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Unions talk tough at US Social Forum

By Jerry Mead-Lucero

"What is happening in America to workers today is the result of a thirty year sustained, intentional, strategic, assault on workers, unions, our quality of life and our standard of living. It has been a class war against workers and it is time we engage that class war and fought back."

These words were met by a standing ovation from the crowd and loud applause. But it is not an IWW speaking. It might surprise you to hear that Stewart Acuff, Organizing Director for the AFL-CIO, said this at the Workers' Rights in the Global Economy plenary of the first United States Social Forum (USSF). I don't expect that Acuff's speech was meant to announce the Federation's decision to call for the abolition of the wage system or that it will lead to any plans for a nationwide general strike. But his words are symbolic of mainstream labor's continued and deepening interest in connecting with other social movements and less traditional forms of organizing.

Big Labor's involvement in the social forum process, since the first few World Social Forums in Porto Alegre, Brazil, has served as a way for the AFL-CIO and many of the union internationals to mix and mingle with activists from a broad range of social struggles. The same can be said of the relatively impressive support given to the first USSF by organized labor.

The role of the labor movement in the planning and organizing of the forum was apparent at the opening march and rally on June 27. Though clearly outnumbered by anti-war, racial justice and environmental activists, union members were abundant among the thousand marchers who made their way through the streets of downtown Atlanta. The original march route was meant to take participants past a number of sites in the city at which workers are engaged in struggles with their employers or local government.

According to the Local 1644 Deputy Director Nancy Lenk of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), march orga-

nizers were forced to compromise with police on a much less confrontational route due to the opposition of much of Atlanta's business community. A destination in the original plan was Grady Hospital, where the green-shirted members of Local 1644 had planned to express their opposition to a recent decision by the Chamber of Commerce to privatize this public hospital. Still, the march did pass nearby and the AFSCME contingent encouraged rally participants to join them in chants of "We are the key to saving Grady" and "the community has got the key to saving Grady."

Struggles of public sector workers were a major theme of labor-focused workshops at the conference.

A number of panels featured public employees from North Carolina, one of only two states (Virginia being the other) where collective bargaining for public sector workers is explicitly outlawed. The United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 150 recently partnered with unions in Canada and Mexico to encourage an investigation of the situation in North Carolina by

the ILO (International Labour Organization). In April, the ILO declared the North Carolina ban on public sector collective bargaining a violation of international labor standards and called for repeal of North Carolina General Statute 95-98, the basis of the ban.

Traditionally, social forum planners and participants will engage in a number of public protests to provide some level of direct action to the content of the forum. In the case of the USSF, a number of these actions focused on union or labor campaigns.

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) organized a picket outside of a nearby Publix grocery store to demand the removal of union-busting Smithfield Foods' products from store shelves. Supporters of trade unionists in Colombia took part in an action at Coca-Cola headquarters.

The National Day Laborer Organizing Network held a rally protesting the political position of Republican Senator Johnny Isakson. The senator is advocat-

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Colombia still a union death trap

Colombian trade unionists continue to be threatened and killed with impunity, said an Amnesty International report released on July 3.

The report, "Killings, Arbitrary Detentions, and Death Threats: The Reality of Trade Unionism in Colombia", denounced the use of terror tactics by the Colombian military, pro-government paramilitaries, guerrillas and criminals to intimidate, hurt and kill union members in the last decade.

The report detailed the stark reality of fighting for workers' rights in Colombia. In one example, union leaders in the coastal city of Bucaramanga received paramilitary "death certificates" that called for "a Colombia free of trade unionists and guerrillas." Shortly afterward, gunmen killed a union adviser as he drove his motorcycle through the streets of a city in the interior, Barranquilla. The incident demonstrated the deadly reach of anti-union killers.

From 1991 to 2006, 2,245 unionists were murdered, 138 disappeared, and 3,500 had reported receiving threats. In 2006 alone, 77 unionists were killed. The guerrilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are accused of killing six trade unionists, while the other 92 per cent are attributed to paramilitaries and the military. So far in 2007, 18 union members have died.

A high proportion of human rights abuses against trade unionists take place during labor disputes which, according to the report, indicates they are targeted for supporting socio-economic rights. The violence affects workers in every sector: education, health, public services, agriculture, and food processing, among others.

Esteban Beltrán, director of Spain's Amnesty International in Madrid said that being a union activist in Colombia is one of the "most dangerous professions in the world."

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New York City IWW launches '9 in 90' organizing drive

By Stephanie Basile

In New York City, wobblies recently marched on HWH Trading Corp to demand fair pay and better working conditions for the company's 15 warehouse employees.

The July 1 march was the first public action of an ambitious organizing drive that the NYC IWW is undertaking this summer. Dubbed "9 in 90," the IWW is hoping to organize nine new shops in the next 90 days. The drive kicked off in mid-June, and organizers have already had talks with workers from four shops.

HWH, a produce distributor in Queens, is the first of the "9 in 90" whose workers have gone public with their IWW membership.

At HWH, workers are not only expected to work extremely long hours, but routinely travel up and down the Eastern seaboard. Workers come into the warehouse Sunday night, spend the night loading their trucks and head out for long trips Monday morning. One employee works 116 hours per week and makes weekly trips between New York City and Maine, a seven hour drive one way. Another worker makes routine runs between New York City and Syracuse, a four hour drive one way.

The march was held to show that the workers have the support of fellow wobblies and to officially alert the boss of their membership in the union.



Photo by Benjamin Ferguson

IWWs picket EZ Supply warehouse in New York.

About 30 people attended, along with some flags and makeshift drums. At the march, the boss was informed that the workers were demanding he respect minimum wage laws. He agreed to pay workers minimum wage, to pay time and a half for overtime, and to reduce the workers' weekly hours.

In addition to gaining better working conditions, the workers are looking to finally collect what they rightfully earned while working below minimum wage. Two days before the march took place, workers met with a lawyer from the attorney general's office. As a result of the meeting, the attorney general is expected to launch an investigation into HWH's minimum wage violations. The workers are hoping that the investigation will lead to a win in back-wages.

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Canyon Ranch resort takes staff tips

Staff and resort clients file class action to retrieve \$6 million

By X351536

On the morning of June 17, community members and IWWs from the Upstate New York James Connolly IWW branch staged a solidarity picket at the Canyon Ranch Health Resort in Lenox, Massachusetts in support of the workers' struggle here for economic justice.

Current and former employees of Canyon Ranch, as well as by patrons of the spa, recently filed a class action suit alleging that this exclusive resort illegally deprives employees of tips from their spa-related services, ranging from bodywork and skin care to the dining hall and hair salon. Canyon Ranch charges guests an 18 per cent gratuity fee under the pretense that it passes along this mandatory tip to its employees.

"This is a long-standing violation undertaken deliberately and willfully with the outrageous and evil motive of maximizing their own profits by misappropriating tips and services owed to their employees," said the legal brief.

The class-action suit is retroactive for six years, meaning a total of approximately \$6 million.

To add insult to injury, the resort's management advertises on their website and tells patrons directly not to tip employees. They tell the guests that employee tips are covered by an 18 per cent gratuity charge, and that employees receive the service fee in addition to their regular wages. In reality, the workers who give the services receive nothing from this extra charge, which instead goes directly into the resort's coffers. In other words, it's pure profit for the corporation at the expense of the workers and patrons.

Many employees wanted to be present at the picket including this writer, who is an IWW member, but were afraid of losing their jobs for speaking

out. Canyon Ranch has a well-deserved reputation of heavy-handed and arbitrary mistreatment of its employees.

IWW member Paul Poulos discussed the picket with a senior management employee from the Health resort, who was pumping the wobbles for information about themselves.

According to Poulos, he promised to pull the picket then and there if this senior management employee could tell him straight that Canyon Ranch was not stealing workers' tips. The man responded: "I cannot discuss current litigation."

The picket continued.

Many low-level managers are secretly in agreement with the lawsuit. As one manager told this writer, "If Canyon Ranch is illegally expropriating tip money they should make it right." This same manager added that many of the recent policy changes for the massage therapy staff in particular, originated over some managers' resentment that they were earning less money than the senior workers.

Workers in other departments are also affected by recent policy changes



Photo by X351536.

Community members and IWW members picket Canyon Ranch's main entrance.

designed to limit their ability to earn money working on the side. Previously, if workers were not booked for a service, they could call in and be taken off the schedule for that time, freeing them up for freelance work.

Currently, workers must remain on site even if they are not booked. There is no base pay for sitting around so this is effectively time and wages lost. Management claims that the policy is designed to make workers available for guests who

want to book services at the last minute, ignoring the fact that a "bullpen" had been set up for that very purpose, in which workers were paid a base rate to sit and wait voluntarily for bookings.

Due to the corporate theft and other policy changes which adversely affect the workers, organizing efforts are underway at Canyon Ranch in Lenox and threaten to spread to corporate headquarters in Tucson, Arizona.

Wobblies are also organizing at another Lenox health resort, the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. Workers have filed a lawsuit against the Lenox-based Cranwell resort over its corporate theft of tips. An IWW Health Service Workers industrial union is in the works to represent employees at all the resorts in the Lenox area.

The legal team of Canyon Ranch plans to respond to the class-action lawsuit by pleading poverty, according to our sources. However, Canyon Ranch is well able pay up.

In addition to the facilities in Tucson and Lenox, Canyon Ranch operates health spas and clinical services in Las Vegas, Miami, and Cleveland, as well as on board the Queen Mary 2 luxury resort liner.

Canyon Ranch until recently was owned and operated by Mel Zuckerman and Jerrold Cohen, with silent partner investment. Nearly half of Canyon Ranch is now owned by Crescent Real Estate Equities Company, based in Fort Worth, Texas, which is currently being acquired by Morgan-Stanley Realty.

According to their figures, Morgan Real Estate "has acquired \$121.5 billion of real estate assets worldwide and currently manages \$55.6 billion in real estate on behalf of its clients."

With assets such as these and substantial backers, it is unlikely the courts and certainly not the workers themselves, will believe a plea of poverty.

Speak Spanish?

Want to be part of a fighting union?

The IWW needs you! If you can help our Spanish-language campaigns with translation or organizing, call IWW headquarters at 513-591-1905. Get involved!

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.

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. Dues may vary in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, Europe).

- 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: _____

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City, State, Postcode, Country: _____

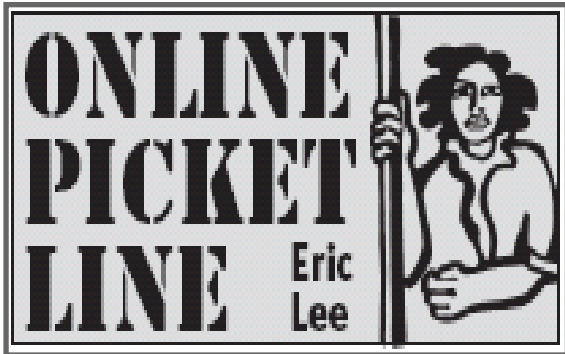
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Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.





Bosses counter online campaigns

A decade ago, South Korean workers used the Internet to distribute live reports (including video) about their general strikes. At the time, they were way ahead of the rest of the world in maximizing the use of the new communications technology. They still are.

A union seeking to organize workers at a company called KORENO (a subsidiary of Samsung and a Japanese corporation) set up an online group in October 2006 and signed up 110 members. The group was hosted by one of the largest Korean Internet service providers, Daum Communications.

So far the story is not unlike what many of us have experienced. Many unions use online tools such as Yahoo Groups to help on organizing campaigns.

The company management at KORENO did not like the online group, so they brought legal action against the union. They claimed that the union had "injured the company's honor" by publishing "false content" online.

At the same time, they wrote to the internet service provider demanding that they shut down the union's web presence. Daum Communications promptly did this, not only denying the union a platform but also denying them access to details about individual workers who had used the site to express their interest in joining the union.

The union and its supporters are furious, claiming that this is all a form of censorship. They point out that there has been no court ruling regarding the company's claim that the site is libellous.

Daum says that its own policy for-

bids it from hosting any content which is subject to a legal dispute.

There are certain lessons to be learned here by unions anywhere which are trying to use the net to organize workers.

First of all, backup. The Korean union needed to keep an offline backup of all the contacts it had collected through the website. It is staggering to

Companies are not stupid. They may be aware and look for ways to slow and stop our use of powerful new technologies.

think that they do not have access to contact details of those who wished to join a union because these were kept by the internet service provider.

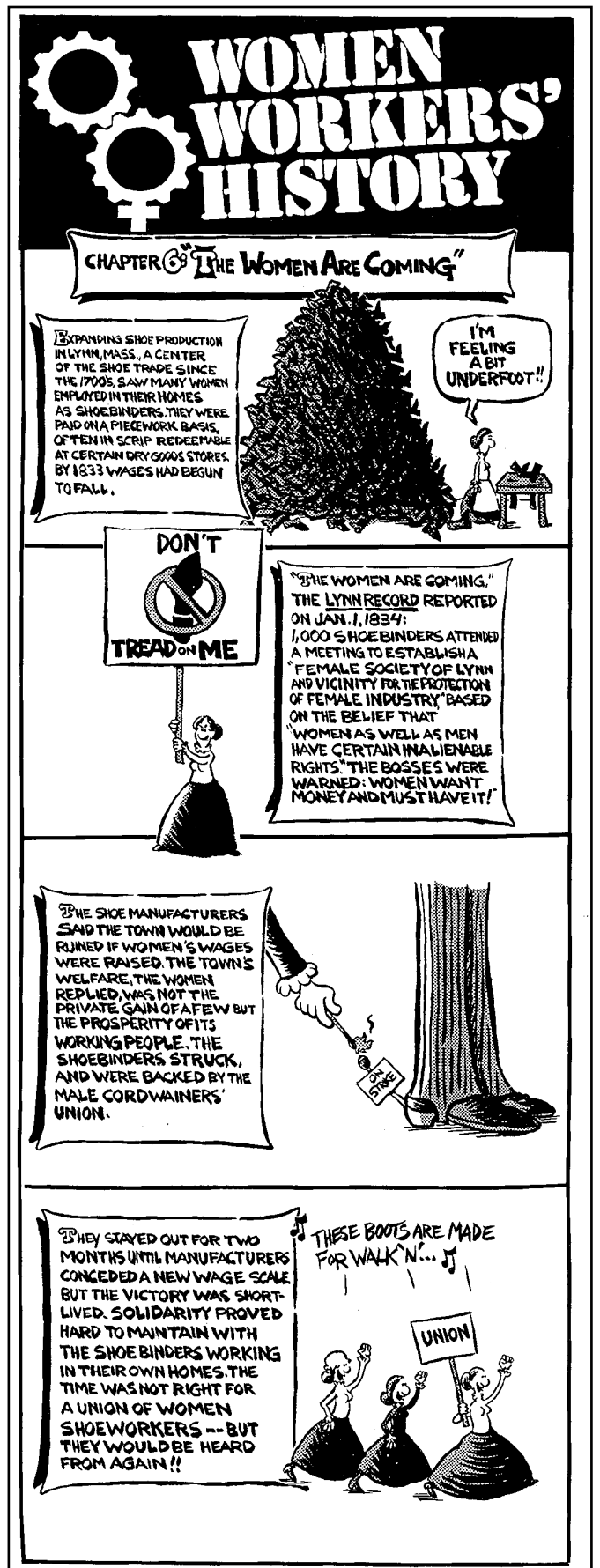
Second, more backup. Every website should be backed up on the union's local computers, ready to be moved to another internet service provider when and if needed. This is not only important in cases like KORENO where censorship is at work, but more typically when a union needs to change internet providers to save money or get better service. The LabourStart website, for example, is now on its fourth hosting company—meaning that on three separate occasions in less than ten years we have had to move all our content.

Third, we should not over-rely on free online tools. Things like Daum's network of "cafes" or Yahoo Groups may seem quite tempting, but can obviously be easily taken away from us. And again, not only in cases of censorship, but sim-

ply because companies that give online services away for free can change their policy at any time and start charging, or restricting what we do, or even shut down completely. We need to use our own sites hosted on our own servers where possible.

And finally, we should not underestimate the opposition. It's all well and good to delight in the new-found freedom we have online, with our ability to launch instant campaigns and build global networks at virtually no cost. But companies are not necessarily stupid. They may well be aware of what we are doing and look for ways—including legal action and threats made to internet service providers—to slow down and even stop our use of these powerful new technologies.

A decade ago, Korean unions were showing unions around the world our future. We were seeing how web pages could be created in real time and global solidarity built online. Today we're seeing what happens next: a corporate counterattack that is increasingly sophisticated and effective.



Solidarity unions must be more than paper tigers

By Todd Hamilton

Simply put, solidarity unionism is organizing as a group of workers to change a workplace, workplace, industry or economy to what we want. This simple idea is not fleshed out systematically either in practice or in theory. Solidarity unionism leads us to change our understanding of what the 'union' means for us, as well as where we intervene and put our emphasis in struggle.

There is no blue print for how to organize in general, but that doesn't mean we can't develop strategies to pursue our goals. Previous writers such as Alexis Buss and Staughton Lynd have focused on how we can organize without falling back on some of the familiar features of union organizing. These features included comprehensive contracts, election-based organizing campaigns requiring a majority of workers, and involving directly the mediating bureaucracies and institutions such as the courts, union bureaucracies, lawyers, politicians and parties that alienate workers' power.

Solidarity unionism presents its own challenges and poses new questions. For me, the rough model has experienced workers participating in workplace struggles where demands are won through direct action. Workers are brought into the organization and develop as organizers through these struggles. This experience helps them



move towards a revolutionary understanding and practice. As they grow stronger, these worker organizers can apply deeper pressure in their industry and avoid deflating the struggle through mechanisms that strip workers' power.

Solidarity unionism advocates have argued for organizing, even if only a minority of workers are involved, regardless of whether or not the boss and/or state recognize the union. This organizing recognizes where workers' power is the greatest—in the workplace and community—and strategically chooses how to fight back, while avoiding the institutions that often act against workers' interests.

We have hit some walls while trying to organize workers. Gaining contracts have helped kill job actions by forcing workplace gripes into a mediating bureaucracy that is hostile to workers. Hierarchical institutions choose to put struggle into realms where worker power

is weakest where workers play a secondary role.

Union bureaucracies also have this effect. Union officers who have all the power and knowledge, in effect subordinate workers to their own union by forcing them to go through the acceptable tools of struggle. Membership-based drives sink huge efforts into getting people to sign cards and vote for a union. However, once that is done, the workers' role is done, too. There is often little benefit for workers who are passive in relation to their union hierarchy.

Solidarity unionism is about organizing whether we're recognized or not, whether there's a contract or not, and, most of all, settling worker issues by the workers directly. Contracts, lawsuits, arbitration are not ends in themselves, but only tactics that feed into our strategy.

This understanding leads to a deeper perspective on strategy. For instance, we don't need to fly the union flag as a

hallmark in every campaign. It might make more sense to keep the boss in the dark about union activity at a shop or in an industry, until we have built a wide enough base of support and won some victories. The solidarity union would only announce its presence if it presented a strategic advantage.

We can also be strategic about who and when we sign members up. Rather than having the goal of organizing being to just get people to sign cards whether they want to participate or not, membership can be an action itself, a positive step a worker can take in furthering the struggle and building worker consciousness. We can keep membership for workers who want to be an active part of the organization, who are ready to join, and who have experienced class struggle and organization together with the union.

This idea is a positive feature, rather than a restrictive one. By signing up members who are active members, we can draw a line in the sand between unions that are paper tigers, and unions like us that exist in our actions, education, and struggle.

Send your submissions for "Workers Power" to forworkerspower@gmail.com. For more on solidarity unionism, don't miss our Chicago Couriers Union feature on pages 6 and 7 of this issue.

Save Crichton campus campaign needs support

The Scottish National Party (SNP), which had made saving the Crichton campus a campaign promise, won the May 3 Scottish parliamentary election.

With just one more parliamentarian than its rival, the Scottish Labour Party, the SNP is now under pressure to deliver what it promised.

It is “pretty clear” that the new government is putting pressure on the board of Glasgow University and the Scottish Funding Council, a quasi-autonomous funding agency for higher education.

The IWW in Scotland is asking for people to pile on the pressure by making a wave of calls to save the Crichton campus to the new ministers and make sure they know it has popular support.

“What a change,” said Nick Durie, an IWW organizer on the campaign. “We’re doing our bit here, fighting within the trade unions to get them to act, and acting on the ground with the resources our small job branch and campaign have mustered, to the point where we have made quite an impression, but we need your help urgently to secure a victory.”

September, the start of a new semester, is the deadline for the university to make a decision on whether to go through with the campus closure or not.

At stake are at least 40 jobs, including the jobs of IWW members on Crichton campus.

“If we can win here, and organise this university—this is our first major struggle in that battle—then we can surely demonstrate the real power of the organised working class. We can show by example the utter indefatigable necessity of organising workers into one big industrial union,” said Durie.

The IWW Save Crichton campaign is asking IWWs to send an email or letter or telephone Glasgow University in support of keeping the campus open.

Contact the Principal, Sir Muir Russell and complain at the decision. Email: principal@gla.ac.uk; Tel: 0141 330 5995. Contact the Scottish Funding Council and urge them to help Glasgow University find a resolution to this problem. Email: rmcclure@sfc.ac.uk. Contact Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, and urge her to act quickly to help resolve the situation. Email: Fiona.Hyslop.msp@scottish.parliament.uk.

Make sure they know that Glasgow University made a £2 million profit; that it is unacceptable to shut down a liberal arts school and replace it with a business



IWWs march to demand that Crichton campus remains open.

school on the main campus, thus forcing young people to leave their region to find education and opportunity; that Sir Muir Russell has a poor financial track record and his opinion cannot be trusted; and that Dumfries and Galloway provinces

have no other higher education facility and while they suffer economically from a gap in graduates and graduate jobs.

We need your support now, so send your letter today and help us save Crichton campus and build the IWW.

NLRB charges Starbucks for firing IWW—again

Less than three months after the National Labor Relations Board hit Starbucks with a 30-count legal complaint, the federal labor agency has once again accused the coffee giant of breaking the law in a continuing effort to undermine the IWW Starbucks Workers Union.

Based on an independent investigation into the company’s conduct, the Board has alleged that Starbucks fired outspoken union barista, Isis Saenz, for protected organizing activity.

“It’s beyond dispute now that Starbucks is waging one of the most relentless anti-union operations in the United States today,” said Stuart Lichten, the IWW’s attorney on the case. “If Wal-Mart has a soulmate in the union-busting arena, it’s Starbucks.”

Starbucks fired Ms. Saenz after she participated in a union protest at a Park Avenue, New York Starbucks where Chairman Howard Schultz was scheduled to attend a book release event. Protesters called on the company to pay a living wage and respect the right to organize.

“Shame, shame,” the protesters chanted, when Starbucks Regional Vice President Jim McDermott exited the store.

Starbucks was upset that Saenz referred to McDermott informally as “Jimmy” and fired her. In response, working people in the United States and abroad took to the streets in a global day of action to condemn the firing.

“With this complaint, workers everywhere should rest assured that calling your boss by his or her first name at a union protest is protected,” said Alex Van Schaick, an IWW barista at the Park Avenue store. “Even if you add a ‘y.’”

Chicago IWW reinstated

Starbucks is now having to deal with the backlash of its policy of firing union organizers.

Starbucks settled with a fired Chicago barista in June, offering to reinstate her and pay an undisclosed settlement sum.

The company had fired Gloria Sykes, 55, a Chicago barista, who told management that if they didn’t make changes with respect to age discrimination and scheduling, she and her co-work-



Graphic by Benjamin Ferguson

ers would “reach out” to the Starbucks Workers Union. Ms. Sykes spoke out after several incidents of age discrimination including one instance of being told that “even 16 year olds” could learn to make drinks quicker than her.

“This settlement is a victory for every barista, older and younger, who are fed up with the lack of guaranteed work hours at Starbucks,” said Sykes.

“We have a right to demand a secure work schedule with a union and this settlement proves it.”

Starbucks denied wrongdoing in the out-of-court settlement.

Starbucks on trial in New York City

The trial against Starbucks on all the outstanding New York charges began on July 9, 2007. Last year, the coffee giant entered a lengthy settlement agreement with the federal government in the first labor case brought by baristas in the United States.

Starbucks workers can earn a starting wage as low as \$6 or \$7 an hour and are prohibited from obtaining full-time status. While the company boasts of its health care offering, Starbucks actually insures a lower percentage of its workforce than Wal-Mart, a company notorious for its unaffordable health care package.

Due to understaffing, baristas are often forced to work at an unsafe speed, exposing themselves to the risk of repetitive stress injuries and burns.

The IWW Starbucks Workers Union is an organization of employees at the world’s largest coffee chain united for dignity on the job and in society. Since the founding of the union in 2004, Starbucks workers have joined at multiple stores in several US states.

Pressure from the union against Starbucks has resulted in wage increases and the remedy of a diverse array of grievances from pregnancy discrimination to health and safety violations.

Barista homeless

The IWW Starbucks Workers Union is calling for solidarity to defend Simone Gordon, a black Starbucks barista who was demoted and had her schedule cut to just five hours per week on New Year’s Day.

Gordon’s store manager, Graham Higgins, accused her of being racist against white people at the store in a New Jersey mall and stated that she wasn’t fit to be a leader in the store.

“The allegation that Ms. Gordon is racist is so patently absurd that we won’t even dignify it with a response. Suffice it to say, Simone Gordon, who has a white grandparent, opposes all forms of discrimination,” said a Starbucks Workers Union statement.

The demotion and cut in hours has forced Gordon onto the street and onto welfare. She was also caring for her father, who is suffering from a heart illness.

Since Higgins began to spread the rumors, one customer requested that “the black girl who doesn’t like white people” not touch her drink.

Management has also criticized Gordon for wearing her hair in an Afro on occasion and for “the way she talks,” according to the union. The union said it is planning to lay legal charges against Starbucks.

In the face of this racist harassment, Gordon is fighting back as a member of the Starbucks Workers Union.

“I always had to fight for things- I’ve been on my own since I was 17. I want to fight because if they’re going to do this to other people I’m not going to allow it. No one should be treated like trash. We’re all human; we’re all taxpayers. No matter our salary, no matter a fancy car, we’re all equal,” said Gordon.

The Starbucks Workers Union is asking people to email Starbucks Chairman Howard Schultz at hscultz@starbucks.com, voneil@starbucks.com as well as copy your message to the Starbucks Workers Union to demand Simone Gordon’s immediate reinstatement to her former position and compensation for the losses she has suffered over the last seven months.

Chicago Couriers Union: a lesson for

IWW member Colin Bossen delivered a talk on the IWW's Chicago Couriers Union at the Provisions Library in Washington, DC on June 8. The Institute for Anarchist Studies and Provisions Library supported his work along with the CCU organizers interviewed. This article is an edited version of his presentation.

What is solidarity unionism?

Solidarity unionism is a term and an organizing strategy coined by the labor historian and activist Staughton Lynd in his book of the same name. He defines solidarity unionism as "relying, not on technical expertise, or the numbers of signed-up members, nor on bureaucratic chain-of-command, but the spark that leaps from person to person, especially in times of common crisis."

Lynd's solidarity unionism has six basic characteristics: voluntary membership, no dues check-off, no paid officers or staff, democratic decision-making with everyone empowered to "criticize frankly and fully", a focus on direct action rather than collective bargaining agreements, and internationalism that seeks to build networks of workers "across boundaries of nation, gender, and religious faith."

Lynd contrasts solidarity unionism with the business unionism of the large AFL-CIO and Change to Win unions. Lynd identified three characteristics inherent to business unions: being government-sponsored monopolies that [try] to force all persons working in a particular shop to join the union and deducts dues directly from a workers' paycheck; agreeing to collective bargaining agreements that grant management exclusive power to make the crucial on-the-job and investment decisions alongside a no-strike clause prohibiting direct action of all forms during the contract; and, undermining and preventing the formation of independent labor parties, locally and nationally. Business unions are "organized from [the] top down," devoted to keeping the labor peace and relying on paid staff who don't include workers in processing grievances or making decisions.

While past IWWs may have practiced something like solidarity unionism, this organizing theory was introduced to the IWW in 2000 by the IWW's then-General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss.

"We must stop making gaining legal recognition the point of our organizing. We have to bring about a situation where the bosses, not the union, want the contract. We need to create situations where bosses will offer us concessions to get our cooperation," said Buss in her *Industrial Worker* column.

A union is not a union because it gets legal sanction from the government or a contract from the boss, said Buss in another column. Rather, a union is simply any "organized group of workers" that comes together to have "more potential power than unorganized individual workers." This redefinition of the union shifted the power back to workers. In the United States, any group of workers engaged in concerted activity has legal protections under the National Labor Relations Act. These rights include presenting grievances, working together, making demands on the boss, seeking meetings, and even striking.

Buss also encouraged wobblies to look at the work of two of Lynd's mentors, Stan Weir and Martin Glaberman. Weir and Glaberman were both working class intellectuals who wrote about the structural problems of the American labor movement. Weir spent much of his life working as a sailor, a longshoreman or an autoworker in California. Glaberman was a Detroit autoworker.

Glaberman's work focused on the problems inherent in union contractu-



Arrow messengers during a work stoppage in 2005.

CCU file photo.

alism, specifically how labor contracts could turn the union into a cop for the boss, enforcing discipline among the union's members. Glaberman had a second key insight that "activity precedes consciousness." This meant that people respond to workplace situations emotionally before they respond rationally and often take actions in a way that contradicts their presupposed beliefs, and in the case of unions, contractual agreements. Glaberman's favorite example of this was during World War II when workers at the autopants would sign no-strike agreements with management and then would spontaneously go on strike over safety issues.

Weir, in his essay "The Informal Work Group," reinforced this idea that consciousness comes from activity and the experience of working and socializing together. These informal work groups, the social groups that people form at work, were for Weir the heart of the union, with each having its own culture, "informal leadership, discipline, and activity."

First steps to organize

The campaign to organize what is now the Chicago Couriers Union began among young members of the Chicago General Membership Branch of the IWW who decided that they wanted to try to organize a solidarity union. In Fall 2003, several members of the Chicago IWW met and decided to organize the courier industry in Chicago.

The couriers had no union or prospect of a business union interested in organizing them. The industry's high turnover and unique subculture seemed to be well suited for a solidarity unionism campaign. At the same time, these traits made winning a National Labor Relations Board-sponsored election at a single company unlikely. Chicago has dozens of messenger companies.

Messengers also potentially have an enormous amount of power on the job. Packages must be delivered in a set amount of time; it was possible for a courier to use direct action to delay and disrupt a company's business. In theory, couriers could be organized around specific grievances rather than the idea of a union contract.

The IWW also had a recent history of organizing in the courier industry. From 2000-2002, Wobblies in Portland had built a union of bike messengers that succeeded in winning a number of substantive demands, including a pay raise, at Transerv, one of the larger messenger companies. Only the International Longshore and Warehouse Union

(ILWU) in San Francisco, had created a similar organization. The Chicago IWWs felt this experience would give the IWW legitimacy among messengers and that they could draw directly on the wisdom gained by other IWW organizers through their own struggles. IWW members had begun already to develop a few relationships with messengers. This meant that getting a foothold in the industry would be easier.

Although no one in the IWW knew it at the time, members of the bike messenger community had been shopping around for a union for several months before conversations between messengers and IWW members even began.

In June 2003, there had been an effort to create a Windy City Bike Messengers Association (WCBMA). The effort was led, in part, by Andrea Murphy and was the third attempt at creating a bike messenger association in the city. Murphy had participated in the WCBMA with the clear intent that it would become a union and had even gone so far as to attend a weekend training put on by the AFL-CIO.

Under Murphy's guidance, the first act of the WCBMA had been to invite a trainer from the AFL-CIO Organizing

Institute to meet with messengers. While about 40 people attended the meeting nothing substantive came of it because the AFL-CIO trainer told the messengers they needed to organize before

even approaching a union for help.

The initial purpose of the WCBMA had been "to tackle on-the-job issues" but after the AFL-CIO meeting this focus was eventually lost. As the WCBMA unravelled, the IWW stepped into the vacuum. Conversations between the remnants of the WCBMA and the IWW's organizing committee resulted in the decision to bring IWW organizer and former bike messenger 'Lil Pete out from Portland for a week. During Pete's time in Chicago, he spoke with Chicago messengers about organizing with the IWW and the union held a public forum to discuss the idea.

After flyering and word of mouth, a publicity a forum was held in mid-December 2003. At least 40 people came, many were veterans of the industry. There was both excitement and fear about the possibility of forming a union. Grievances began to emerge, in particular, several people were upset about being independent contractors rather than employees. There was also talk about next steps and a general sense that security was important. Messengers feared losing their jobs. At the meeting, Pete outlined a basic strategy for building the

union. He argued that the first two tasks of organizing a union were to develop a social map of the industry and gather a contact list for as many workers as possible, so it was best to keep the organizing quiet. The meeting ended with plans to hold another information meeting and proceed from there. A questionnaire was circulated, but few people filled it out in time for the next meeting. The information asked for was the number of people in the company, their names, contact information, demographics and social groupings, and the owner of the company.

The second information meeting was held in a messenger's home. More than 20 people came. Few people had filled out the survey, so discussion turned to their working conditions and what could be done about them immediately. Arrow Messenger Service had recently instituted a policy that called for messengers to cover their tattoos and remove piercings. Chicago bike messengers, particularly white messengers, tended to have a lot of piercings and tattoos. People were pissed off. The IWW organizers at that meeting wanted to build infrastructure and lay campaign groundwork, rather than do a strike or job action so the meeting ended without a clear plan of action.

The IWW organizers decided to build the courier union's infrastructure, map the industry and gather contacts. The organizers also recognized they lacked the experience, so petitioned the General Executive Board for funds to bring in Pete to kick start the campaign. With the funds approved, Pete planned to come to Chicago from late March to mid-June to teach workers how to organize, handle grievances and devise strategy.

'Hot Shop' at Arrow

Before Pete arrived, things began to get hot at Arrow. A few of the messengers had reached a breaking point and wanted to strike over the new tattoo and piercing policy. They invited two of the IWW organizers to attend a meeting where they discussed what to do. The organizers talked them out of striking, reasoning that they did not have the support or organization to win. In retrospect I cannot help but wonder to what extent we performed the function described by Glaberman of keeping workers in check in that case. On the other hand, the messengers in question probably would have never thought of striking without having talked to the IWW in the first place. In her final report as a CCU organizer Andrea Murphy is critical of the IWW organizers.

"A couple of messengers at Arrow were feeling exploited enough to want to do the most daring thing they could do in their position. In the end, the outcome was no different than it would have been had they been fired [most of the messengers in question quit Arrow]. Because of the desire to keep the campaign under cover and the (imagined) responsibility they assumed for the results of the campaign, a genuine passion to do something was stifled.

"I challenge every organizer...to think about how best to direct energy rather than subduing or controlling it. Consider what it might look like to lead from behind. I caution against talking anyone out of doing anything, as this requires too much influence over the passions of peoples," said Murphy.

Problems with top-down organizing

In this instance, the IWW organizers had begun to make decisions about the direction of the campaign without real input from workers in the industry. We wanted people to think and act strategically while they often wanted to solve their problems immediately. As organizers from outside the industry, we were

IWW solidarity union organizers

not initially accountable to the messengers. They had not elected us and the power that they had over us essentially amounted to whether they participated in the activities that we organized or not. It took several years to break this pattern.

Our strategies would prove later on to have limited, if any, success. With organizing at Arrow stifled, we began the task of building an Industrial Organizing Committee. We selected a group of four workers to be its first members. They were chosen because we thought them to be leaders within the messenger community. All four of them were white and all former WCBMA

members. One of the first tasks we set for the group was to recruit members who more accurately represented the demographics of the messenger industry. About half of the couriers in Chicago are black and we realized that we would never be able to organize the industry without a union that reflected the people in the industry.

We also developed a larger strategy for the campaign based on Pete's experiences in Portland, the theory of solidarity unionism and studying the industrial union structures of the IWW in the twenties and thirties. Our idea was that we would organize two types of committees. The first would be shop committees composed of members of the union who worked at a particular company. They would handle the grievances that arose at that workplace. Each shop committee would elect a member to serve on an industry wide organizing committee that, in turn, would handle the grievances that could not be dealt with on a company by company basis.

Once the union got strong enough the industrial organizing committee, we would issue a set of demands for industry-wide standards and then go about trying to enforce these through direct action. The members of the industrial organizing committee selected the other members of the committee, often with heavy input from Pete, MK and I.

The goal was to develop the shop committees to the point where they would elect their own representatives to the IOC. This never happened, probably because the structure we wanted was imposed upon the workers and did not arise naturally out of their day-to-day work experiences. To put it bluntly, we had miscalculated their informal work groups.

Changing organizing strategies

Pete returned to Chicago in late March and we began to implement our strategy. Through a lot of diligent work in Pete's absence, we had managed to create an almost complete map of the industry and collect the contact information for close to 650 messengers, roughly 45 per cent of the people working in the industry. The near-heroic efforts of messengers made this possible.

Pete's arrival in Chicago kicked the campaign into high gear. With Pete in town, we organized several shop committees. Our plan was to build the union slowly by winning small grievances at individual work places. However, no committee was capable of functioning without an IWW organizer present. Two organizer trainings were held, but they failed to empower couriers to be independent organizers. Despite these weaknesses, the shop committees achieved limited success.

Our first victory came when Scott Gibson, one of the members of the IOC, was fined illegally "when he was caught not wearing a company-required uniform" by Standard Courier. Scott only



Bike messengers at a 2004 union picnic.

CCU file photo.

learned about the fine when he saw a \$50 deduction from his paycheck. Such deductions are illegal under Illinois law.

Scott and the Standard Courier shop committee confronted management, demanded Scott be reimbursed and an end to the uniform policy. Management insisted that the messengers at Standard were independent contractors. The shop committee reasoned that independent contractors could not be required to wear uniforms. Over the course of a week and a half, Scott and six of his co-

almost entirely of bike messengers. We knew we had to bring driver messengers into the campaign if it was to succeed.

This effort failed due to different work cultures. Driver messengers are an atomized workforce isolated in their vehicles at work and during breaks. Bike messengers congregate together during their downtime. The bike messenger subculture also can be elitist and alienating to non-members.

It was around this time that MK took a job with Arrow as a bike messenger



Chicago Couriers Union pickets the Lasalle building in 2007. Photo by X353650.

workers marched on their boss to issue their demands. After the third march, management rescinded the uniform policy, refunded Scott \$50 and fired him.

Scott's firing turned out to have a silver lining. The same day he was fired, he filed an Unfair Labor Practice with the NLRB charging Standard Courier with punishing him for union activity. Several months later Standard settled the charge and offered Scott \$3,000. In the meantime, Scott had also filed a claim with the Illinois Department of Employment Securities. The claim resulted in a decision "that Standard's workers are employees and not independent contractors as the company has claimed."

During that time the couriers won a small victory at the Comet messenger company. Comet employed primarily black workers. A couple of bike messengers from Comet joined the union and told the IOC that "workers paychecks did not amount to minimum wage." The messengers began to organize. The threat of organizing pushed management to enforce minimum wage laws.

Pete left in June and his absence was immediately felt. MK and I lacked his experience at group facilitation. The organizing faltered and changed direction.

We decided to aggressively reach out to driver messengers. Up until this point, participation in the union had consisted

and focussed on building a shop committee at Arrow. His work led to a major campaign to change working conditions and pay. This switch of focus by a key organizer prompted the end of the IOC.

The union then decided to concentrate efforts on fighting independent contractor status. In Chicago, and across the country, many messengers are considered independent contractors by their employers. The reasoning of the employers is that messengers are able to decide whether or not they will accept a particular package from a dispatcher and, therefore, are independent. As independent contractors, couriers are responsible for their own taxes, denied workman's compensation, unemployment insurance and even a right to a minimum wage or overtime pay.

Government agencies have mostly rejected the employers' claim. But most messengers do not know this and so the companies get away with it. The North American Independent Contractor Association (NICA) helps them do it. When a messenger gets a job with a company that uses NICA she or he is told they are contracted through NICA and merely assigned to work for the courier company's dispatchers. NICA messengers are charged a weekly fee and must pay for using the radio equipment. These fees can be quite high, up to \$100 per month.

We formed the Stop NICA! committee with the goal to drive NICA out of the industry. The committee would fight NICA on both a legal level, by filing claims for unemployment and workmen's compensation with the various government agencies as if the workers in question were employees, and through direct action. The Stop NICA! committee hoped to convince companies that they should switch their workers back to employee status and prevent NICA's spread elsewhere.

The committee lasted the summer and had moderate successes, winning five workman's compensation cases and holding a series of pickets that delayed, but did not stop, NICA from spreading to two companies.

Andrea Murphy came onto the campaign as a full-time paid organizer to speed up and focus the work. She decided that it was time "to end the secrecy" that had surrounded the campaign since the beginning. Murphy threw CCU meetings open to all couriers who came.

"Every working messenger would have a voice and a vote at meetings, with the exception that only members of the CCU in good standing could vote on money matters," said Murphy.

The CCU elected a secretary, Marshall Arnold, a former Arrow dispatcher who worked at Dynamex. The group held workshops, advocated for messengers to city hall, and organized around grievances and industry issues. Arnold believes that in some ways the union's biggest accomplishment is that it continues to exist.

In Fall 2006, the CCU began a campaign to the get one of the buildings in downtown Chicago, 135 S. LaSalle, to install a messenger center that would allow couriers to easily drop off their packages as reported in the June 2007 *Industrial Worker*. What is exciting is that this campaign is that is the first major effort spearheaded by the couriers themselves. Nearly four years later, the dream of a solidarity union for the courier industry may be happening.

Learning five lessons on the job

Looking back, we learned five lessons. First is that a campaign initiated by outsiders cannot follow the pure model of solidarity unionism advocated by Lynd. IWW organizers often found their ideas in conflict with the couriers working in the industry. This conflict stifled these workers and slowed the campaign.

Second, building a union takes a long time and organizing requires dedication and patience. The CCU is only a success because organizers stuck with it for several years. The industry's high turnover raises the question of how to create stability for a successful union.

Third, informal work groups matters a lot. The union failed to bring in drivers because they belonged to a different set of informal work groups.

Fourth, structures must evolve organically. Efforts to create the IOC, the Stop NICA! committee, and the shop committees failed because organizers imposed them artificially onto the industry. The structure of the CCU ultimately succeeded because it reflected the social dynamics of bike messenger culture, which is part of a community. Organizers should pay careful attention to the indigenous forms of organizing that exist and seek to capitalize on them.

Fifth, organizers need clear goals. Organizing at Arrow and now around 135 S. LaSalle, has been successful because the organizers had and have both clear goals and a plan of action. This clarity makes it much easier to get people to join in the organizing and understand why it might benefit them.

For information or citations, contact Colin at cossen@mindspring.com.

Review

Snapshot of 'Oaxaca commune'

The People Decide: Oaxaca's Popular Assembly, by Nancy Davies. Narco News Books, 2007, US\$17.

Review by Paul Bocking

The popular uprising in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca was one of this country's biggest untold stories from 2006, a precipitous year full of protests, strikes and repression across the nation. *The People Decide* is a diary-like compilation by Nancy Davies of day-to-day first-person news stories chronicling the movement led by the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) and the state local of the national teacher's union. This movement demanded the ousting of an authoritarian governor and the creation of a truly democratic society led by the poor Indigenous majority in Oaxaca.

Davies is an American retiree who has lived in Oaxaca for the past eight years. These reports on the struggle unfolding around her were published online at narconews.com in English, and subsequently translated into Spanish and other languages.

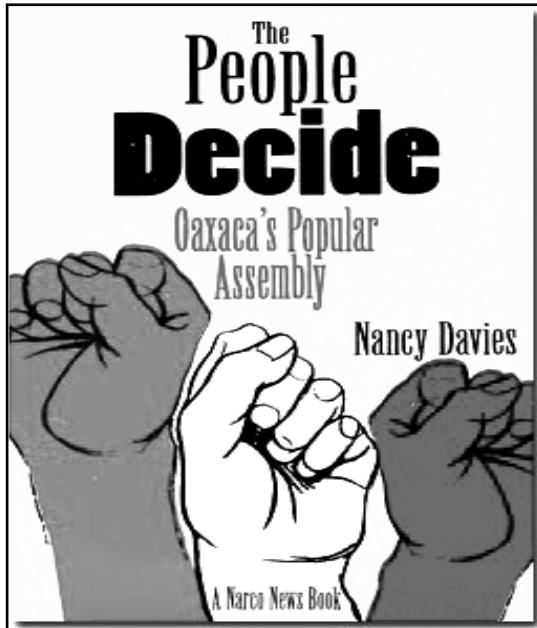
The whole event began as a fairly routine teacher's strike, but when state police violently attacked an encampment of striking teachers on June 14, 2006, killing three teachers and children, a popular uprising broke out in their support. The teacher's bread and butter demands for higher wages and more funding for dilapidated schools were joined to a growing mass movement broadly united under the APPO, that had one non-negotiable imperative: state

governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz must leave office.

Police and other authorities were driven out, and government offices occupied or blockaded in cities, towns and villages across Oaxaca. Commercial and government-run radio stations were taken over by teachers and other activists to serve as the movement's primary form of communications.

Following months of paramilitary violence and harassment conducted against teachers and the APPO, resulting in dozens of disappearances, arrests and deaths, Mexican federal police forcibly re-occupied the state capital of Oaxaca City in November 2006, at which point the entries of the book conclude.

This rebellion's story continues to unfold past the conclusion, however, and is one which all IWW members should get to know as a contemporary example of a revolutionary movement of organized workers and their community that transform their society. This movement exists despite the best efforts of a violent government, its business allies and the capitalist media in Mexico and abroad



that prefers to ignore or sensationalize it. Narconews.com is the best independent online news source in English (and one of the best in Spanish) on Mexico's social movements. Its publication in April of this collection of articles is certainly timely, considering the events it depicts occurred only several months earlier.

As with other contemporary social movements such as Argentina's worker-

run factories and Mexico's Zapatistas, the "Oaxaca Commune" will likely be a subject for more books and articles over the next few years. They will be able to offer more analysis and different perspectives from Davies' version.

The APPO itself is a hotly contested political organization involving several factions, making it hard for any author to accurately characterize it. Some activists in Oaxaca have said that not touching this issue is a major oversight. Aside from this limitation, *The People Decide* has a sense of immediacy one can feel while reading each entry.

Wobblies have participated in solidarity protests against state violence in Oaxaca, wrote and distributed articles in both the *Industrial Worker* and the IWW's Spanish-language newsletter *Solidaridad*, and visited to build direct links between the IWW and local organizations. I hope IWW members continue to support the popular movements of Oaxaca, and draw inspiration from their struggles. For an excellent account of the first six months of the Oaxaca uprising, and a sign of what may be to come for the rest of Mexico, *The People Decide* is a great read.

Australian terror squad rounds up G20 protesters

The Ongoing G20 Arrestee Solidarity Network has launched a campaign to defend protesters arrested and harassed by police since the G20 meeting on November 2006 in Melbourne, Australia.

On the G20 meeting agenda were global energy and minerals markets and IMF and World Bank reform. The Grand Hyatt Melbourne Hotel hosted the event. Police surrounded it with a barricade.

About 3,000 protesters marched against the G20 meeting, denouncing it as elitist and pro-capitalist. Direct actions shut down banks and resulted in confrontations with Melbourne police.

In response, the state police's Victorian Terrorist Investigation Squad raided six homes in Sydney and arrested five protesters. More raids followed with 35 people arrested. Charges ranged from riot and conduct to harm persons, which, if convicted, would result in 10-year jail terms. A Melbourne IWW member, Akin Sari, was one of those arrested.

"Direct action and civil disobedience have long been part of a worldwide campaign against global capitalism and other issues. These tactics have a proud history of success from the suffragette movement, to the struggle for the 8 hour work day, to the gay rights movement in Tasmania," said Anita Thomasson, a spokesperson for the arrestee solidarity network.

The campaign is not only seeking that the police drop all of the charges, but is demanding to know why protesters are being labeled as terrorists.

"Why is it that the full force of the state, snatch squads, federal police, anti-terror units, have been deployed against the G20 protestors, when Paul Wolfowitz, architect of the Iraq invasion, a man whom almost a million Australians, and millions more around the globe protested against, gets a special invitation?" asked protester Liz Thompson. "The criminalisation of solidarity and resistance will not prevent us from taking actions in our own defence—it simply makes the law look more and more like an instrument of the rich and powerful to use against the poor and powerless."

The G20 or Group of 20 is composed of the governments of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Union (with representation from France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom), India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey and the United States. It was formed to blunt criticisms that the Group of 8 was elitist and excluded non-white, non-Western countries from decisions about how to rule the world.

The G20 group has launched a web site to inform and rally supporters www.afterg20.org.

Oz IWWs liven labor history

By x347961

IWWs Brian McLure and Jack sung the words off the pages of the Australian IWW's new pamphlet, *Fanning Discontents Flames* at the tenth National Labour History Conference hosted by Melbourne University on July 4-6. The conference theme was "Labour Traditions."

Brian and I attended the labour history conference at Melbourne University to fan the flames of discontent with a few wobbly favourites and other revolutionary songs. There were about 30 people (mainly labour history buffs it seemed) who took great delight in seeing real life wobblies in the flesh.

The IWW was highlighted in two papers: Mark Derby's "A country considered to be free—NZ links with the wobblies" and Verity Burgmann's "The IWW in International perspective: comparing the North American and Australian Wobblies."

Jack sang and Brian spoke about what being an IWW meant to him. Three people from the audience joined us on stage to sing the songs.

We sold a copy of the pamphlet and handed out a leaflet in support of the G20 arrestees. One Melbourne IWW member was jailed for two months after being charged during the media-generated and at-times blatantly racist hysteria immediately after the protests. IWW members have been active in and supportive of the current campaign to drop the charges against the stop-G20 activists.

Songs sung included Joe Hill's Casey Jones Union Scab, WTO (see lyrics), and Woody Guthrie's Union Maid.

WTO

By Dana Lyons

Corporations, it's a really great day,
To sidestep nations, who just get in the way,
Because their people, have too much of a say
But boys we have got the answer
Free trade, it sounds really good
It spells freedom for the corporate brotherhood
And you need us in your neighborhood
We're the new global employers.

CHORUS (as follows)

Ah honey, let's join the WTO
Make lots a' money at the WTO
We can change a few laws,
Fix democracy's flaws
It's the corporate new world order

Unions are a pain in the ass
They cause problems, give executives gas
They want fair wages for the people who work
What a bunch of jerks
Poor children must be taught how to live
They need employment so they'll have money to give
To corporations who are making their clothes
The child labour laws must go

CHORUS

People of America fret,
Turtles and dolphins, who are caught in the nets
But it takes money to free all these pests
And that's a free trade barrier.
Clean air is a luxury for some
But let's be fair, it's not for everyone
Cause goods are cheaper, if you release a little scum
Defend your freedom of pollution.

Colombia union death trap

Continued from 1

"Many of them must negotiate wearing bullet-proof vests, live with an armed escort and they move around in armored cars," said Beltrán.

The Colombian government has responded to the strongly-worded report by saying the report distorts the reality that more people than just union members suffered during the conflict. The government said it is now protecting 1,500 union leaders and that the government has convicted 75 people for attacks on union members and is prosecuting 27 more trials and another 39 cases pending.

The Amnesty report said that government protection is often not as reliable as it appears. Amnesty said that often key protection is sometimes "withdrawn or restricted, even at times of heightened security risk", often with the excuse being "budgetary constraints."

"This report does not seek to evaluate the protection programme; AI considers that the high number of killings

of trade unionists is indicative that such security measures on their own are not sufficient."

Amnesty International called on the Colombian government to implement a delayed human rights plan, end the impunity enjoyed by human rights violators, and to support the new permanent mission of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The report also notably called on companies working in Colombia to "take proactive measures, in line with international human rights law and standards, to ensure the safety of their workforce," declare their public support for the human rights of their workers including their right to join unions, and cooperate with police and prosecutors to help investigators end impunity. This call on employers makes it even more difficult for them to remain in the background and benefit from the use of violence to enforce their profit margins and workplace control.

Boycott Molson beer during strike

Workers fight \$7 wage cut for new workers

By Nick Driedger, *Wobbly Dispatch*

In a time when unions should be making record gains in step with record profits, employers are forcing concessions onto them.

At the Molson brewery in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, new hires' wages are being cut from \$29 to \$22 per hour. Workers are represented by the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW).

Molson's strategy is clearly one of sowing division in the union's ranks: up to half the workforce is set to retire in the next five years, so they are attacking the pension of the new hires. This is precisely what makes the solidarity shown on this strike so admirable.

Many of the workers on the line are younger, newer employees that have never been through a strike. Like many of us in the IWW, they grew up in the Nineties, a time of comparable labor peace. Going on strike for the first time can be a scary thing. Just last week in the middle of the night on the downtown Edmonton picket line, someone pulled a knife on one of the strikers.

There is always uncertainty about how the struggle is going to turn out, and it seems recently employers can wait out a strike, letting it drag for months. The

Palace Casino (see below) has been on strike for ten months now.

However, if it were not for people taking a stand, we wouldn't have any of the rights we have today. It's important to remember that even though the struggle is tough, it's about something bigger—our communities and our dignity. A strike is about more than just a few paltry raises, but in the long run being able to assert control over our own work.

On top of all this, much of the leadership of the Molson strike are older members who will not have to face the wage cuts for new hires or the crummy second rate pension. Their fight is purely one of working class solidarity—standing up for each other because it's the right thing to do.

The solidarity doesn't end at the Edmonton plant either. Canadian Auto Workers truckers are refusing to haul Molson beer, and all the other Molson plants across the country are refusing overtime, making it impossible for the company to replace lost stock.

On June 12, Molson offered a 20-cent higher wage over their previous one for new hires. What Molson forgets is

that the workers at the Edmonton brewery make the beer. Without people to make beer there is no one for human resources types to shuffle around, there is no product for the marketers to sell, and there is no money for CEOs to schmooze and play golf with. Without workers, there is no product, and when one considers what workers are actually owed, in proportion to the useful work done in a company (that is, all of it) a decent wage and reliable pension do not seem unreasonable.

Workers across Alberta are urged to not buy Molson beer until the end of the strike. Many in the IWW are going to have to do without their favorite—Black Label—this summer.

This fight cannot be won if we think about it as just Molson against the CAW. This is the wealthy Canadians against the workers. Make no mistake: this attack is not just on the brewery workers—it is on all of us, too.

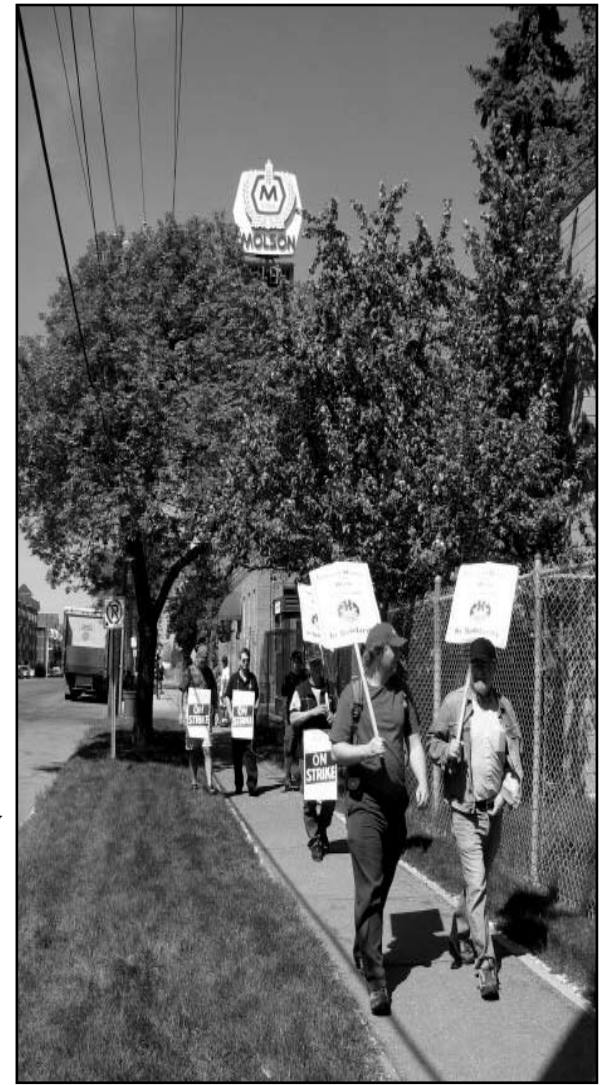


Photo by Jeannette Gysbers.

Edmonton IWWs picket with Molson workers.

Canadian wages stagnate, while corporate profits soar

Canadian workers are more efficient than ever, but their pay has not increased in 30 years, said a new report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released on June 28.

The report, "Rising Profit Shares, Falling Wage Shares", is part of the Centre's Growing Gap study (www.growinggap.ca) that documents growing inequality in the Canadian economy.

Not only have wages remained stagnant, but the poorest workers are earning less. Real wages adjusted for inflation have decreased for workers earning minimum wage.

Overall, it means that workers are getting the smallest share of Canada's

gross domestic product (GDP) in the past 40 years, with an increased share going to corporations.

"Corporate profit shares are the highest they've been in 40 years—and we're not talking peanuts here," said Ellen Russell, who wrote the report with Mathieu Dufour. "In 2005, corporations banked \$130 billion more in gross profits than they would have if the profit share had remained at 1991 levels. Sharing those earnings with workers could have gone a long way to reducing Canada's growing income gap."

The study also revealed how increased productivity doesn't mean better pay. The link between the two is broken.

"If workers' real wages had increased to reflect improved productivity and economic growth, they could be earning an average of \$10,000 more each year on their paycheques (in 2005 dollars)," said the report.

Yet, Canadian workers are fighting back.

Another study, conducted by the British national statistics agency, showed that Canadian workers struck more often than anywhere else, aside from Iceland, in North America and Europe.

In the last decade from 1995 to 2004, Canadian workers lost an average of 193 lost days of work per 1,000 employees compared to the average of

48 days in industrialized countries. That means Canadians were on the picket line four times more than other workers in Western industrialized countries.

Yet, something has gone wrong for workers. Strikes and the bargaining resulting, should have led to improved contracts, working conditions and benefits. These agreements then set the standard for non-unionized workplaces.

One possible answer for what has gone wrong is that employers are more aggressive, demand more concessions and reject fair bargaining in the belief that workers should take it or leave it.

Thirty per cent of Canadian workers belong to unions.

Labor talks tough at US Social Forum

Continued from 1

ing for legislation in the US Congress, which would bar local governments from requiring Home Depots and other big box retailers to provide shelters for day laborers.

Day laborers often wait all day, rain or shine, for people to hire them so the shelters are an important support.

The most impressive labor-related workshops and planning sessions at the USSF were organized by "non-traditional" worker's organizations. Within the space provide by the forum, domestic workers and farm laborers met together with their fellow workers from around the country.

The domestic workers, through their private meetings at the USSF, agreed to form a national coalition of domestic worker organizations. Domestic worker organizing has developed in major urban centers around the country in recent years.

Largely independently, immigrant social service agencies and organizing centers such as Casa of Maryland and Andolan, a South Asian workers center in New York, started to become aware of hundreds of thousands of domestic workers who were facing extreme situations of exploitation and often, verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

Isolated by their place of employment and often by their status as immigrants, domestics have also largely been ignored by the mainstream labor movement.

Labor law in the United States, due in part to racist compromises made in the years of the Roosevelt administration, does not extend labor rights to domestics or to farm workers such as the flawed but important right to collective bargaining.

The domestics who came to Atlanta for the social forum to meet and learn from each other's efforts to organize were certainly not content to remain unheard or unnoticed. It was quite impossible to miss the domestics' boisterous renditions of their anthem, the "Domestic Workers Calypso" or their exuberant, enthusiastic responses to the speakers in the workshops and plenary sessions.

At the worker's rights plenary, just before Acuff spoke, Ai-Jen Poo of Domestic Workers United in New York, explained their plan to enthusiastic applause.

"We hope to build our labor movement to a place where, when we call for a strike as domestic workers it will be for domestic workers rights and for global justice, legalization for undocumented workers, and an end to the war in Iraq [...] or maybe, maybe it will be a strike of all informal sector workers or better yet, a strike of all workers, union and non-union, the entire working-class."

Following such powerful language, it is no surprise that the AFL-CIO has felt compelled to up its rhetoric. How could anyone in the labor movement call for less than open class warfare?

Palace Casino strike hits 300th day



Photo by Jeannette Gysbers.

The Palace Casino workers' marked their 300th day on the picket line on June 29 with a party. Edmonton IWW members have walked the line in solidarity with these members of UFCW each week since September 2006. At the party, a number of UFCW workers plus FW Gabriel Cardenas (above) helped raise money for leukemia by shaving their heads.

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



The Mayor of MacDougal Street: A Memoir by Dave Van Ronk with Elijah Wald

Dave Van Ronk (1936-2002) was one of the founding figures of the 1960s folk revival, but he was far more than that. A pioneer of modern acoustic blues, a fine songwriter and arranger, a powerful singer, and one of the most influential guitarists of the 1960s, he was also a marvelous storyteller, a peerless musical historian, a Wobbly, and one of the most quotable figures on the Greenwich Village scene. Holding court in legendary venues like Gerde's Folk City and the Gaslight Café, Van Ronk's influence was so great that a stretch of Sheridan Square—the

heart of the Village—was renamed on June 30, 2004, and is now Dave Van Ronk Street. *The Mayor of MacDougal Street* is a unique first-hand account by a major player in the social and musical history of the '50s and '60s. It features encounters with young stars-to-be like Bob Dylan (who survived much of his first year in New York sleeping on Van Ronk's couch), Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, and Joni Mitchell, as well as older luminaries like Reverend Gary Davis, Woody Guthrie, Mississippi John Hurt, and Odetta. Colorful, hilarious, engaging, and a vivid evocation of a fascinating time and place, *The Mayor of MacDougal Street* will appeal not only to folk and blues fans but to anyone interested in the music, politics, and spirit of a revolutionary period in American culture. **Hardcover, 246 pages. Originally priced at \$26.00, now just \$12.00**

The Bosses' Songbook: Songs to Stifle the Flames of Discontent Co-authored by Dave Van Ronk, Roy Berkeley, and more

Largely a spoof on authoritarian leftist movements, *The Bosses' Songbook* is pure Wobbly, written at a time when it was very difficult to have both a sense of humor and radical politics. The Kellermans have thankfully rescued this publication from obscurity, and the Literature Department is offering it for a limited time.

*They handed him his orders at Party headquarters,
Saying, "Pete, you're way behind the times.
This is not '38, it's 1947,
There's been a change in the Party line."*

42 pages, \$6.00

Special Deal: The Mayor of MacDougal Street and the Bosses' Songbook for \$15.00

A Century of Writing on the IWW 1905 - 2005: An Annotated Bibliography of Books on the Industrial Workers of the World Compiled by Steve Kellerman

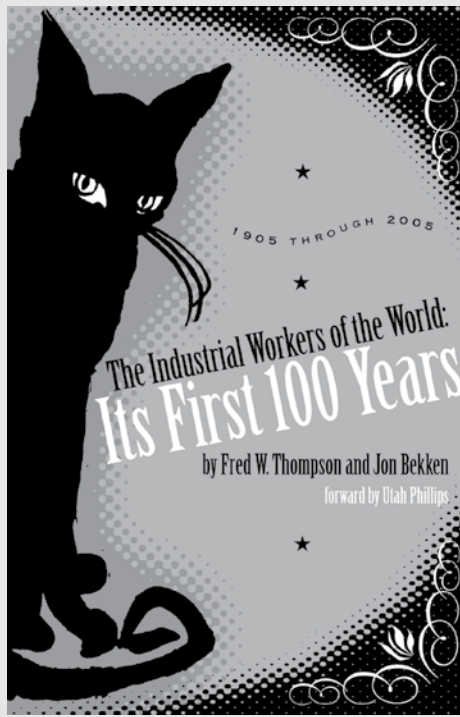
This annotated bibliography published by the Boston General Membership Branch of the IWW lists all known books on the IWW, organized by category in chronological order. Brief critical notes describe the books, quickly and helpfully identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Other categories are Biographical Works, Miscellaneous Works including substantial discussion of the IWW, Writings by Wobblies, and a listing of novels featuring the union. An excellent resource for anyone doing research on the IWW. **38 pages, \$5.00**



The Big Red Songbook Edited by Archie Green, David Roediger, Franklin Rosemont and Salvatore Salerno

This is indeed an incredible endeavor. The most comprehensive collection of rebel workers' songs and poems ever compiled in English, *The Big Red Songbook* includes all the songs that appeared in the IWW's celebrated *Little Red Songbook* from 1909 through 1973, plus dozens more. Here are the songs of Joe Hill, T-Bone slim, Dick Brazier, Ralph Chaplin, Covington Hall and other Wobbly legends; lesser knowns, but ought to be legends such as Eugene Barnett, Paul Walker, and Henry Pfaff; for the first time anywhere, a good selection of songs by women Wobblies: Anges

Thecla Fair, Laura Payne Emerson, Sophie Fagin, Jane Street, Laura Tanne and others; Australians Bill Casey and Harry Hooton, Englishman Leon Rosselson, Germans Ernest Riebe and John Olday, and Scotsman Douglas Robson. A special section focuses on variants and parodies of IWW songs: a Depression-era version of "Hallelujah I'm a Bum," Jack Langan's 1960s version of "Solidarity Forever," an Earth First! adaptation of Joe Hill's "There is Power" by Walkin' Jim Stoltz, and Hazel Dickens' bold update of "The Rebel Girl." And there's the wealth of essays, analysis, references, bibliographies, and discographies, provided by Archie Green, his coeditors, and other collaborators, giving not only historical context, but also a wide range of perspectives on the Wobbly counterculture and its enduring legacies. **546 pages, \$24.00**



The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years by Fred W. Thompson & Jon Bekken forward by Utah Phillips

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 transformed working conditions, 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 IWW, and for an understanding of its ideas and tactics. **255 pages, \$19.95**



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International Solidarity Commission delegate report

IWW meets with Bangladesh garment workers' fed

By Jason Fults

Many readers of the Industrial Worker are already acquainted with the ongoing struggles in Bangladesh's garment sector, as well as the activities of one of its most vocal unions, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF). Over the past three years numerous wobblers have worked to build solidarity with the NGWF, most notably in Pittsburgh and upstate New York.

At a *Labor Notes* conference in May 2006, Fellow Worker Greg Giorgio met with the NGWF's General Secretary, Amirul Haque Amin. When asked how the IWW's International Solidarity Commission (ISC) could best help the NGWF's struggles, FW Amin replied: "We need continuous support. But before providing support, we need more (time to learn) about each other. So, I will be happy if someone from the IWW visits Bangladesh [so] the NGWF, our members, [can] share their struggles, share their information."

In early June of this year, I accepted Amin's invitation and visited the NGWF office in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, on behalf of the ISC. Our meeting took place barely one year after "a wave of fierce class struggle" brought Bangladeshi garment workers (and others) into direct clashes with police and the military. This months-long conflict resulted in several workers killed, thousands more injured or imprisoned, and over a dozen factories burned to the ground. The atmosphere, though tranquil by comparison, was nevertheless foreboding; early monsoon rains had already flooded some parts of Dhaka (as usual), and a government-imposed "State of Emergency" remained in effect. General elections were postponed indefinitely, resulting in a backslide in labor rights and civil liberties.

Despite these challenges, the NGWF continues to recruit members, conduct worker education and organizer trainings, and provide legal assistance to workers. NGWF membership now stands at 22,000 workers. Four thousand are classified as "regular subscribers", members who regularly pay union dues of 10 Takas (US\$0.15) per month. The rest are classified as "subscribers." Currently, the NGWF has 30 factory-based unions, and 1,000 "factory committees," the first step towards forming a union in a workplace.

Amin views these membership numbers as a real victory given the extreme difficulties with forming unions in Bangladesh. When the NGWF was founded 23 years ago, they had no office space and organized their meetings in parks, cheap restaurants, academic institutions, and other public spaces. Now, the union has six branch offices covering all the industrial zones plus their central office in Dhaka. The NGWF also now has 11 full-time and eight part-time organizers. Despite the union's growth, Amin still refers to the NGWF as "small and not well-funded compared to the trade union organizations elsewhere."

Gender equality a priority

Another striking feature of the NGWF, and of the Bangladeshi garment sector in general, is its gender composition: 80-85 per cent of Bangladeshi garment workers are reportedly women. The NGWF tries to reflect this demographic reality in its organizational structure and according to the NGWF's constitution, at least 50 per cent of any committee must be comprised of women. The union's 30-member National Assembly, its highest decision-making body, currently has 16 women. They play key leadership roles as the President, both Vice Presidents, the Treasurer and other officers are all women. Of the union's 19 staff, 11 are women. The



The National Garment Workers' Federation office in Dhaka. In the front row, middle, is the President of the union while in the back row is General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin (left) and Jason Fults (right).

Photo by Molly Stentz

union's gender composition has influenced its campaign decisions. One of the union's primary campaigns is to implement maternity leave.

Other NGWF campaigns in recent years have included: the campaign for a six-day work week; the campaign for improved health, safety, and security; the campaign for a paid May Day holiday; and the campaign for an annual Muslim festival bonus.

Throughout the sector, forcing bosses to simply follow Bangladesh's existing labor laws has been a major ongoing struggle, and a much more difficult one under the State of Emergency, which is used to repress workers' direct action.

Ideas for working together

Apart from gathering more in-depth information on how the union operates, another major purpose of our meeting was to discuss continued collaboration between the IWW and the NGWF.

Amin reiterated in no uncertain terms that pressure from consumers onto multi-national corporations, and from these corporations onto their subcontractors, is extremely important. Unions such as the NGWF will continue their fights at the local level, but they are limited in what they can accomplish without the solidarity of people outside the country.

Basically, there are millions of unemployed Bangladeshis, and the bosses can fire with impunity, knowing that they can easily replace however many workers they need to. What is much more difficult is for the individual factories to continue to receive orders once their reputation has been damaged publicly. Amin said that international pressure on the brand-companies is as important, and some times even more important, than anything the workers can do locally. Amin insists that the NGWF and their

allies in the West have to build capacity and partnership, acknowledging that a key aspect of that partnership is information exchange linking conditions in specific factories with particular brands and corporations.

The NGWF wants to commit two additional staff specifically to such a focus.

Amin estimates that to hire two new organizers, the NGWF would need \$200 per month.

Also on the topic of information exchange, Amin agreed with fellow workers in Pittsburgh that the formation of not only North-South, but also South-South communication networks is crucial.

As such, he thinks that the possibility of the IWW facilitating exchanges between the NGWF and workers' organizations in Latin America is a "very interesting and useful concept."

He requested that the IWW play a central role in such a project, making the initial introductions between the NGWF and groups in Latin America, from which point the three groupings (NGWF, IWW, and Latin American unions) could have ongoing conversations.

Amin was very interested in the idea of organizing along the entire supply chain. He supports projects which would, for instance, connect US workers in Wal-Mart's distribution centers with Bangladeshi garment workers sewing the clothes with Latin American work-

ers producing the fabric. Amin believes that such an approach is essential if workers are going to win in the long-run and suggested Wal-Mart as an appropriate target, stating that "all workers throughout the world" need to be targeting the company, due both to the sheer size of their supply chain as well as the symbolic value of all that the company represents.

Finally, we discussed more immediate and concrete means of increasing the levels of communication between the two unions. The NGWF would like to begin receiving a few additional copies per month of the *Industrial Worker* to share with their branch offices, and agreed to submit regular updates to our newspaper regarding their activities. Amin is also interested in having a few key IWW materials translated into Bengali and perhaps doing a sizable print run of these materials to distribute to NGWF members.

Obviously deciding on any of these ideas for working together does require further discussion between the NGWF and IWW.

Overall, our meeting was both comradely and productive. Some small steps were made, and a relationship that, in time, could become very important for both unions was strengthened.

I will be based in India until at least the end of 2007, possibly longer, and if the ISC requests another trip to Dhaka during that time I will gladly oblige. In the meantime, the ISC, as well as Fellow Workers who support this budding IWW-NGWF relationship, have much to discuss and follow up on.

Jason Fults is a Thomas J. Watson fellow based in New Delhi, India. To obtain a complete copy of his 4500-word *Bangladesh Report*, write him at Sisyphus@riseup.net.

Sl.No	Years	Date	Area	Name of Garments	Killed	Injured
1	1990	27 th December	Mirpur-10	Sarika Garments Ltd	27	100
2	1991	11 th January	Rampura Road	Ching Hing Sweater Ltd	1	50
3	1994		Paltan	Mini Apparels Ltd	1	9
4	1995	12 th February	Sialbary, Pallabiy (Fools News)	Poster Garments Industries Ltd	5	50
5	1995	2 nd March		Pro Star Industry Ltd	10	92
6	1995	16 July	Ibrahimpur	Tamanna Fabrics I. Shinghi Apparels I. Jahanara Fashions I. Tamanna Robbery Textail L.	23	
7	1995	5 th August	Ibrahimpur	Lushaka	9	100
8	1996		Ibrahimpur	F Fashion		52
9	1996	24 th June	Mirpur, Pallabiy	Trimode/Surtext	11	31
10	1996		Mohakhali	Towhdul Fashion	14	60
11	1996		Mirpur	Dorin Garments	1	20
12	1996		Mirpur	Tamanna Garments	27	100
13	1996			Jahanara Fashion	1	20
14	1996		Dhanomdi	G.M. Establishment		20
15	1996		Narayanganj	Padma Garments Ltd	1	20
16	1996	30 th October	Mirpur, Swarpara	Alpha Fashion		10
17	1997	17 th July	Mirpur	Rahman & Rahman	9	200
18	1997	30 th July	Mirpur-1	Shunhai/Jahanara	24	100
19	1997	6 th September	Rashidbag	Novely Garments	5	50
20	1997		Mirpur	Local Garments	1	20
21	1997			C.D. Deshner		30
22	1997	22 nd November	Gulshan-2	Capital Garments	2	20
23	1998			Finix Garments	10	43
24	1998			S.K.S. Garments		5
25	1998			B.P. Garments	1	25
26	1999	20 March	Rupsona	Union Textail	1	50

List detailing the 447 workers killed and 2,466 injured in 44 garment factory fires and collapses since December 1990.

Photo by Molly Stentz

Still available! NGWF assessment stamp.

Help build the bridge from the shop floor of the global apparel weatshops to the IWW! Join hands with the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh and aid their strike fund with this \$5 assessment. As they sew gear for Major League Baseball and other sweatshop profiteers, their struggles continue to mount.

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FROM
COOPERSTOWN
TO DHAKA

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

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.

By Mike Pesa

Supporting public sector strike in South Africa

The International Solidarity Commission wrote a letter of solidarity with the approximately one million workers involved in a massive public sector strike in South Africa. The letter was sent to the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation as well as to the secretary and spokesperson of the President. In the letter, the ISC condemns police brutality against strikers and also criticizes government officials who have been raising their own salaries at the expense of workers and the public. The ISC endorses the workers' demands that any agreement must include the reinstatement of all fired workers.

ISC delegate visits unions in France and Spain

In an effort to advance the IWW's relationship with European labor unions, ISC delegate Kieran Knutson of the Twin Cities GMB visited the offices of the CNT and CGT union federations during his travels in France and Spain. This trip builds on the momentum created by the IWW's delegation to the International Syndicalism Conference in Paris this May. With the IWW growing rapidly in Europe, our contacts and relationships with other European workers are quickly developing.

Solidarity with UAW wildcat strike

The ISC passed a resolution supporting 700 rank-and-file United Auto Workers (UAW) members in Rowan County, North Carolina, who engaged in

a wildcat strike against their employer, Freightliner LLC. In March 2007 the workers struck over safety issues and benefits, defying UAW officials who considered the strike "unauthorized."

The resolution condemns LLC for refusing to negotiate with workers. It also urges international UAW leaders to support its members when they decide a strike is necessary.

New assessment stamps

Two new assessment stamps (a \$3 and \$6 stamp) are now available to all IWW members. Funds raised directly support our international solidarity work. Examples of projects that will benefit from the stamps include raising money for this Fall's IWW delegation to Mexico and providing material aid to the National Garment Workers Federation in Bangladesh so their organizers can devote more time to working with us. To order individual stamps to decorate your red card or entire sheets of stamps to distribute to the members of your branch, send your check or money order and a self-addressed stamped envelope to:
ISC Solidarity Fund Stamp
c/o IWW General Headquarters
PO Box 23085, Cincinnati, OH 43223
USA

Reminder: A number of last year's NGWF Strike Fund assessment stamps are also still available through the Upstate New York GMB. Email solidarity@iww.org for instructions on how to purchase them.

Thank you for your support!

Uk radical ed workers analyze industry

By Bob Miller, IU620

A group of education workers met on July 1 in Manchester, England. The meeting was organised by individual IWW members and members of both the Anarchist Federation and the Solidarity Federation, who work in schools, sixth form colleges [senior high schools and prep colleges] and universities. Teachers, lecturers and students were present as well as a librarian and a porter.

Although a small event, the discussions were well-informed and held in a comradely manner.

We started with a discussion on the examination system and the pressures it puts on both workers and students. Under discussion was the way students are being checked and monitored at each point of their lives and the way that exam league tables are used by employers to discipline and control educators.

We then moved on to analyse the government's plans to close many of the secondary schools in England and replace them with academies. Academies is an important sounding title for privatised schools, run in many instances

by religious groups from the Christian right in England. They pose a threat to the working conditions of all the staff who work in schools and further tighten the control over the curriculum that is taught.

The third discussion was led by a member of Manchester Solidarity Federation. He detailed the way they had been organising at the University of Manchester against job cuts and re-organisation. He emphasised that the atmosphere of threat and intimidation meant that

their work had to be carried out in a clandestine manner. In many ways, what he described would be familiar to wobs organising in job branches that had not 'gone public' yet.

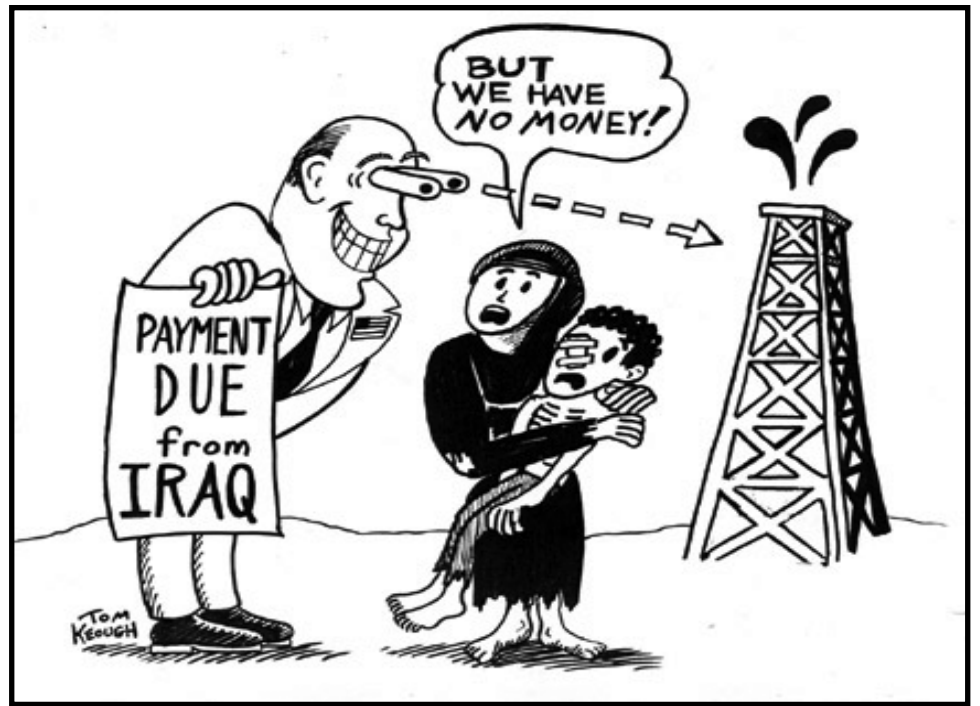
Finally, we looked at the way the universities are changing from centres of academic study to production lines turning out well-trained graduates.

The theme that emerged through the day was the similar nature of the problems faced by people in each area discussed. We hope to have a similar meeting in the future.

Japanese cop stabs himself for time off

A Japanese police officer in north-western Japan stabbed himself in May to get some time off, according to the Associated Press. The man, 44, reported the wound as an attack, but his colleagues found no one matching the description. The policeman had also waited one hour before calling for help.

He had been in charge of a disaster relief effort after the March 25 earthquake that killed one, injured 300 and damaged nearly 15,000 homes. He is now facing a misdemeanour charge for filing a false report. Japan has a word for death by overwork, *karoshi*, recognized by the health ministry.



Graphic by Tom Keough.

Opinion

US tells Iraq to pay up debt, Gulf War costs

By Tom Keough

The US government is lobbying hard to prevent forgiveness of Iraq's \$125 billion debt, incurred under President Saddam Hussein. The US claim that it liberated Iraq apparently stops at the country's chains of debt.

On top of this debt are war reparations. When Iraq lost the Gulf War in 1991, part of the surrender agreement created a legal requirement that Iraq must pay war reparations to Kuwaiti individuals, Kuwaiti government organizations and multinational corporations who claimed that Iraq damaged their property in Kuwait when the Gulf War started. The UN received 2.7 million claims demanding up to \$352.5 billion. The corporate claims filed topped \$80 billion from 5,800 claimants of more than 100 countries. Oil companies' claims account for more than half of the corporate amount. However, these corporate claims such as "lost profits" are difficult to prove, so only \$610 million has been awarded to date.

Overall, the United Nations Compensation Commission, whose governing council mirrors the UN Security Council, has handed over \$21.8 billion to claimants with another \$30.6 billion due.

The key question is where is this money going to come from?

The nation of Iraq has no money to re-build their country nor care for their wounded nor run their utilities. Yet, the combination of the Iraqi national debt and reparation payments will force many generations of Iraqis to pay the bill with oil. Washington will ultimately get what it wanted from the invasion.

The Hussein government paid over \$19 billion before the invasion, despite international sanctions. Some of this money came from the Oil For Food program. US news media critics often complained that Saddam didn't use the money to feed his starving people. Some Oil For Food money went to pay the big oil companies for reparations.

After the 2003 US-led invasion, as the country unraveled, the US administrators forced Iraq to continue payments of over \$2 billion in reparations since the fall of Saddam's government.

The UN's Compensation Commission debated at their meeting held in

Geneva, Switzerland, this June how much of this debt should remain the legal responsibility of Iraq. The US delegation argued for no forgiveness. US activists and other countries protested outside the meeting. Protesters demanded an end to the reparations payments, elimination of Hussein's debt, and full funding of reconstruction costs for Iraq.

Before President George W. Bush's war on Iraq, the world watched as military, political, and intelligence authorities from around the globe protested his plan to invade. Even the most pro-American, pro-big business leaders such as General Norman Schwarzkopf, the US generals in charge of NATO and the Pope strongly denounced the invasion as being about nothing but oil. The horrors unleashed by the invasion resulted in worldwide revulsion and opposition to President Bush. Many traditional government and business allies of the US spoke out, saying they did not want to help US Vice-president Dick Cheney and corporations such as Halliburton make a huge profit from this war.

Foreign corporations who compete with US corporations saw no reason to help their US competitors get a huge financial advantage. President Bush and his appointed governor of occupied Iraq, Paul Bremer, even promoted a policy of not allowing anyone to do business in Iraq if they were from a country that had not sent troops to Iraq.

With the creation of the so-called new Iraqi-led government, the US kept the power to decide who can invest or do business in Iraq. This policy has backfired on Washington. Foreign governments did not send soldiers just to buy Iraqi oil.

With both domestic and foreign opposition to the Bush war for oil, the UN Compensation Commission is not granting oil money handouts as perhaps the US envisioned. At the June meeting the UN commission said it would grant far less money than asked for by claimants.

Iraqis need our support to lift this huge burden of debt and war reparations. They cannot be expected, living in a shattered country gripped by a bloody guerrilla war the US started, to pay this debt. To demand they do so is unacceptable and unethical.

ASDA-Wal-Mart watch

British social justice advocacy group War on Want has launched a website that shines a spotlight on ASDA, a supermarket chain recently taken over by Wal-Mart. The website, www.asdawatch.org, is supported by the GMB union which represents 25,000 workers out of a total workforce of 140,000, with collective bargaining rights at nine of 20 distribution depots and at none of ASDA's retail stores.

The website's goal is to inform and recruit consumer support for a campaign to ensure workers have the right to organize as well as to protect the local food economy and small shops.

War on Want has also tried to use a website, www.tescopoly.org, to focus attention on ASDA's key supermarket rival, Tesco, which controls 30 per cent of the British grocers market and reported £2.5 billion (US\$5 billion) in profits.