actions threaten all European jobs.

That's why the only way is the resistance against national trade unions boundaries and leading common fight on the basis of workers' self-organizing above national divisions.

Scottish workers occupy Simclar

Closure blamed on inability to compete. workers disagree

Electronics manufacturer Simclar Ayrshire fired 450 workers on January 29 and closed two factories in Kilwinning and Irvine, citing their inability to compete and claiming bankruptcy in the county. Workers received no notice of the closures.

The closure is another blow to Scotland's manufacturing industry. "Simclar management have acted more like Victorian mill owners than responsible 21st century business people," said Willie Paterson, the regional secretary for the workers' union, Community.

At least 20 workers responded by occupying the Kilwinning factory on February 2 during a picket of the factory. Workers occupied the factory to prevent the removal and sale of its machinery, accusing Simclar of asset stripping and demanding better redundancy pay.

Community said the occupation helped highlight the "despicable way" Simclar treated them, although it remains unclear why the union called it off so quickly.

Simclar workers on simclarthetruth.blogspot.com said that Simclar's claim of a fall in business making the factories unviable is far from the truth.

"Simclar management have acted more like Victorian mill owners..."

"Simclar (Ayrshire) had a full order book for the next 9 months with existing customers such as NCR & Motorola quoting for new business. We had just won a major order to supply 150 sheet metal parts to Alcatel-Lucent, a major supplier to the telecommunications industry for the global market. [...] Does this really sound to you like a company facing 'challenging business conditions?'"

Since the end of the occupation, Community has turned to lobbying the Scottish Parliament, calling for an investigation into Simclar's closure of the plants. It has also issued an appeal for solidarity donations to help the fired workers whose last pay is mired in bankruptcy proceedings.

Community has 34,528 members in the United Kingdom.

Raising a Working-Class Culture

Twin Cities IWW provide childcare to include parents, men and women, in the union

By Erik Davis

Building a radical working class culture is part of the aim of many activists, unionists, and workers. For us in the Industrial Workers of the World, that idea is actually built into the Preamble to our constitution. The Preamble states that “By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.” But it is not only our workplaces that need reorganization and solidarity: it’s also our homes and families, no matter what they look like. Women and single parents are especially hard hit by the way in which capitalism considers childrearing a ‘personal choice’ with no bearing on employer responsibilities. Pregnant women are pressured to leave decent jobs, and after giving birth find it increasingly difficult to find a job that will pay their bills. No parent wants to give up their children, but our society makes it intensely difficult to both have children and care for them. This burden falls disproportionately on women. Working women are 41% more likely to live in poverty than men, according to a study published by policy research center Legal Momentum. Of all the adults living in extreme poverty—defined as making less than half of the poverty standard—sixty percent are women.

Childcare is a part of this problem. Parents who need to work to pay for housing, clothing, and groceries need to pay for childcare, and the average monthly cost of childcare in 2003 was \$340. Single women are again hit disproportionately by this problem. Although men (like the author of this sentence) may talk a lot about gender equality and feminism, we rarely pull equal weight in the home, whether the work involved is the raising of our own children or the doing of the dishes. Even in dual-income families, women still do the vast majority of this ‘reproductive labor.’ Increasingly, we recognize the importance of supporting parents and children within the activist and union culture. Once they have children, new parents—especially mothers—often find themselves marginalized and overworked by the very movements that they helped build. Dependable childcare is often not provided at events. This is a problem for all parents, but women are the hardest hit. Across nearly every category, women still do the vast bulk of childrearing. While women are doing this

most vital of labors, radical men tend to have more relative freedom to engage in public work, union organizing, or activism. By default, men continue to dominate our institutions, set our priorities, and find themselves as the most active members of our union.

Raising children is both difficult and rewarding: it takes endurance, compassion, and a balance of mind that pushes our limits and our buttons! But it also requires resources—food, housing, clothing, medicine. Most parents work to meet these requirements. Without including children and working families in our lives we cannot expect our new culture to grow and sustain itself, or for the lessons we learn to be passed on to the next generation. Similarly, children and families without a community to rely on quickly fall away from movements. We need each other.

And yet, demands delivered to employers are much less likely to include the ‘feminine’ concerns of rank-and-file women and parents, and even less likely to receive full union support. Looking around our own local branches, the vast majority of the faces in the meetings could grow beards. Wobblers at the General Membership Branch of the Twin Cities IWW became increasingly concerned about this trend, which is not limited to union meetings but crosses the spectrum of unions, activist groups, and even socializing in public, and began to think of ways to address this problem. In Summer 2006 the branch decided to mandate that childcare would be available at all union events. By September, the branch had drafted and approved a document outlining expectations of both union volunteers providing childcare, and parents bringing their children. We hope that by doing this we are starting to take some small steps toward building a more robust and sustainable radical workers’ movement. Childcare is provided at all union meetings and events, from business meetings to classes at the new Work People’s College. Since November, we have also held a monthly children’s event called “Paidea” - the Greek word for education, and a word that implies the development of an autonomous culture. This event is currently held only one three-hour period a month (the last Thursday of each month), but it’s growing, and bringing our branch new attention from groups which had previously not been interested, or not had the time to get involved.

FW Jeff Pilacinski of the Twin Cities GMB and Industrial Union 620, understands this project as both an expression of basic worker solidarity and good branch-building strategy.

“Organizing and building solidarity at your workplace is taxing. With some of our most dedicated branch organizers being working parents, burnout is a very real danger for them”, Pilacinski explained.

“Providing some space for IWW parents to participate in the class struggle and/or recharge is critical for the continued growth of the One Big Union. Between the weight of the bosses and the incredible responsibilities of parenthood, this is the least fellow workers can do for one another.”

There’s nothing unusual about what we do at Paidea: no strange practices or ‘radical singalongs’ (unless the children demand them). We’re terribly ‘normal,’ except that we don’t use television to pacify the children, and we take children seriously. We’ve done everything from read books to play basketball to help tutor students with their math homework. Volunteers benefit by learning with and from the children. But the most important benefit is intended for the overworked parents who haven’t had time to themselves in months—no time for spouses, lovers, friends, or community. No time to read or go on a walk. No time to soak in a warm bathtub. Once a month we offer three hours for these parents to recuperate their sense of self, so that they can return to their children more energized and prepared, and hopefully remain active in the working class culture we’re helping to develop.

The example of Kathryn is instructive. Kathryn is a part-time ESL teacher and mother of a two-year old. She is highly active in the radical community of the Twin Cities, though not a wobbler. For her, childcare is one of the keys to allowing her to continue to do both her paid labor and her activist work. She says that “This program definitely fills a need; I often cannot afford to pay for childcare, and this program allows me to accomplish specific tasks or to relax and regroup, both things that are harder to accomplish while with a small child.”

We have chosen to start small: if this project grows, and shows the results we want and need, we may choose to offer it more often. Some of us would certainly like to. So far, all the volunteers for Paidea have been over-committed unionists for whom this is yet another, albeit wonderful and different, commitment. One of the members is a parent of two who has had three nights to himself in the last two years. We know it’s a humble beginning, but we hope it’s also a real one: we know that our community needs to grow, and that we will grow stronger and more comprehensive as a union if we support working parents.

‘Paidea: Radical Babysitting,’ happens on the third Thursday of every month. Parents and guardians are encouraged to contact the IWW with questions, come visit and observe, or reserve a space. We will refuse to accept more children than can be handled by our volunteers, so reservations are accepted, and will help us plan staffing to accept as many children as we can. We are always looking for more volunteers from the community. Come and see us! Please call the Twin Cities IWW with questions at: (612) 339-1266, or email us at twincities@iww.org.

Palestinian union fed faces attacks

The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) suffered multiple attacks in late January and early February. Around 2 AM on January 29, the home of its Deputy General Secretary Rasem Al Bayari was bombed and shot at by unknown gunmen. The attackers returned the following night. Al Bayari was reported not injured although the front entrance of his house was destroyed.

On February 2, a rocket destroyed the PGFTU’s Gaza headquarters and the federation’s “Voice of Workers” radio

station. Two days later, the PGFTU led a march through Ramallah protesting the attacks and declaring that they would not be silenced.

“This attack will not silence the workers and will not stop our activities to build structures of the Palestinian state for the benefit of our people and workers,” the organization said in a statement. Unions and human rights groups from around the world are calling on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to stop the violence and uphold the rights of Palestinian unionists.

Workers Initiative tangles with Polish Post

Workers’ Initiative in Poland is accusing Polish Post (Poczta Polska) of targeting trade union activists and protesters following a series of wildcat strikes in November 2006. A well-known strike leader, Bartosz Kantorczyk, was moved to another post office, separating him from his fellow workers. Other activists

were threatened with being sacked for their support of the wildcats and their demands for workers rights.

Workers’ Initiative has responded by promising pickets at post offices in Gdansk, Poznan, and Warsaw. They are demanding that Kantorczyk be moved back to his job.



Employee Free Choice Act introduced in US Congress

A new piece of legislation called the Employee Free Choice Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) on February 6 with 231 cosponsors and bipartisan support.

The bill would help protect workers’ right to form unions and bargain by strengthening penalties for companies that coerce or intimidate employees, establishing mediation and binding arbitration when the employer and workers cannot agree on a first contract, and enabling employees to form unions when a majority decide to join the union by signing authorization cards.

This last provision circumvents the National Labor Relations Board election process, which can take months or even years and generally favors the employer.

Union leaders are expressing strong support for the Act. According to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, the bill brings “fresh hope to millions of America’s workers who desperately want and need the free choice to join or form a union to improve their families’ lives.”

On the other hand, the binding arbitration clause—depending on how it is worded in the final version of the bill—could represent a threat to workers’ right to strike.

Should the Act pass, it is not clear whether it will genuinely strengthen workers’ rights or merely serve to streamline the collaborationist labor-management model advocated by the business unions and many employers.

Solidarity with Iranian Workers

By John Kalwaic

When Western political pundits discuss Iran, it can usually be assumed that they are talking about the country's relationship to Israel, the United States, and occupied Iraq. (Discussion of Iran's nuclear capabilities also falls under this category). Even in news sources such as the BBC, the political dynamics inside Iran are rarely discussed. Yet in recent times there has been an upsurge of labor unrest in Iran that rivals that of any other country. While we can applaud this ongoing worker uprising, we must remain mindful that it exists alongside a great deal of suppression.

The Islamic Shoras

In Iran there is only one official labor union known as the House of Labor. It is controlled by Iran's theocratic government. The only other official labor bodies in Iran are the Islamic Shoras: government installed worker-management mediation committees that most often side with management. These committees were created by the government to co-opt and smash the real Shoras which were created by the workers themselves during the 1979 revolution against the Shah, as they were deposing the capitalist management and putting factories under the self-management of the workers. The new Islamic government found this to be as much of a threat as the Shah did, and replaced them with "Islamic Shoras" that answered to the government and the factory management. There is a good deal of similarity with this and the way Bolsheviks suppressed and co-opted the Soviets and workers councils after the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Post-revolution politics

After the 1979 revolution, the new Islamist government nationalized most of the major industries, which had been owned by foreign western corporations under the Shah. However, this did not last after the death of the first Ayatollah (Ruhollah Khomeini). A more moderate and clever politician named Akbar Ruffshanjani came into power as president. He and his Executives of Construction (ECs) political party set Iran on a neo-liberal course for privatization, foreign investment, and corporate downsizing. This agenda did not leave room for any reforms regarding state controlled labor unions and labor councils. As a result, a grassroots movement among the working class began to form against privatization. This movement began to form alliances with professional middle class and student groups who already despised the clerical regime. The leftist tradition among the workers had already been marginalized both because of enormous repression by both the Shah and the clerical regime and because of widespread disillusionment with Marxist-Leninism following the fall of the Soviet Union. This gave way to a somewhat more horizontal rather than a vanguard approach, in part leading to reform-minded president Mohamed Khatami and his Iran Islamic Participation Front/Party (IIPF) to be "elected" to power. This president was slightly more to the political left than previous Ayatollah's and presidents. He loosened censorship and repression against political dissidents, and restrictions on the rights of women were relaxed. Unlike Rafsanjani, Khatami did this without wholeheartedly embracing the neo-liberal agenda. He also attempted to appear more like an advocate for an "Islamic democracy." But many leftist, labor and student groups viewed him as a usurper and as fake reformer.

The grassroots movement of labor, women and student groups only grew larger. And the antics of both grassroots movements and the reform minded politicians alarmed the new Ayatollah (Ali Khamenei) and the other clerics. As a result the clerics banned Khatami and his IIPF party from running for reelection (a power afforded to them under Iran's theocratic constitution). Instead, the only candidates allowed to run for president were Rafsanjani EC party and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's more populist (but rigidly fundamentalist) Islamic Society Coalition (ISC). Amudinijad and the ISC won in a landslide victory.

In the western press this was seen as a victory of fundamentalism over reformism with the Iranian masses, and it might appear so to us at first glance too. However, consider the fact that only two parties were allowed to run: Amudinijad and the ISC versus Rafsanjani and his ECs. The few people who voted preferred Ahmadinejad and his populist rhetoric for the poor and peasant classes to Rafsanjani and his neo-liberal agenda and corrupt politics. In many ways Bush himself was responsible for this occurrence. After his infamous "War on Terror" and his labeling Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil" the clerics in Iran knew they could stir up nationalist and religious sentiment against the United States as a way of distracting from issues at home.

Amudinijad shows his true stripes

Amudinijad is credited for being from a working class background and for redistributing some land to poor peasants. However, his labor record shows a different story: Since his ascension to power, repression of labor rights has risen to new levels. Workers who have attempted to strike have been arrested,

fired, and bullied by armed thugs. Bus workers, who tried to form an independent labor union known as the Workers Syndicate of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Syndeket Vahed), were all fired and the leaders were arrested by Iranian authorities. These workers were most likely clamped down upon because they did not go through the state-controlled House of Labor or the Islamic Shoras.

Only recently has the primary leader of the union, Monsour Oslanoo, been released from jail after much international outcry. There have also been multiple attempts to strike this last year. Workers who went on strike at a tire factory formed a barricade of burning tires to prevent armed thugs from assaulting them. In December 2006, carpet workers gathered in front of government buildings to protest non-payment of their wages. Many of these workers were beaten or arrested.

Recently on January 30, workers at Iran's largest ship building company (Iran Sadra) went on a spontaneous strike to protest the sacking of 38 of their colleagues. About 150 workers were arrested on February 2 after the Sadra management complained to the government that the public order had been disturbed because of their protest. There are countless other stories of Iranian workers not being paid by corporations or getting fired for union activity and beaten or arrested by police or armed thugs for picket line activity.

President Amudinijad has made repeated statements denying the Holocaust. This President made a mockery of anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism by holding a conference at a university in Tehran where some of the world's worst right wing bigots came to this conference including former US Ku Klux Klan

member David Duke. Students protested outside of the conference, calling for humanist socialism and an end to war and "Sexual Apartheid". Despite its anti-occupation rhetoric, the Iranian government has ties to Shi'a Muslim political parties that support and participate in the occupied government of Iraq. The invasion and occupation of its neighbor has increased the Iranian government's influence in Iraq.

Solidarity, not war

Activists often forget that when defending a country against the immediate threat of nuclear war and invasion, they can still support that country's workers against oppression by their government. If this element of solidarity is ignored, it leaves wide open the chances for right-leaning imperialists to co-opt any seemingly progressive movement in that country. It is also important that the Western Left keep up its opposition to any neo-conservative plans to attack or bomb Iran. Imperialist powers will often exploit the oppressiveness of an anti-western regime in order to vilify the country. Already British Prime Minister Tony Blair has been quick to point out the suppression of Iranian workers when his own record of labor rights is poor. They claim to support workers rights against Islamists. But for the Iranian workers, Islamism is not the issue. The issue is the corporate global attack on workers rights, whether that oppression comes from Islamists, Christians or neo-liberals. Iranian progressive, labor, women and student groups have denounced Bush and his attempt at an attack on Iran. It is definitely possible to show solidarity with the people of Iran without supporting the Iranian government. Progressives in the West must take a stand against Bush, Amudinijad and any other dictator or imperialist oppressor.

For more information, visit www.ete-hadchap.org/antiwar-sanctions.html

Oaxaca on the barricades

By "Jaime"

"It's gonna be an intense night. We just found this out that they're gonna come at us..."

That's what I wrote on the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 1, 2006, from the Santa Lucia del Camino colonia in Oaxaca City. I'd been there since mid-September, and, when things started to get hot, I started sending regular updates to friends and compañera/os in the U.S.

On Nov. 1, we discovered, through a neighborhood informant, that the same shock groups of PRIistas (loyalists to the Institutional Party of the Revolution, or PRI) who killed U.S.-based Indymedia journalist Brad Will a block away from my house the week before, had agreed to "throw out" our house: more than likely, that meant a middle-of-the-night raid, with bricks and guns and pick-up trucks.

The house in question is the space of the Magonista group CIPO-RFM (Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca - Ricardo Flores Magón). After months of peasant, workers, student, and neighborhood groups controlling the city through popular assemblies, barricades, and occupations, the federal government sent in the Federal Preventative Police to establish "order." But this violent, repressive, and lawless "order" created an opportunity for the PRIistas to do what they do best: intimidate, beat, or "disappear" anyone who won't accept their brutal model of statecraft.

This insurgency, gestating for years in the villages and colonias of this poverty-stricken, and largely indigenous, state, took on its current form after the violent dislodgement of striking teachers and supporters from the central plaza of Oaxaca City on June 14. The

PRIistas have yet to attack the house, a fact undoubtedly due to the amounts of international solidarity (in terms of publicity and money) that came from people around the world, including many IWW fellow workers. The following is an excerpt from a diary entry October 12, 2006.

Little Chato will soon become "el comandante"... He's probably 12 years old.

"Early" evening -- at about 10 pm -- is the most dangerous at the barricades. It's when we're probably fewest, and it's when we need to set up the barricades for the night. It's when we hang around a street corner between the Santa Lucia and Calicanto neighborhoods, trying to look inconspicuous, waiting for the rest of the compañeros to show up. It's the liminal moment when little Chato, a neighborhood kid with a Yankees cap, will soon become "el comandante," a balaclava'd militant who's usually in charge of the walkie talkie.

He's probably 12 years old.

The other side attacks when we're weak, and we're weak when we're few, and when our barricades our not yet up we're vulnerable.

My hooded sweatshirt helps me pass as a legitimate loiterer, and when a police patrol truck with probably 12 officers approaches, I scurry into the little snack shop on the corner. The others -- still trying to look inconspicuous -- say it will turn around and come back.

Suddenly Chato is yelling. "Hide yourself!"

The truck turned around early. I follow him as we race into his parents' pantry a few doors down. Chato and some of the other youngsters giggle nervously. They don't necessarily understand the gravity of some of what is happening.

Later in the night we'll have to explain to el comandante why several compas won't be with us for at least a week. Two of them seem to have been targeted during the last police attack, last week, which I wrote about in my last entry. And they had recently gotten some death threats. They're were going to leave the state for a while.

Back at the snack shop, a little boy explains to me and his mother that the police truck has stopped at the grassy lot maybe a half mile from us. We'll have to get the barricades up quick.

Within a half hour, three big trucks and buses have been commandeered. One bus driver tried to drive through, rather than stop as ordered, and the bus was pelted with re-bar and paving stones.

If the barricade was up down the road, the compas would surely stop the bus and detain the driver for a while, perhaps hog-tying him, perhaps stripping him, perhaps neither. Most drivers oblige and let us use their trucks as barricades, perhaps out of fear but often out of support for the movement.

Either way, the twigs and cardboard in our nightly bonfire were starting to crackle, and in about an hour some neighborhood people would probably bring out coffee, sweet breads, and lemon tea.

Canada's New Ministers of Class War

By Eugene Plawiuk

The Canadian government recently shuffled ministers, but the mainstream overlooked the change that matters most to workers – the appointment of new ministries in human resources and treasury.

This change is the decision to put Monte Solberg in charge of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), the ministry responsible for labor policy, unemployment, social benefits and job retraining. This step is a dangerous one for workers and the trade union movement in Canada.

Monte's electoral riding was the site of last year's long, ugly labor dispute between Tysons and its largely immigrant unionized workforce. This was a strike Monte didn't bother to comment on.

"It doesn't matter whether you're in Camrose or Calgary, Edson or Edmonton, 'Help Wanted' signs are everywhere," Solberg said. "And you know, when it starts to affect our ability to go to Tim Horton's and get a double-double [coffee], it ceases to be a laughing matter. It's a serious issue."

Solberg was in charge of liberalizing Canada's temporary worker program under his Immigration portfolio. Now he can see this liberalization to its logical conclusion in his new job. That means more flexibility for the employers in the oil patch to hire temporary workers for Alberta, which they and the Alberta government have lobbied for long and hard. British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan will benefit from a government program designed to ease regulations concerning foreign workers coming into Canada.

"Canada's new government has been listening to employers in Alberta and British Columbia, and they are truly having a hard time finding enough workers. The improvements we are announcing today are making it easier, faster, and less costly for employers to hire temporary foreign workers," said Solberg, when he was the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Temporary workers are not allowed the same rights as other workers, including immigrant workers. They are subject to exploitation by the state and employers while being used to undermine wages and working conditions, through no fault of their own.

Already scandals around exploitation of Polish workers in the oil patch have come to light.

A group of 30 Polish welders who say they were brought to work in Canada under false pretenses are suing an energy services company, Lakeland College and three individuals for more than CDN \$5.5 million.

The lawsuit, filed in Edmonton's Court of Queen's Bench on February 5, makes two main claims:

- That the men believed they were being hired by Kihew Energy Services Ltd. to work in Alberta as full-time welders, not full-time students as their visas said.

- That once here, they received inadequate pay for their work, earning \$10 to \$12 an hour from Kihew while four companies contracted with Kihew paid up to \$28 an hour for their services.

The court action comes one month after Alberta's Auditor General raised questions around Lakeland College's involvement in the program where the

college collected more than \$200,000 in tuition from Kihew to educate students who attended virtually no classes.

Auditor General Fred Dunn said in his report on Lakeland's contracting practices that the former general manager and three people who reported to him also failed to follow the college's policy about who can issue letters to Citizenship and Immigration Canada verifying international student registration. As many as 158 letters were sent to the federal agency.

While Solberg cracked down on 'illegal' workers in Canada, in particular Portuguese workers in Toronto's construction industry, he did not declare a general amnesty as was done in the eighties, quite successfully. Instead, he deported them raising the concerns of Toronto's Portuguese community – with up to 15,000 undocumented members, working mainly in the booming construction industry.

By placing Monte in charge of Canada's Human Resources ministry with this agenda to carry forward, Harper is rewarding his Western power base, the Alberta government and its Big Oil partners in an attempt to undermine the building trade unions in Alberta. It can only mean more confrontations between the federal government, Big Oil, the Alberta Government and the labour movement.

The second dangerous appointment the Prime Minister's second dangerous appointment for workers and unions in Canada was Vic Toews as Treasury Board president. In charge of the public service. Uh oh.

Toews takes over the job at a time when federal unions are gearing up for

another round of collective bargaining in 2007 when contracts for more than 130,000 workers expire. Prime Minister Harper said he picked Toews, whom he called "an economic conservative", because he wanted a skilled politician who has the skills to grasp the details and 'big picture' of such a complex portfolio.

Outgoing Treasury Board President John Baird spent most of his time sucking up to the public sector unions in his riding, speaking out on their behalf when he was in opposition. So he was tainted as a tough negotiator.

That the mainstream media made no mention of Toews' appointment once again illustrates Harper's masterful handling of the media. So it looks like Harper is preparing for class war in Ottawa.

US Senate Kills Minimum Wage Bill

Giving in to a filibuster by the Republican minority, the U.S. Senate has abandoned the "clean" minimum wage bill that was approved by the House of Representatives on January 10th.

In place of it, the Senate on February 1st voted 94-3 to pass a compromise bill that provides for a \$2.10 raise in the minimum wage but also includes \$8.3 billion in tax cuts to businesses. Later, 28 Senate Republicans even voted to repeal the minimum wage altogether.

Now Congress must reconcile the two bills in a joint session, but as of press time, no date is set. Meanwhile, minimum wage workers continue to struggle to get by on \$5.15 per hour.

Editors note: The February 2007 issue of the Industrial Worker featured the headline "Minimum Wage Hike Passes". The headline should have read "Minimum Wage Hike Passes House of Representatives".

Ontario Labor Federation Campaigns for \$10 Minimum Wage

By Marc B. Young

In February 2007, the Ontario minimum wage rose to CAN \$8 per hour. But many residents of Canada's most populous province remain unhappy with the measure.

On the left, the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Ontario Federation of Labor (OFL), with a special push from the Toronto and York Region Labor Council, have kicked off a public campaign in favor of a \$10-an-hour-minimum wage.

Even John Tory, leader of the opposition Conservatives, has added his voice to the chorus of those asserting the obvious – that this wage is not enough to live on, especially in expensive cities like Toronto and Ottawa. Tory, apart from whatever genuine convictions he brings to the issue, is seeking to re-position his party as a centrist option to the governing Liberals.

The initiative, scheduled to unfold in the provincial capital in a series of town hall meetings between the end of January and the beginning of March, seeks to give extra-parliamentary momentum to a bill introduced in the legislature last fall by the NDP's Cheri DiNovo.

Across the province, OFL president Wayne Samuelson also held a series of February press conferences with local labor council leaders calling on the government to embrace the \$10 proposal.

In Toronto, the labor council has been astute enough to team up with immigrant organizations and student groups. The result is that its two initial town hall meetings were attended by many new Canadians.

These sorts of mobilizations/information sessions will also occur in other cities, according to Dana Boettger, OFL media officer.

There are some interesting sub-texts to this campaign. Whenever OFL-affiliated unions mount an initiative there is a chance one of their objectives is to improve the electoral fortunes of the NDP. Or, as they put it, to complement the initiatives of their "political partner". In this case, the party poured resources into a February 8 by-election in the low-income Toronto riding of York South-Weston. The second of the town hall meetings took place precisely there. As it turned out, the NDP won the vote.

Another point worth reflection: one of the individual unions affixing its stamp to the campaign in Toronto is a local of the United Food and Commercial Workers. The UFCW recently negotiated a new contract for workers at, among other establishments owned by the grocery giant Loblaw Companies, Real Canadian Super Stores. The pact will provide a starting wage of \$8.50 for part-timers at this discount outlet.

Some critics of mainstream union organizations like the UFCW suggest that its leaders see a \$10 minimum wage as an opportunity to win gains for lower-paid members – without breaking a serious sweat at either the bargaining table or on the sidewalk.

Finally, a fortuitous event helped the campaign draw attention from the province's media outlets. Just before Christmas, members of the Ontario legislature voted themselves a base salary increase of \$22,000, pushing their annual pay over \$110,000.

Unionists and NDP politicians, who opposed the hike, have been able to wring mileage from the evident hypocrisy of government leaders eager to feather their own nests but tight with the province's poorest workers.

Not surprisingly, the government has countered that a mandatory \$10 an hour would put unnecessary pressure on employers, endangering, according to elastic Ministry of Finance data, between 22,000 and 66,000 jobs.

Minister Greg Sorbara also observed that some two-thirds of those earning minimum wage live at home with their parents, thus acknowledging that the state expects working families to subsidize corporations.

Toronto labor council figures suggest that only 29 per cent of low wage jobs are in small, family run businesses.

"Cabinet Ministers ...should be ashamed of themselves," said Don Fraser, the Hamilton and District Labour Council President.

Still, union leaders may want to be wary. Charges of hypocrisy have a tricky way of sticking to more than their intended targets. With their new salary, simple Members of Provincial Parliament are not in danger of encroaching on elite CEO territory. But they'll soon be in the wage neighborhood of quite a few top union officials, including UFCW figures.

In the meantime, the \$10-an-hour campaign is lighting some fires and helping some poor Ontarians assert their right to a near-respectable minimum wage.

Anti-poverty activists hope the initiative isn't merely gas to fuel a not-too-distant provincial election campaign.

US Union Numbers Slip

The US Labor Department reported union membership declined last year, continuing a decades-long downward trend. The report said that labor unions lost 326,000 members in 2006, reducing the percentage of employed workers that are unionized to 12 percent, down from 12.5 percent in 2005. Union membership decreased in both the public and private sectors.

Union membership peaked in the 1950s when about one-third of all US workers belonged to unions. Since then, the percentage has plunged due to a combination of factors including the loss of industry and the rise of a service economy, the effects of free trade policies and outsourcing, privatization, aggressive anti-union campaigns and a lack of militancy on the part of union leaders.

The importance of this latter factor is ignored by top union officials such as AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff, who blames last year's losses on external causes, taking no responsibility for the shortcomings of his federation and the labor movement. Despite two successive waves of union reform in the past 25 years, the decline continues. The rhetoric about more organizing repeated by labor leaders like SEIU's Andy Stern has not changed the movement's commitment to the failed policies of labor-management cooperation and electoral politics.

Militant rank-and-file unions have not fared much better over the past year. The IWW, for instance, lost nearly 5 percent of its members in 2006 (although the number of members in good standing increased slightly). Clearly, unions of all stripes must confront these troubling figures, take a creative approach and breathe new life into the American labor movement.

Tightline Johnson returns and is ready to organize at Starbucks

FICTION

By Joseph Lapp II

Author note: Ralph Winstead (1894-1957) published a series of short stories in the 1920s about the fictitious Wobbly troublemaker Tightline Johnson. I'm commandeering his character for this story, although RW's wit, humor, and undeniable skill as a writer are not easily replaced. This is for RW.

Part 1

Back in 1917 me and some other courageous Wobs were locked up under something called the Sedition Act. Sedition, in case you hadn't heard, is when a member of our noble class speaks up against a rich man's war that somehow only manages to make poor people dead and leaves things even more in control of those unproductive leeches who started the whole thing. "War is the health of the State," I've heard it said, but "war is the health of the elite" is nearer to the mark. Anyway, just keep that all in mind next time some Sunday School teacher starts in on you about free speech and all that. Well, as I was saying, I was in the can a long time, one of the last to be turned loose. They finally set me out into the sunshine again, without so much as a "Sorry for the trouble, Tightline old boy" from the government that put me in there and I decided that I was deserving of a little vacation.

Somewhere along the way, back in those heady hoboin' days of the early nineteen-teens, I'd picked up a little spread of land in the Chugach Mountains of Alaska. This was where I went to set up a little homestead and get away from the world awhile. I stayed up there a long time farmin', trappin', scrapin' by however I could until a big old land bull came to me about some "imminent domain" for a pipeline of some kind or another. I knew better than to argue when he offered me compensation for it in good hard currency. Why didn't I duke it out over my home, you ask? Well, when the law wants your land the law is generally gonna get it, particularly if you're just one lone man off in the middle of the woods, cause he's just gonna keep comin' until you're run off, but he's only gonna offer to pay ya for it once. Besides, a man can only neglect his organizin' duties for so long. I'd had some peace up

there, and some mighty soul searchin' quiet, but I was ready to set nose to the grind stone and get caught up in the proletarian revolution.

With the wad of greenbacks in my pocket, I booked myself a luxury ferry down from Seward, Alaska to Seattle. The whole way down I was sip-pin' bubbly water and nibblin' on finger foods, enjoyin' some of the good things in life that we Wobs have been fightin' for all this time. Let me tell you, brothers and sisters, the victory will be well worth all the trouble.

Seattle was much changed since last I'd been through town. As soon as my boot touched solid ground I was on my way to the IWW hall to get stamped up and filled in on the state of the movement. When I got to the address I found the old hall to be gone, and in its place was some massive orange thing called a Home Depot or some damn fool thing. Dismayed, I took to stoppin' folks in the street to see if they could direct me to the new hall. To my chagrin and great surprise I didn't stumble across a single fella who'd even heard of the Eye-Double-You-Double-You. I knew I'd been out of commission awhile, but I didn't think I'd been gone so long as for the bosses to completely wipe us out! I figured I'd try another tack.

Unsure of where to turn I decided to stop by the library figurin' they'd have to carry the Industrial Worker or somethin' to point me in the direction of a delegate who'd have some stamps and some news. After askin' around a bit, I found the section with the papers and journals and sure enough they had a fresh copy of the Worker. Nothin' benefits man or woman (or child, while we're at it) like a little education on the class struggle, and boy was I ever educated. A helluva lot had changed in the world while I was off coaxin' gold out of the rocky Alaskan ground. Seems like the whole union hall idea was pretty much a thing of the past and something called the Internet was the new thing for keepin' up with fellow workers.

Lucky for me that old library was jammed full of computers and with a little help from a nasty librarian who seemed to have forgotten which side of the class line he fell on I was readin' up on the struggle by way of IWW dot org. Thinkin' about this new technology I

decided that capitalists could never have come up with it, no matter what they said. This tool seemed much to valuable to the radical prol for him to have had no part in developin' it. Fact is, I'm amazed the Rockefellers of the world haven't made it illegal yet. But give 'em time, says I, give 'em time.

Well, without digging into the hoary details let me just say that I figured the thing out. Ol' Tightline Johnson can work any machine he gets his hands on, I say with only a little boasting. Before long I was once again a card carrier in good standing (the only state for any worker to be in, if ya ask me) with a head full of news. Seems that the struggle has shifted near as much as this crazy old world has. The Wobs was out of the freight cars and the hobo jungles, moved on from the logging camps and the camps of the seasonal farm hands, and was now workin' hard at some other sectors. The two big drives goin' on, according to the Worker were in the retail end of things and organizin' immigrant workers. Well folks, I'm all for solidarity and everybody, regardless of color, language, or "immigration status" has an equal place in this union, says I, but as my knowledge of Spanish starts and ends with words you wouldn't say to your grandmother I figured that particular battle wasn't the one for me right then and there. A quick good luck to you IU460 cats, give the bosses hell for Old Tightline, and any Wob who happens to be worth their salt and isn't agitatin' where they're at has got to be brushin' up on their Español so help, brothers and sisters, should be on its way.

The other big push seemed to be more on my level. My fellow Wobs were tacklin' a big ol' corporate giant call Starbucks. I always sort of saw myself and my fellow Wobbly cohorts as class conscious Davids fighting the big ugly Goliath of capitalism so I felt drawn to

do my part. As luck would have it the home base of this Starbucks was right there in Seattle so I set my mind on doin' some infiltratin'.

I didn't have any idea what this giant actually did, business wise, until I found one of its shops. This wasn't very hard to do; it seems these things are everywhere. It appeared that all they did was brew up coffee. Now a huge corporate giant that only made coffee was a new idea to me, this wasn't the steel or lumber industry after all, but I'd made plenty of coffee workin' as a cook in logging camps all up and down this coast so I wasn't gonna do any complainin'. In fact I figured I'd be the perfect man for this outfit, red card or not. Feelin' mighty sure of myself I walked on in and asked about a job.

Seems that this establishment must have some trouble keepin' workers because the manager that came out to talk with me was mighty enthusiastic about signin' me up. While he was talkin' up a storm about "team environment" and "partners" I was busy gettin' an eyeful of my new labor situation. This place was right jam packed with thirsty folks lookin' for a sip of something warm while three wild-eyed workers rushed to and fro like crazed ants in a stirred up hill. They was movin' so damn fast that I could only just barely make 'em out.

Meanwhile, Ol' Bill the manager was still gabbin' somethin' about "corporate responsibility" and "fair trade beans". I could see my first battle already set up for me. Anytime the workers are havin' to run like chickens that's been separated from their heads while the bosses sit around talking nonsense is a workplace ripe for a little Wobbly sabotaging.

Finally Scissor Bill the company stooge wrapped up his preachin' on the glories of holy Starbucks (and boy was this fella a true believer if ever there was one) and supplied me with the necessary gear to start up work in the morning. I left the place still thinkin' about those poor fellow workers and the panicked look in their eyes.

Worry not, brothers and sisters, the One Big Union is comin' to the rescue!

Read Tightline's story next month...

Anti-War Protests: Washington, San Fran

continued from p. 1

"The war we are facing is a corporate-driven war against working people at home and abroad," Benjamin declared.

"This fight here is a fight to defend these union members' jobs and working conditions, but it is more than that. It is a fight to defend trade unionism in San Francisco, a labor town; it is a fight to defend union labor on the water-front, where modern industrial unions were forged in the bloody battles of the 1930s."

He continued: "We cannot, we will not, allow Hornblower and its cronies to break our unions...We must exert our full union muscle to send them a signal that labor and its allies are united, that we will fight back, and that, if necessary, we will shut them down."

As pressure to end the war mounts, unions are increasingly taking a stand against Bush's failed policies in Iraq and connecting this struggle to the ongoing struggle for workers rights and economic justice. More demonstrations are planned for March 17-19 (the fourth anniversary of the war) and a large union

presence is expected. Meanwhile, the growth of organizations like U.S. Labor Against the War is helping to forge stronger bonds between U.S. anti-war groups and the Iraqi labor movement. In the legislative arena, a movement led by progressive Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Cleveland) is putting internal pressure on Democratic leaders to use the fiscal power given to them by the Constitution to put an end to the madness. However, those who look to elected officials for salvation should bear in mind the words of Black Sabbath in their 1970 song, "War Pigs":

Politicians hide themselves away.
They only started the war.
Why should they go out to fight?
They leave that role to the poor.

Boss-serving politicians started this war but it is we the workers who are made to do the killing and dying. Only we can stop the bloodbath and bring the troops home once and for all.

With files from alcatrazunion.com.

On-Line Picket Line: Eric Lee

continued from p. 4

Fourth, we need to keep any entries we've made up to date. If we've reported on union-busting, on a worker being sacked, or on a strike, we should from time to time make sure the text we added is updated.

Fifth, if someone in the Wikipedia community challenges us using the online discussion built into every Wikipedia page, we should engage that person in discussion. Others will read this, and potentially a huge audience can read a discussion that can go far beyond what we might put on the actual page.

And finally, if you think the Wikipedia is a fantastic resource and you're thrilled by the fact that it's free and independent, with no advertising, you have a moral responsibility to help keep it that way.

Please join me in becoming a regular financial contributor, giving whatever you can afford.

Make no mistake about this: the Wikipedia is becoming a massively important resource for millions of people. It is now generating approximately 30,000 requests per second (about 2.5 billion requests per day). And the growth in use, as well as content, has been exponential over several years.

While it remains important to get our message out to conventional media through press releases and so on, it may be even more important to make sure that our side of every story – the workers' side – is featured in the Wikipedia.

Scotland IWWs

continued from p. 1

students in Dumfries and linking up with supporters in Glasgow.

"It's important too for all those that are in struggle, from staff to students, to see that the IWW is with them all the way," said Nick Durie, IWW organizer for central Scotland. The pressure is barring some fruit, the Scottish Parliament debated the Crichton closure on Thursday 15, 2007, with MSPs, from all parties calling on the Scottish Executive action to prevent the withdrawal of the site, although the Principal seems adamant to continue with the closure plans.

Call for solidarity

While the Principal at the University of Glasgow and the Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council are happy to blame each other, we need solidarity. Send emails protesting the closure to: Principal Sir Muir Russell, principal@gl.ac.uk AND Roger McClure, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council, rmclure@sfc.ac.uk.

Union in Maryland

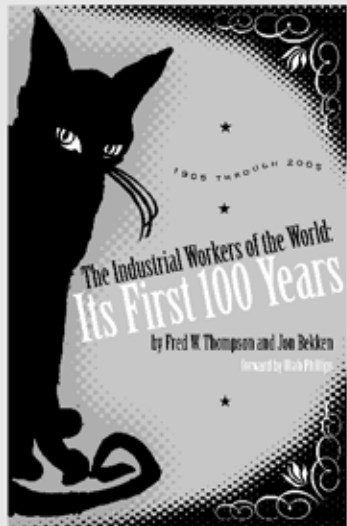
continued from p. 1

efforts including full-page ads in the New York Times defending its benefits and the slick but hollow website www.whatmakescoffeegood.com.

"If Starbucks respects employees right to join a union, a Caramel Frappuccino is an authentic Italian coffee drink," quipped New York City barista and SWU member Pete Montalbano.

"Howard Schultz and Starbucks need to face the fact that we're here, we're growing, and we have a right to exist."

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First One Hundred Years

by Fred W. Thompson and Jon Bekken
forward by Utah Phillips

Many histories have been written of the Industrial Workers of the World, often called the Wobblies. Founded in 1905 in hopes of uniting the working class into One Big Union, the IWW promoted industrial organization at a time when craft unionism was the established pattern. The IWW welcomed all workers, regardless of ethnicity, race or gender when other unions boasted of their exclusionary

policies. Its reliance on direct action on the job generated much of the strategy and tactics of the modern labor movement. Often referred to as the singing union, Wobblies wrote hundreds of labor songs and published millions of copies of their *Little Red Songbook*. The IWW's theme song, "Solidarity Forever," became the anthem of the entire American labor movement.

The first book on the history of the IWW was published in 1919, just 14 years after the union's founding. Since then, countless articles, novels and histories (an annotated bibliography issued in 1986 lists more than 5,000) have been published on the union – showing that the IWW's influence has extended well beyond its membership and captured the imagination of generations of labor activists, novelists, poets and historians.

The IWW: Its First 100 Years is the most comprehensive history of the union ever published. Written by two Wobblies who lived through many of the struggles they chronicle, it documents the famous struggles such as the Lawrence and Paterson strikes, the fight for decent conditions in the Pacific Northwest timber fields, the IWW's pioneering organizing among harvest hands in the 1910s and 1920s, and the war-time repression that sent thousands of IWW members to jail. But it is the only general history to give substantive attention to the IWW's successful organizing of African-American and immigrant dock workers on the Philadelphia waterfront, the international union of seamen the IWW built from 1913 through the 1930s, smaller job actions through which the IWW, Wobbly successes organizing in manufacturing in the 1930s and 1940s, and the union's recent resurgence. Extensive source notes provide guidance to readers wishing to explore particular campaigns in more depth. There is no better history for the reader looking for an overview of the history of the Industrial Workers of the World, and for an understanding of its ideas and tactics. **255 pages \$19.95**



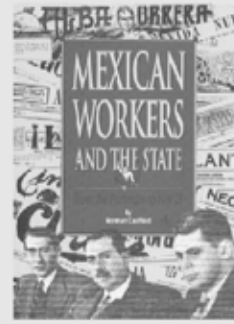
Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina edited by Marina Sitrin

December 19th and 20th, 2001, marked the beginning a popular rebellion in Argentina. After IMF policies led to economic meltdown and massive capital flight, millions of Argentinians poured into the streets to protest the freezing of their bank accounts, the devaluing of their currency, and the bankruptcy of their state. This rebellion—of workers and the unemployed, of the middle class and the recently declassed—erupted without leadership or hierarchy. Political parties and newly

emerged elites had no role in the movement that toppled five consecutive national governments in just two weeks. People created hundreds of neighborhood assemblies involving tens of thousands of active participants. The dozens of occupied factories that existed at the start of the rebellion grew to hundreds, taken over and run directly by workers. The social movements that exploded in Argentina that December not only transformed the fabric of Argentine society but also highlighted the possibility of a genuinely democratic alternative to global capital. *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* is the story of those movements, as told by the men and women who are building them.

"The movements in Argentina have been among the most creative and inspirational in recent years. Marina Sitrin's collection allows us to learn from the activists themselves and continue the experiments in autonomy and democracy they have begun."—Michael Hardt, co-author *Empire and Multitude*

"Marina Sitrin has provided an invaluable service to scholars and activists around the world by compiling the testimonies of the participants in some of the most prominent and original Argentine popular movements. These activists speak of political passion, determination, solidarity, and new forms of horizontal organization. They also speak of frustration, obstacles, and repression. Overall, their voices show in startling detail the stubborn hope of a new generation of sufferers and fighters."—Javier Auyero, author, *Contentious Lives* **255 pages \$18.95**



Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA

by Norman Caulfield

In contemporary Mexico, as during the Porfiriato, the forces of global capitalism are transforming labor, the political system, and other sectors of society. The situation has generated political fragmentation, popular uprisings, violence, militarization and a volatile economy. Within this context, organized labor seeks to redefine itself. Caulfield's book, which contains extensive work on the IWW's cross-border organizing, helps readers understand the importance of independent, internationalist, working class movements. **180 pages, \$15.00**



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The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email solidarity@iww.org.

Repression of Ethiopian teachers

The International Solidarity Commission sent a letter to the Ethiopian government protesting their use of torture, arbitrary detention, and suspicious disappearances to crush the Ethiopian Teacher's Association (ETA). The ISC also criticized the establishment of a government-controlled "union" to compete with the ETA and called on the government to "cease all intimidation and harassment" of union members.

West Bengal farm workers resist govt giveaways of land

The ISC released a statement in mid-January supporting the farmers of West Bengal (and the PBMKS union) and their active resistance to the government's planned giveaway of thousands of acres of land to the multinational Tata Group conglomerate and the Indonesia-based Salim Group. The plan would displace thousands of farmers in order to build a car factory and a chemical plant. The statement also condemned the West Bengal regional government's repression of farmer protests against the measures, exemplified by the unjust arrest and detention of several unionists and the government killing of eight Nadigram residents and a 17-year-old girl in Singur.

Solidarity with Hotel Workers in Canary Islands

The Commission sent a letter of solidarity to the FECOHY-CC.OO union which represents workers at the Iberostar Hotel chain in the Canary Islands.

China

Suspicious death sparks riot: Hotel set ablaze

By John Kalwaic

A worker's unexplained death caused a riot at an upscale hotel in the city of Dazhu located in the Chinese province of Sichuan on January 17, 2007.

A 16-year-old worker at the hotel, Yang Daili, was found raped, mutilated and murdered at work in the early hours of December 30, 2006. Police inquiries found little evidence to process or arrest anyone for the murder.

The girl's family received conflicting reports from the police, government and hotel officials. One report said she died of alcohol poisoning after tending to guests, reportedly thought to be government officials. Another report said she died from a drug overdose. As the conflicting reports accumulated, the friends and family of the girl became suspicious of a cover-up.

A police station director and government officials are owners of the hotel. Collusion between government and party officials and corporate elites is common-

Iberostar management has attempted to suppress the union, firing union organizer Antonio Garcia Romas and then trying to bribe him with 300,560 Euros. The ISC is demanding Romas' immediate reinstatement and that the company recognize the union.

Unionists targeted for murder in Guatemala

The International Solidarity Commission sent a letter to the government of Guatemala expressing urgent concern for the safety of four members of the Executive Committee of STEPQ, a dockworkers union. These organizers received death threats on January 17 following the reinstatement of nine dockworkers who had been illegally fired in October. The threats came two days after STEPQ General Secretary Pedro Zamora Alvarez was murdered by a well-organized group of gunmen while returning home from a local clinic with his two small children. The ISC urged the Guatemalan government to take urgent measures to protect the threatened unionists and to investigate Zamora's murder.

Brazil seizes occupied factory's assets

The ISC sent a letter to key officials in the Brazilian government protesting the recent decision of a federal judge in Joinville to seize 11% of the revenue of Cipla, a worker-run occupied factory. The seizure is in connection with a large debt owed by the former corporate shareholders of the company before it was taken over by the workers. This action could set a precedent to allow further seizures that would result in the closure of the factory and a loss of employment for all its workers, some of whom have worked there for decades. The ISC expressed its solidarity with Cipla workers and insisted that the government of Brazil abide by a 2005 agreement not to seize anything over 1% of Cipla's revenue.

place in China.

The hotel offered the family the equivalent of US \$65,000 in compensation, but the family demanded a proper investigation, refusing the money.

Unsatisfied with the official answers, the friends of Daili, their relatives and supporters gathered in protest for two days outside the hotel to declare what they saw as a cover-up.

By January 17 up to 20,000 people had gathered. Protesters entered the hotel, vandalized it and set it on fire. The rioters prevented fire crews from putting out the blaze. The crowd reportedly cheered on the blaze.

This is one of many incidents like this in China that are on the increase. The peasants are being evicted from their land. Unpaid workers and citizens outraged at corruption have all rioted against police, government party officials and the corporate elites. Often abuse by employers does not just include abysmal wages and benefits but cover-ups of hideous crimes like this one, as both corporate and government interests collude.

Source: asianfoodworker.net

Vietnam

Vietnamese workers defy ban on independent unions

Vietnam is fast becoming a hot bed of labor unrest and repression.

Vietnamese authorities have arrested Tran Quoc Hien, a leader of the recently-formed United Workers and Farmers' Association (UWFA), and are holding him without charge in a local jail.

Tran is the latest in a series of UFWA organizers jailed for their union activity. At least eight others, including the union's main leader Nguyen Tan Hoanh, face similar situations. The UFWA and another union called the Vietnamese Independent Union (VIU) were founded in late October.

Although independent unions are illegal in Vietnam leaving a state-run union as the only legal organization, UFWA and VIA leaders openly announced the existence of their organizations in order to fuel the movement for the legalization of independent unions. The government immediately cracked down on the two unions, rounding up the leaders and forcing employers to fire their members.

Farm workers continue to take action in defense of their livelihoods. On January 16, over 150 farmers peacefully protested outside a government office in Hanoi, accusing Ha Dong provincial officials of illegally confiscating their land in 2005 without adequate compensation, as reported by the Committee to Protect Vietnamese Workers.

The workers were "protesting against corrupt local officials who took our land and repressed us for their personal

benefit," said Tran Quang Chinh, a 74-year-old farmer from Ha Dong.

Meanwhile, 4,500 workers from the Hansoll Vina garment factory in the Binh Duong province are on strike against low wages and poor working conditions. According to sources cited by the Associated Press, managers regularly insult workers and force them to work when they are sick. The union is trying to negotiate an agreement with the factory bosses.

This is not the first surge in union activity to take hold in Vietnam recently. From January to March of last year, a massive strike wave swept the country, forcing the government to raise the minimum wage by 40 percent in February 2006.

During the strike wave, Taiwanese, Japanese and European bosses associations demanded that the Vietnamese government crack down more firmly on strikers. At the time Vietnamese officials refused to heed these demands, pointing out that the strikes occurred because employers were violating Vietnamese labor law.

However, anyone who interpreted this stance to signal a change in Vietnam's policy toward independent unions was sorely mistaken, as the current crackdown on the UFWA and VIU demonstrate. Yet, it is equally clear that Vietnamese workers are not willing to be cowed into submission.

Vietnam has long been a haven for sweatshops, not only because of its low wages, but especially because—in the words of the head of the European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam—"the workforce is not prone to industrial action". In light of current events, this claim needs to be re-evaluated.

Korea

Victory for Migrant Workers Union

The Migrants Trade Union (MTU) won a major victory on February 1 when a High Court in Seoul struck down the Labor Ministry's claim that migrant workers had no right to union representation or collective bargaining.

When the MTU was founded in April 2005 its leaders applied to the Labor Ministry to register as an official union. The Ministry rejected the application. Now that the courts have declared this decision illegal, the union is pushing for immediate recognition.

Teachers detained for 'national security'

On January 19, the Seoul National Police in Jangdong arrested two middle school teachers and members of the Korean Teachers Union. They have been held in isolation since then on charges of national security violations. The charges they face carry a maximum penalty of death. Their crime: Educating students about the unification of North and South Korea.

Award-winning teachers Choi Hwa-seop and Kim Maeng-gyu were netted in a January 12 raid on their homes and offices and were pressured by police to appear for questioning. The teachers were allowed to remain free while consulting a lawyer. They pledged to submit to questioning by January 22. However, on January 18 Prosecutor Kim Shin ordered police to arrest the two.

According to a report by the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union, Kim had expressed concern that "if the teachers were not in custody, they might attempt to contact an underground North Korean group, and that they would in any case brainwash innocent young students with unification education."

The arrests are apparently in connection with posters that the teachers had uploaded to the internet in July 2006. The union denounced the arrests in a press release.

"If the police are going to arrest and detain teachers for referring to North Korean politics, prosecutors should investigate officials at the Ministry of Education as well," said the release.

"Their Internet Peace School, for example, encourages students and teachers to explore the political ideologies of the North." According to the union, the National Security Law is often used to crack down on dissent in the labor movement and stifle public debate. Amnesty International and many other organizations have repeatedly called for reform of the law because it restricts basic rights to freedom of speech and association.

Construction workers prosecuted for demonstration

On January 19, a judge in the Pohang District of Korea sentenced Yoo Ki Soo, General Secretary of the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions (KFCITU), to two years in prison for leading a demonstration in August 2006. The union plans to appeal the ruling.

Around the same time, Korea's National Human Rights Commission released a statement about the protest in question. The Commission formally acknowledged that riot police had used "excessive violence to break up the demonstration", which resulted in the death by head injury of demonstrator Ha Joong Keun.

In December Ha's family filed a civil suit against the government holding them responsible for the death. Despite these revelations, 25 KFCITU members remain in jail on trumped up charges related to their struggle against construction company POSCO. Some face sentences up to three years.