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Writers Guild wins Internet rights

The Writers Guild of America members will start voting to ratify or reject a new contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers on February 12.

"We will build on this energy, unity and creativity to make our union stronger than ever," said Michael Winship, president of the Writers Guild of America, East, in a letter to the members. "It is an agreement that protects a future in which the Internet becomes the primary means of both content creation and delivery."

The union leadership of both the east and west coast sections endorsed the deal unanimously on February 11. The members voted to lift the strike and return to work on February 13, pending the ratification vote. The mail-in contract ratification ballot will take two weeks to complete.

The strike began on November 5 after talks broke down over residuals, a fee received for re-broadcasts of writers' work, particularly in relation to new media such as DVDs, cell phones or the Internet. The employer also demanded major concessions in pay formulas, pensions, health benefits, and writers'

rights, particularly in new media. As part of its anti-union propaganda, the Alliance claimed to have paid union writers "at least \$1 billion" in residuals. While meant to showcase its generosity, the factoid actually demonstrated the high stakes involved in the dispute. The length of the dispute, three months, showed the determination of the writers to risk hundreds of dollars in unpaid wages for the possibility of thousands down the road. For writers, residuals are a form of pension plan, a safety net for the frequent dry times.

Another key point was to establish the proprietary rights of writers in new media, so that they can be paid for their work at union rates and not have their work reproduced in traditional media without compensation.

"Thanks to three months of physical resolve, determination, and perseverance, we have a contract that includes WGA jurisdiction and separated rights in new media, residuals for Internet reuse, enforcement..., expansion of fair market value and distributor's gross language and no rollbacks," said the presidents of the union's east and west coast sections.

UK workers lose billions in 'free' overtime, rich pay less tax than ever

The British Trades Union Congress (TUC) reported in two new studies that corporations are getting a double boost, using loopholes to avoid paying billions in taxes each year, while their employees are often working seven unpaid hours overtime per week.

The TUC reported that free overtime is costing five million workers an average of £5,000 (\$9,700) per year. It's an annual Christmas bonus of free work worth £25 billion (nearly \$49 billion) to these workers' bosses.

Workers in Yorkshire and Humberside saw the biggest increase in free overtime, while London workers give employers even more, nearly eight hours per week.

In contrast, *The Missing Billions* study described how the wealthy avoided paying £13 billion (\$25 billion) each year in taxes, while corporations get a £12 billion (\$23 billion) per year break through tax avoidance.

"This is not the politics of envy but the economics of fairness. It is all about getting rich and powerful people to understand they must play by the rules, not look for ways round them," said Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary.

The report suggests that if corporations and the wealthy paid their fair share, the basic tax deduction could be raised and provide relief to the poor and working class.

"Most people think that we have a progressive tax system, but it has now

**"Too much tax is now voluntary for the rich."
—Brendan Barber, TUC**

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Photo: Wobbly Dispatch

Women wobblies proudly display their banner at the May Day march in Edmonton, Canada. See page 8-9 for International Women's Day features.

UK blood service cuts blunted, IWW, allies fight to reverse them

By Becca Kirkpatrick

The board review of the National Blood Service (NBS) restructuring strategy to create three supercentres and cut local services is now complete and these are the outcomes.

The outcry from hospitals, staff and the public at these dangerous and stupid proposals have forced the board to scrap the idea of supercentres in the north and south-east. One excellent victory that we can claim is that the Newcastle centre is now to remain fully open, and Sheffield also keeps many more functions.

But the axe still hangs over essential labs at centres across the country.

From the north and south-east of England, processing and testing labs are still earmarked for closure at Leeds and Tooting, with Brentwood set to lose its testing lab, too.

NBS Red Cell Immunohaematology (RCI) reference labs, which crossmatch blood for patients with rare or reactive blood types, are critical to have closely linked with hospitals in the area. Despite this need, NBS directors still think that they can get away with closing RCI labs in Manchester, Southampton, Cambridge, to cut costs.

The NBS has also taken advice that it should consider ending its role in antenatal screening by 2011. This will cost more jobs, and will eventually cost the wider National Health Service (NHS) as well. The NBS is able to do this testing at a fraction of what it costs hospitals to do it themselves. If the NBS extended its

involvement in antenatal screening, it could create more income for NHS Blood and Transplant, while lightening the load on hospital budgets. It seems the word foresight is missing from the NBS management dictionary.

Interestingly, the revised proposal will cost a predicted 600 jobs, in addition to those slashed in the midlands and south-west consolidation. Before the review the figure of 600 applied to job losses in total across the whole country. It should also be noted that bosses want to cut more jobs in the extremely understaffed collection teams, at a time when collected donations are way below target.

Meanwhile in the midlands and south-west zone, directors are desperately clinging to the supercentre model, reluctant to face the humiliation of abandoning their flagship Filton supercentre venture in Bristol. This was purposely left out of the review as bosses knew McKinsey & Co. would advise against such a drastic cut, as has been proven in the other two regions. Large processing labs from Birmingham, Southampton and Plymouth are still destined to be packed off to this white elephant.

Campaigners in Birmingham protested the plan to close the donor testing lab there on January 31.

Directors also want to inexplicably uproot donor typing and patient screening from Colindale, and the national Cord Blood Bank from Edgware, to Fil-

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Exporting the SEIU Stern model to Oz

Andy Stern is the pin-up boy of the Australian trade union bureaucracy.

The SEIU and Andy Stern are the role models for the Australia Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and many sell-out unions' current brand of unionism.

I was a National Councillor for the Australian Community & Public Sector Union (CPSU, Federal branch) from 2003 to 2005. That was when the leadership brought in a restructure called the Organising Model, which basically involved ceding power to the central bureaucracy whilst making delegates carry the can by cutting back on staff and, at the same time, restricting the autonomy of delegates and the workers on the shop floor. They could only act if they had the approval of the union leadership.

Part of the model is about control.

The CPSU had a rent-free office in Newcastle which housed an organiser who organised tax and centrelink

workers in the Hunter region. From all accounts he had the unconditional support of CPSU members in the area. The Hunter region had the highest CPSU union membership density in the Country. So this arrangement was obviously hugely successful, sustainable and empowering for the local CPSU membership. The leadership closed down the office in 2005 without any consultation, primarily because it didn't want workers in this area to have any autonomy.

Before 2005 members of the CPSU's divisions such as Tax, centrelink, telecommunications, etc., used to directly elect its own full-time officials, thus meaning that these officials who had responsibility for leading pay and conditions campaigns were directly accountable to the workers in their sector that elected them.

Andy Stern, and the SEIU's model were used to justify reducing the number of elected full-time officials in the union, to make all full-time positions nationally elected as well as dictating that the holders of these positions had to reside in Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra only. The leadership also made sure that the pay for these positions was dramatically increased so that most of these positions now attract six-figure salaries.

Running a union on a top-down, Harvard business model invariably

makes the union hierarchy out of touch with its declining member base and is no way to build class solidarity. In many senses, the more conservative union leaders now see their primary role as being asset managers and financial controllers. I'm sure many officials would also identify themselves as being a part of the bourgeoisie instead of with the working class.

There are some parallels with the closing scene of Orwell's novel, *Animal Farm*, where the animals looking into the farm house couldn't tell the difference between pig and man. There are parallels with the "new" style of unionism and the "New labor" where these supposed working class organisations are anything but and are more concerned with enjoying the spoils of office by meeting the needs of Capital.

Another aspect of the Stern way that was and is still slavishly embraced by the CPSU & ACTU leaders such as Greg Combet (who has now been bugged [elected] into parliament) is the idea that union activism is all about media campaigning and that this has replaced industrial campaigning and workers taking industrial action, ie fighting.

Whilst unions must make a stand on wider social justice and sustainability issues that impact on the lives of their members, many unions have dropped the ball when it comes to taking action

on the job to defend pay and conditions. The result? Less solidarity, less members and the downward cycle regrettably continues.

In many senses, the ACTU and unions that:

a) don't fight for the rights of their members on the job,

b) don't build power in the union on the job because they refuse to empower their members,

c) see their role as being campaign junkies instead of industrial organisations, and

d) see the bosses' courts as the primary means to win gains for their members, are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

What is the solution? Bodies such as Union Solidarity (unionsolidarity.org) are a good starting point. Dropping union membership levels has more to do with the way the unions have changed as opposed to the nature of work or the attitudes of workers.

In the current environment, workers desperately need militant and progressive unions that are prepared to fight like never before because, as the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) says, "If you don't fight, you lose."

Regards,

Terry Costello, Class Actions radio Melbourne, Australia

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IWW Organizing Summit in Toronto, Canada April 18-20, 2008

The IWW Organizing Department Board and the Toronto General Membership Branch will be holding the 2008 Organizing Summit, April 18-20, in Toronto, Canada.

We need the experiences, ideas, and resources from fellow workers throughout the union to make this go off splendidly.

Please contact the Organizing Department Board to get involved and contribute to the works.

The Organizing Department Board urges IWW branches and groups to think strategically about sending organizers who will help build the union and campaigns, and to fundraise to help

this along. Having a diverse organizing summit is important to our organizing and our historical mission, and should be considered in our strategizing.

Since many wobblies will be traveling from the US it is imperative that fellow workers act quickly and plan for international travel.

Start your planning to attend now. The rules for US-Canada travel have changed and a passport is most likely necessary, which takes time to get. It may be cheaper for wobblies from the United States to travel to Buffalo first, before taking a bus to Toronto.

Questions? Contact organizing@iww.org for more information.

IWWs elect fresh crop of officers

The Industrial Workers of the World elected a fresh crop of new officers in its annual referendum. Each officer serves a one-year term, starting January 1, 2008.

The relatively new Organizing Department Board has a new chair, Todd Hamilton, who was elected with Jefferson Pierce and Peter Montalbano.

Likewise, the International Solidarity Commission has a new chair, Saku Pinta. He is joined by Daniella Jofre and incumbent commissioner, Mike Pesa.

The General Executive Board, which broadly sets day-to-day policy for the union, is mostly new, too. Incumbents Adam Lincoln and Bryan Roberts are back in the saddle, with new board members Nick Durie, Heather Gardner, Jason Krpan, Evan Wolfson and Alexis Buss. Arthur Miller was elected, but has since resigned, with Roberts stepping up to replace him.

Mark Damron was re-elected unopposed to his third and final term as the General Secretary-Treasurer. Tom Kappas was returned unopposed to the post of Central Secretary-Treasurer of the IWW's legal defense wing, the General Defence Committee.



General Secretary-Treasurer Mark Damron speaks at the General Assembly.

The 2008 General Assembly will, for the first time in the IWW's history, be hosted in London, United Kingdom.

Solidaridad, the informal Spanish-language newsletter, was approved as a formal IWW publication with an editor to be elected in the 2008 referendum.

Neither of the charges reform proposals garnered enough votes, so it's back to the drawing board.

Preamble of the IWW

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 outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

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.

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Membership includes a subscription to the *Industrial Worker*.



ICE, Fresh Direct crush Teamsters union drive



Photo: www.teamsterslocal805.org

Teamsters protest the firings of two pro-union workers, Lonnie Powell and Loreto Gomez, by Wild Edibles in 2007.

The online food company Fresh Direct continues to deny charges that it used an immigration audit to bust a Teamsters union drive at its Long Island warehouse in December.

While the employer has declared victory, the Teamsters union said Fresh Direct used a "coordinated, vicious, union-busting campaign" at its warehouse, combined with a federal immigration investigation, to unfairly win.

"FreshDirect pulled out all the stops to keep a union out, and through intimidation, fear, and heartless treatment of its workers, the company succeeded," said Sandy Pope, president of Teamsters Local 805. The Teamsters are now demanding Fresh Direct "pledge that they will not retaliate against any

worker who was brave enough to stand up for a union."

Of approximately 900 employees at the company's warehouse, 426 voted against the union, with 73 voting for Teamsters Local 805 and 31 for UFCW local 483S.

Missing from the vote were between 100 and 300 workers who the company notified on December 9 of an audit by ICE, the US immigration enforcers notorious for mass raids of communities and companies in order to arrest and deport people. The union vote was less than two weeks later.

With the climate of fear induced by ICE's mass immigration raids throughout the United States, the impact of the letter was immediate, with hundreds of employees not reporting to work. Of those who stayed, at least one employee was fired and a dozen were suspended for improper documentation, before the union election.

Fresh Direct had previously retaliated against two union organizers, firing them in August and September 2007. The Teamsters responded by sending an Unfair Labor Practice complaint to the National Labor Relations Board for Lonnie Powell and Loreto Gomez.

The complaint is awaiting a NLRB ruling.

New York wobs learn IWW history

By Jim Crutchfield

The New York City GMB began a program of bi-weekly Saturday School classes to educate its members on the history and structure of the IWW, the techniques and problems of workplace organizing, the principles of labor economics, and other topics relevant to IWW members.

Twenty people attended the first session, held on January 12, all of them from the branch's foodstuffs campaign.

Many of these workers have been members of the organization for some time, but until now had not had any formal education about the union that they have been supporting so courageously.

The class was conducted in halting Spanish by Jim Crutchfield, with help from Alfredo Garcia, who provided translation as needed. After class, the group enjoyed a social half-hour with coffee and doughnuts supplied by Daniel Gross.

The NYC GMB hopes to offer English-language classes as well in the near future.

OBITUARY

Lifelong fighter for peace, solidarity

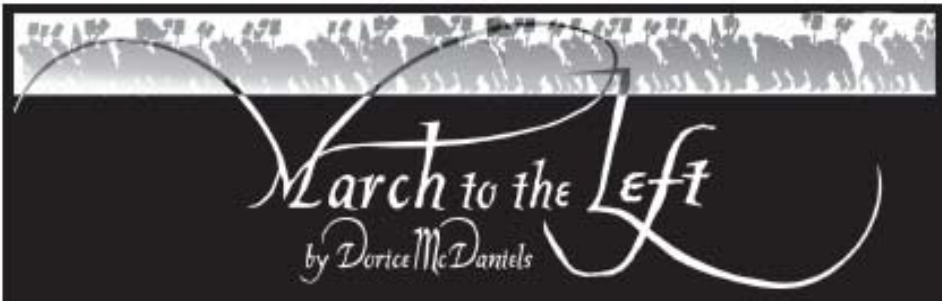
By Maggie Phair

Dorice McDaniels died November 14, 2007. She was a Wobbly, and an activist who all her life demonstrated against war and militarism. She was arrested for this at least ten times. At a late age, she traveled to Northern California to take part in Redwood Summer, defending the redwood trees from a major logging company. She commented that her father (an IWW member) wrote anti-war poetry, her mother wrote letters, but she put her body on the line. Probably her greatest satisfaction came when she recently did counter-recruitment work at Woodrow Wilson High, where she graduated nearly 80 years earlier. She also wrote regularly for the *Industrial Worker*.

This is Dorice McDaniels' last typewritten note to the *Industrial Worker*, which expresses her dedication to the IWW, sense of humor and hope for the future:

Greetings Fellow Worker Moore,
With great reluctance I am posting my last column to the Industrial Worker. I have become quite wobbly (no pun intended), legally blind, rather deaf and now I am beset by a serious problem. So it is that I am closing the door on 90 years of activism. I am most grateful to all you fellow workers who are carrying on the good fight. I hope to continue to support the IWW as long as I can sign checks.
Dorice McDaniels

Below is Dorice's final column.



How does a red-blooded union-conscious sales clerk respond when she finds a picket line at the entrance to her store? The leaflet said, "This is only a consumer boycott." Just the same, I wasn't happy about this set-up. Without a word, I marched over to the office of Retail Clerks #770 on my noon break to sign up.

"It's not our intent to entice clerks out," explained the organizer. "Our consumer boycott is simply putting pressure on the management to sign up. But since you're out----"

Next morning Millirons was astonished to find their missing employee walking the picket line.

At noon, two weeks into the action, a court clerk handed each picket an injunction. Walk in silence two by two on the curb, indeed! As soon as one contingent was arrested, another vociferous batch took its place until all 22 of us were nabbed. Immediately upon release on bail, eight of us were back. This bunch landed in the drunk tank of Lincoln Heights Jail. Guess the cops thought anybody rash enough to court arrest twice in one day must be intoxicated.

On Monday morning, we all pleaded innocent in court. Union paid the fine of \$500 for each recalcitrant picket on each count. The Los Angeles mayor and chief of police gave us the nod. We marched back to Millirons.

Eight unions initially pledged solidarity with the Retail Clerks. Teamsters were the first to renege.

Now suddenly carpenters were pitching ladders in the way of our march. Nails and hammers carelessly slipped out of workers' hands. Sanders wafted cement dust into our noses. Glaziers and window fitters racketed around, drumming out our appeals to honor the boycott. Janitors briskly hustled inside

to conduct their business. Good unionists all, sporting union buttons!

The job completed, the workmen left. But the boycott continued for six months with dwindling public support. One day the organizer told us, "We're giving Millirons a rest for a while. We've got a few other jobs to clean up."

What had these other stores done wrong? "Oh, they broke union rules. Come on, kids. Let's go."

Well, our picket pay was more than we'd been used to. So, grumbling was slight. "Except when I was working behind the counter, I used to know what I was selling."

We were the shock troops engaged in numerous campaigns and hit-and-run skirmishes. We paraded around a dress shop, a drug store and numerous markets. One day, I found myself sporting a Teamster button at the rear of a furniture store where parts were delivered for assembly.

Taft-Hartley was enacted. Wouldn't drivers honoring our line be guilty of breaking the secondary boycott clause of this union-busting law?

"Hell, what can the law do about it when men get absent-minded and forget where they're going? Or get careless and break stuff or lose things?"

So far, so good. But don't expect cooperative behavior to last long with Teamsters. Gradually, drivers began ignoring our signs, until at last we were bucking drivers completely busting us.

The picket beat can be a lonely walk with time for much thinking. Your cogitations linger on organizers posing as business agents with a commercial swagger. And you wonder just what you are doing.

The workers themselves should be organizing their own shops.

That's when a thoughtful Wobbly put an *Industrial Worker* in my hands.

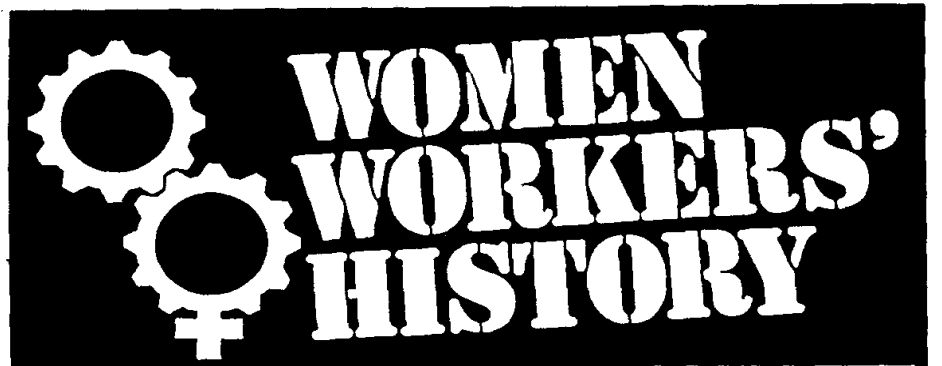
AFSCME Strike: Building solidarity

Continued from 11

Small workplace victories, achieved through organizing in one's immediate area or workgroup, will build this culture of solidarity throughout the workplace and ultimately the industry. It's tiring and daunting work, but most anyone I ask supports the idea of coming together for more control and decision-making power at work. That's what a union is all

about and it contrasts with the narrow interests of today's craft unions.

With strong solidarity networks forming across employee groups at the university, the power dynamic in the workplace will shift and the employer would have little recourse but yield to a large and organized cross-section of its workforce.

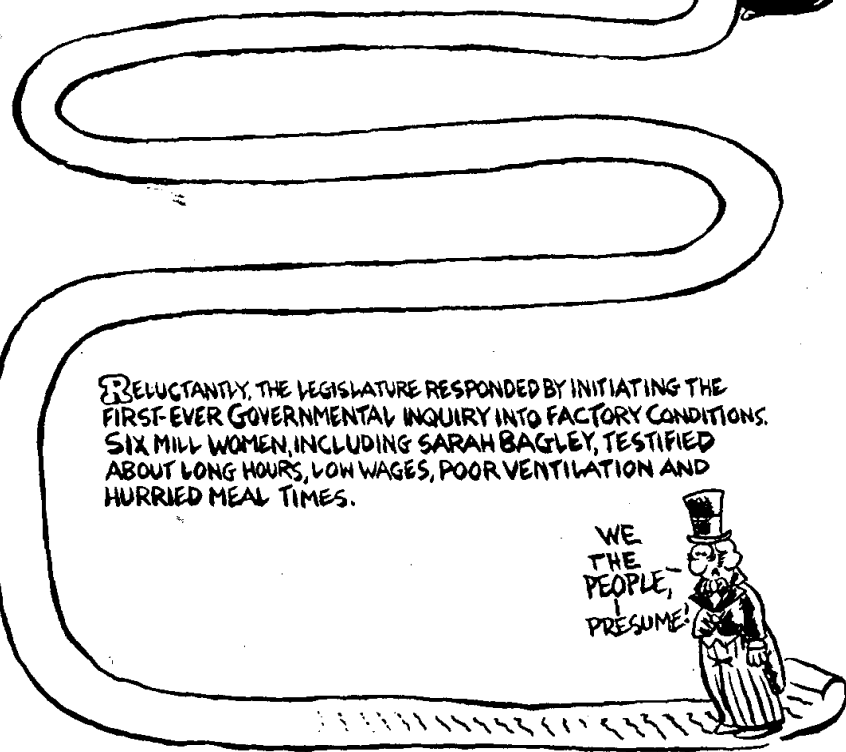


CHAPTER 11 DEMAND FOR 10 HOUR DAY

THE FEMALE LABOR REFORM ASSOCIATION, REPRESENTING THOUSANDS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN NEW ENGLAND'S TEXTILE MILLS, PRODUCED OUTSTANDING LEADERS SUCH AS PRESIDENT SARAH G. BAGLEY AND MELITABEL EASTMAN, CO-EDITOR OF VOICE OF INDUSTRY LABOR NEWSPAPER AND SECRETARY OF THE NEW ENGLAND WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION.



THE WORKING WOMEN JOINED FORCES WITH THE NEW ENGLAND WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION IN A CAMPAIGN TO LIMIT WORKING HOURS TO 10 HOURS A DAY. THE WOMEN IN THE MASSACHUSETTS MILLS COLLECTED THOUSANDS OF SIGNATURES ON PETITIONS TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE DEMANDING A 10 HOUR DAY.



RELUCTANTLY, THE LEGISLATURE RESPONDED BY INITIATING THE FIRST-EVER GOVERNMENTAL INQUIRY INTO FACTORY CONDITIONS. SIX MILL WOMEN, INCLUDING SARAH BAGLEY, TESTIFIED ABOUT LONG HOURS, LOW WAGES, POOR VENTILATION AND HURRIED MEAL TIMES.



THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE BALKED AT REFORM. BUT DUE TO THE MASSIVE PRESSURE CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY THE TWO WORKING PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS, NEW HAMPSHIRE IN 1847 BECAME THE FIRST STATE TO ENACT A LAW SETTING 10 HOURS AS THE LEGAL WORK DAY. THE LOWELL MILL OWNERS AGREED TO SHORTEN THE WORK DAY TO 11 HOURS IN 1853.



Whose Union is up-to-date?

Continued from 10

Preamble so that it now tells us to "remain in harmony with the earth." Thus the IWW is, in principle, the greenest union in America and maybe the greenest in the world.

So which union is living in the past? The one that clings to an archaic law that no longer has much force or the one that believes in workers' own self-initiative? The one that closes its eyes and its pocketbook when other unions are destroyed or the one that proclaimed, in 1905, "An injury to one is an injury to all"?

Here then are my conclusions: a) The benefits that union members en-

joyed at the height of the 20th century did not descend from Heaven or from the White House. Workers had to fight for them.

b) For the last quarter-century and more, the AFL-CIO has surrendered one benefit after another to the employers. This happened despite the mighty federation's money and political alliances.

c) To improve their situation, contemporary workers will therefore have to tread upon the difficult and nearly forgotten path of direct action. That path is one the IWW knows well and is ready to follow again with workers who see through the futility of laws, politicians,

Polish miners occupy Budryk mine, win 10% raise

By John Kalwaic

The striking coal miners who occupied the Budryk mine in southern Poland for 46 days surfaced on February 1 with an agreement that fell short of their demand for equal pay.

The miners will get a ten per cent raise and a lump-sum payment of 1,500 zlotych (\$606), according to Polish public radio, Polskie Radio. The deal falls short of the 20 per cent increase they demanded that would put their pay on an equal footing with other miners in the same company who earned 720 zlotych (\$290) more.

The miners struck the deal with the Jastrzebska Mining Company, which recently acquired the publicly-owned Budryk mine in a privatization deal. It was part of a wave of 300 privatization projects planned by the Polish government over the next four years.

The miners' agreement also includes the inclusion of one miner on a special commission that will look at standardizing wages in mines across Poland. JSW said it would equalize the Budryk wages by 2010.



Budryk miners celebrate Christmas on strike.

Photo: cia.bzzz.net

The strike started on December 13 with six to ten hunger strikers. The strike began in earnest on December 17, after the JSW management refused to negotiate with the workers.

The workers were supported by the August 80' Free Trade Union, which is one of the more militant and democratic unions in Poland. Mainstream union leaders such as Solidarity didn't back the strike.

As the strike wore on, more workers joined the hunger strike, totalling 34. In

early January, 150 miners occupied the mine, shutting down production, while 200 workers occupied the topside operation.

In order to pressure the government, the August 80' trade union sent 50 of the miners' wives from the nearby town of Ornontowice to Warsaw so they could present a petition to the government to intervene on behalf of their husbands. However, the Deputy Prime Minister Waldimar Pawlak refused to meet them, instead going to a church event. "The

wives came for nothing," he said, adding that "this isn't the PRL [communist People's Republic of Poland]... You can't give raises to those who scream the loudest." He then told the women to go home. Instead, the miners' wives decided to stay in the capital until the politicians met with them.

Support has come from all over the world for the miners involved with the strike and occupation. Radical film director Ken Loach sent a letter of support and made a donation to their strike fund. The Russian anarchist group, Autonomous Action, held a solidarity picket outside the Polish counsel in Irkutsk, Siberia, comparing it to the Siberian miner strikes of 1998.

Donations to the Budryk miners can still be made under the name "Support fund for families of striking miners of Budryk" to the bank account, POLU PL PR PL 23 8454 1053 2001 0041 5426 0001, at the bank Orzesko-Knurowski Bank, Spółdzielczy Oddzia, Ornontowice, Poland. Messages of support can be sent to the Polish comrades at poldek@mdnet.pl.

With files from the IW.

Polish cleaners in UK strike Glenn, win

By John Kalwaic

In November 2007, a group of mostly Polish guest workers in the United Kingdom won back wages due to improper payment by the Glenn Management cleaning company.

Glenn Management is an outsourcing company, which cleans offices and buildings. In Moulton Park Industrial Estate in Northampton, England, the workers of Glenn Management had not received their wages in months. The workers tried to contact their bosses but received no response from management.

They downed their tools and struck. Within one half hour, the bosses of Glenn Management began talking with the workers. At first, they argued and

threatened that striking workers would lose their jobs.

The workers held firm. The boss then offered to pay only the workers who spoke English well. The workers again refused and continued to strike.

Glenn Management then began to get calls from their clients, threatening to cancel their services if their offices were not cleaned. Many guest worker support groups backed the strike. In the face of this pressure, the company relented to the workers' demands and it became a victory for direct action.

Polish workers make up more than half of the 111,000 migrants in the United Kingdom, most of whom come from the new European Union countries.

Auchan fires pro-union worker in Poland



Photo by Workers Initiative paspartoo.w.interia.pl

Workers Initiative pickets the Auchan store in Zielona Gora, Poland.

By John Kalwaic

Solidarity protests in Warsaw, Poznan and other parts of Poland denounced the firing of pro-union Auchan hypermarket workers.

On December 31, the management of the Auchan store in Zielona Gora fired Piotr Krzyzaniak who had been organizing with the anarcho-syndicalist union, Workers' Initiative. He was falsely accused of stealing 5,000 zlotych (\$2,000).

On January 25, the Union of Syndicalists, Anarchist Federation, socialists and others picketed the Auchan stores in Warsaw, Gdansk, and Poznan, and other parts of Poland. Marchers placed stickers on Auchan

products that changed the store slogan, "we slash prices" to "we slash wages."

The workers at Auchan are agitating for a 300 zlotych (\$121) raise in monthly pay. They are also protesting long working hours and the use of underage employees who are forced to work overnight shifts. The workers' health is at risk, as they do strenuous physical work, including dragging heavy pallets, that causes repetitive stress injuries.

The firing followed a December 15 protest by dozens of activists at the Auchan in Zielona Gora.

Krzyzaniak is the ninth Workers' Initiative activist fired for union organizing, since the union began in 2004. *With files from the IW.*

Australian IWW Akin Sari pleads guilty

By Joe Toscano, www.anarchistmedia.org

Australian IWW Akin Sari plead guilty to nine charges for his role in the protests against the Group of 20 economic summit in Melbourne, November 17-19, 2006. If convicted of the charges, including riotous behavior, criminal damage, assault and rioting, he may face a maximum of 25 years and fines up to \$20,000.

Sari was brought to the court room from Barwon Prison where he is in day six of his second isolation stint. To date, he has spent 183 days in prison, 65 of those in isolation. He looks the same: dark curly beard, dark curly hair, horn rimmed glasses sitting on a gaunt face perched on a gangly frame. He smiles.

The Judge enters and all stand: two court officials, three detectives, Crown Prosecutor, and assistants. Four reporters from the press, pads in hand, take a back row seat. Akin's barrister and his assistant, 11 members of the public—their common bond is Akin—are scattered in the bowels of the court. A police officer sits next to the dock.

His barrister complains he needs more time with his client; he couldn't see him properly that morning. The Crown team fidgets; the three detectives hunch over, listen intently. Court is adjourned until 11:30 am.

Akin is led back into the cell in the County Court by the police officer. At 11:30 am, the Crown outlines its case, more delays, court adjourned until 2:30 pm. At 2:30pm, the Crown continues and the court watches Akin's antics on that fateful day on a video screen.

The Defence barrister, poorly fitting wig, black gown, gets on his feet and



slowly outlines Akin's plea. No, he was not mentally ill when he participated in the G20 protests. Yes, he believes the tactics used were unacceptable. Police action at past demonstrations is given as the justification for the tactics he used. Snippets of information about why he was involved in the G20 demonstrations filters through the court.

Another adjournment at 4 pm for his barrister to take further instructions from Sari. The crowd had thinned to seven members of the public. Akin is in the dock and there are two reporters, one who is keen to file her story for the evening news. I left, though I understand the plea hearing went on for another hour. Nothing was finalised. The plea hearing continued on February 11, but as yet the judge has not sentenced him.

What is going to happen to Akin Sari, a Turkish political refugee who was granted political asylum and Australian citizenship in 2005? He has taken responsibility for his actions at the G20 protests in 2006 by pleading guilty at the first available opportunity and now awaits his fate in court.

He needs to know that we're there with him.

Write to Akin Sari today: AKIN SARI, c/- Port Phillip Prison, P.O. BOX 376, Laverton 3080, Melbourne, Victoria, AUSTRALIA.

UK workers lose billions, rich pay less

Continued from 1

been hollowed out by so many loopholes and allowances that too much tax is now voluntary for the rich," said Barber, who called for a fair tax campaign.

The Missing Billions research included an analysis of 344 sets of accounts from Britain's 50 largest companies and analysis of HMRC and other official statistics. It showed that rather than pay the 30 per cent corporate tax rate dictated by law, these companies paid 22.5 per cent, a rate that has fallen by 0.5 per cent each year for the last seven years.

The rich avoid paying tax by converting their incomes into investment income, which has lower taxes, by shifting income to spouses and others who earn less or nothing, and by moving billions in income abroad.

Spanish bus drivers strike for 5-day week

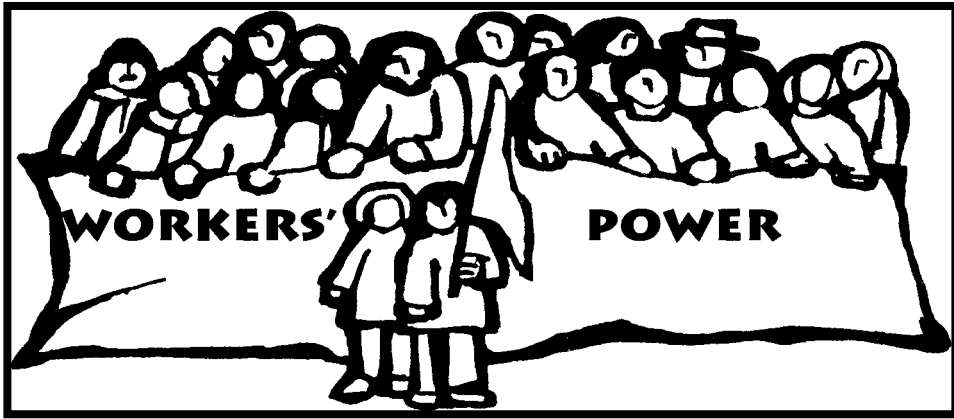
By John Kalwaic

Bus workers affiliated with the radical General Labor Confederation (CGT) in Barcelona, Spain, struck from December 21-24 and January 2-4 to demand a five day week. Bus workers currently work six days per week.

When the employer, TMB, hired scabs to run the buses, strike supporters moved to stop them, smashing windows and spray-painting "scab" on the strikebreaker buses. Fifty-four buses were reported disabled, well beyond the capacity of the two retrieval trucks.

Squatter social centers have mobilized in support of the bus workers, who have stood with them in the past. Previously, the CGT had supported their occupation of TMB properties.

With files from the IW.



Building sustainable resistance

By Todd Hamilton

Workers have been organizing at a low-income reproductive health clinic for the past few months.

It all began when the company, which was on solid footing, went on a hiring spree and improved a lot of working conditions. The federal government began requiring any recipient of aid (the majority of our patients) to prove citizenship. Undocumented workers don't actually need to prove citizenship, strangely; all they need is to indicate that they're permanent residents. The net effect on the industry has been to cut 30 per cent of the funding to all low-income clinics generally. That is the real target of this federal assault, to cut social funding under the guise of racially-based nationalist sentiments.

Management's response was mass layoffs of departments, internal restructuring, productivity increase measures, and a hiring freeze.

The workers responded actively and vocally. At first, the resistance was individualized, emails and phone calls to management expressing agitation. As this method was fairly ineffective, workers began using staff meetings and other such channels to confront management in spontaneous groupings around the natural social circles at work.

As the heat continued to escalate, management rolled over on a number of demands. The hiring freeze was lifted, yearly raises were restored, and management made an effort to meet with workers to hear concerns and supposedly to incorporate ideas for solving problems.

Part of this response came from the fact that management was split by their commitment and the staff demand to serve patients as people. But the workers weren't organized, so this demand was systematically ignored.

The spontaneous groups were easily distracted by small concessions (e.g. changing the color of toilet seats), divided by quibbling and diffused by management. Management began engaging in a propaganda campaign to try and win the hearts and minds of workers, who are vocally angry and resistant.

Many of the senior staff quit, leaving a fresh workforce who are largely ignorant of the context of the ongoing struggles. Amidst this, workers at two clinics organized as a group and demanded a meeting with the CEO in order to air grievances. These workers ended up with management dodging demands and focusing on the easy-to-fix trivial demands. The workers were ill-prepared and fragmented during the meetings.

Conditions at clinics vary wildly as well, and despite general anxiety over layoffs and restructuring, not all clinic staff feel the same level of frustration. At my clinic, a similar meeting was friendly with management to the point of offering personal sacrifices (such as paying more for health insurance). This is in part due to turnover (90 per cent of the workers have been at my clinic less than two months), and also due to the beliefs and positions carved out by the one or two senior staff.

The most successful was a meeting

with a clinic where a small committee had been built with myself and two IWW sympathizers who have been organizing. A one page list of demands was prepared, and the clinic as a whole endorsed it. The organizers in the shop inoculated their co-workers about management's potential responses, and got together to make sure everyone stayed on their collective message. Their crucial demand was more staff at their horribly understaffed clinic. The meeting went well with management taking their demands seriously.

After the meeting more staff were hired, and the way staffing is allocated was modified somewhat. The workers felt like they got what they wanted, but the systemic issues remain untouched. They decided that next time they needed to be less conciliatory, and to have a plan to escalate actions if they don't get what they demand.

Management's strategy has been to try and listen to worker concerns, without committing to implementing solutions, and to roll over on the easier demands that improved the business anyway.

For example, our use of the Internet had been taken away from all staff on a whim, citing a few individuals using mspace too much. Widespread protests

about needing such basics as maps and bus schedules for patients eventually won back full Internet use rights. Likewise, protests over a bizarre rule to do pelvic exams on all women who enter the clinic, quickly overturned the new policy.

The most hopeful turn of events is the building of a cross-clinic organizing committee, which has workers from four of the five greater metropolitan area clinics. The first meeting was held recently, where it was decided to build an organizing committee, map all the clinics, identify leadership, begin pushing demands across the company, and eventually have an independent workers organization that can implement and negotiate our grievances directly.

As management has caved on our demands so quickly, and turn-over is so high, we've exhausted much of our agitational issues. For this reason the committee decided to begin building the relationships and solidarity through social activities and education that will provide a foundation for the next grievances that surface. With a committee already in place and a structure to work with, we can prepare to act collectively and implement our desires.

Send your submissions for "Workers Power" to forworkerspower@gmail.com.

Online blacklist: how the Internet helps the bosses

Back in 1974, I was a student in Cornell University's labor relations program, working during the summer for a union in New York City. The union's education director (today its president) suggested that I quit university and go to work in a factory where I could organize workers. That was the way to get involved in the trade union movement, he told me. I pondered the offer—it would have involved moving to Indiana—and eventually decided not to do it.

Thanks to the Internet, that scenario is no longer possible.

I had been a political activist for a few years by then (I started quite young) but there was really no way for a factory owner in Indiana to know who I was. I probably could have covertly entered the factory and helped unionize it.

Today, factory owners are a mouseclick from knowing everything about each of us. The old strategy of blacklisting--employed so successfully against unions like the IWW for so many years--has now become infinitely more effective thanks to the Internet.

According to a recent report, "Starbucks managers discovered that two pro-union employees in New York were graduates of a Cornell University labor program... Managers took the names of graduates from an online Cornell discussion group and the school's Web site and cross-checked them with employee lists nationwide. They found that three employees in California, Michigan and Illinois were graduates of the program and recommended that local managers be informed."

That's pretty clever. Starbucks was not only looking for troublemakers, but for potential troublemakers or people who might have sat in class next to troublemakers. It was chilling to me to read that they were specifically targeting Cornell labor program graduates. That brought home to me the point that if this technology had existed in 1974, it would not have been possible to covertly insert someone like myself into a non-union factory.

Using the techniques of data-mining, human resources staff are going to be able to block the employment not only of trade union organizers, but of people who might be friends with union organizers. If I were a union-buster, the first thing I'd do is sign up to Facebook (where one is actually face-less and anonymous) and "befriend" all the union activists I could. In the real world, this would be tricky, expensive and time-consuming. But not online.

Many of us, myself included, have long argued that unions should make the best use possible of the Internet, and that it offers us new possibilities to organize, to campaign, to strengthen our unions. The low cost and global reach, we believed, would empower unions and level the playing field in the struggle with employers.

But the net also offers new possibilities for union-busters and there is some evidence that corporations are using the Internet more effectively than we do.

How do we cope with the dangers of data-mining and Internet-based blacklisting?

We need our members and especially our organizers to learn some of the basic skills of protecting their privacy online. We're hearing all the time now about how teenagers are being warned that what they're writing today on MySpace and Facebook may come up to haunt them when they apply for their first jobs. But where are the unions warning members how to behave online, how to protect their identities, encrypt their correspondence, visit web sites anonymously? Which unions are creating for themselves secure areas for online discussion that are not easily data-mined by the opposition?

As the Starbucks example shows, some employers have thought this through and are way ahead of us in the game. We in the trade union movement need to begin training our officers, staff, members and potential members in the art of survival in an age when privacy is becoming a thing of the past.



Analysis

Bush throws money at business

If there is one message working people in the United States should understand, it is that the government is not in control of the economy and it does not know what to do.

The \$170 billion aid package approved by the Senate on February 7 demonstrated a desperaannounced by President George W. Bush in his State of the Union address and approved by the Senate on February 7.

Bush is trying to use the same logic he used after the September 2001 terrorist attacks: go shopping. This time, he's supplying the money to go do it, since so many Americans are facing high debt, low-paying work and no way out.

The 117 million households, 20 million senior citizens on Social Security, and 250,000 disabled veterans who get a check for \$300 to \$1200, may enjoy the money. Maybe they'll pay down some debt. Maybe they'll shop. Maybe they'll buy a round of beer and buffalo wings at the local pub. But it's a one-time cheque, like a lottery ticket win. It isn't something that a family can plan into their annual budget or use to fend off a repossession order.

So what is the real point of this so-called stimulus package? The first \$100 billion or so is to basically get people to spend money, thus give it to business.

Then the second part of the package is a \$50 billion subsidy to business, in the hopes that they will use it to their benefit, which illogically is assumed to be the benefit of the US economy.

So who gets the money in the end?

Business. In effect, President Bush has fooled the Democrats and media into thinking he is helping working people, when they have, in fact, just given \$170 billion to the businesses who have hollowed out the US economy. The pork barrel is out so it must be election time.

By the time the US bureaucracy issues these one-time checks, there is no telling what the economic situation will be. As the economy continues to slow and adjust to reality, the United States will be short \$170 billion that could have been used more strategically to shore up its economy and protect the world's economy from its reckless deregulation and lack of oversight of its corporate elite.

UK blood cuts

Continued from 1

ton in Bristol. The only apparent reason for this is an attempt to further justify that the shiny hangar is not going to be a terrible waste of resources.

Now that the factual support is crumbling, we have to push on campaigning against centralisation. No decision on the fate of our health services should ever be made based on keeping someone's CV unsoiled.

Thanks to all campaign supporters for your valuable help so far. We're getting there and reason is on our side. Let's keep on fighting! You can sign the petition <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/nbs-sos/> or visit our blog to join the Save Our NBS protests popping up across the country.

Freeters' Union: organizing Japan's precariat

By Sabu Kohso

The Japanese post-war slogan of building a middle class-dominant society is now buried under the debris of omnipresent construction sites.

In Japan, the majority of young people are moving from one temporary job to another, without much prospect of ever grabbing a permanent position. These young people include most university graduates who once were thought destined to be national leaders.

Freeters is a new expression used in the everyday life of today's Japan, where the once promised life-long employment for the entire nation is a story of the Toyota-ist past. Freeters are workers who are forced to earn their livelihoods permanently through odd jobs, precisely what we nowadays call the precariat.

Meanwhile, homeless people, mostly middle-aged men who lost their jobs after the mid-Nineties recession, are sleeping under blue tarps scattered in the parks, next to river banks, and on every empty lot one can find. Some prefer to spend nights in a cell of a net-café before the next long day of job hunting. What happened to them?

Neoliberal reformation

The groundwork of this situation was prepared under the surface of a bubbly flourish of the neo-liberal reformation of society, mainly during the Eighties. The social and public domains were decomposed to the bare principles of the market economy. The welfare system was undermined and a harsh class split was the outcome. Unions of state-owned enterprises, including the powerful Kokuro National Railway Union were dissolved along with the privatization. They were more or less absorbed into quasi-unions subordinated to the integrated enterprises (*keiretsu*).

Up until that point, the major body of precarious workers—called the 'industrial reserve army' by Marx—had been concentrated in construction. The daily employed workers (*hiyatoi*) lived in sub-standard lodging houses in ghettos called a gathering place (*yoseba*) in major cities—Sanya in Tokyo, Kamagasaki in Osaka, Kotobuki-cho in Yokohama, and Sasajima in Nagoya.

These workers were those who built, blood and tears, the post-war prosperity of Japan. But despite their work, they remained consistently marginalized in society. During construction booms, harassment of labor brokers (*tehaishi*) intensified. The harassers were mostly gangsters (*yakuza*) who not only took a cut from workers' wages, but of everything else they got, through the pressure of hinted or actual violence.

Now many *yosebas* are deserted because the construction boom has passed and the method of labor recruiting has changed. Instead of sending micro-buses to pick up workers in *yosebas*, they just call personal cell phones wherever they are, whenever they are needed. Simultaneously, ever more types of jobs were becoming informal as an overall tendency. Thus, exhaled from the factories and ghettos, the precariats are spread everywhere in the urban space, without any gathering places.

Freeters network, then organize

In this context, that the All Freeters Union (Freeter Zenpan Roso) formed in 2004. It came from PAFF, a network of Part-timers, Arbeiters, Freeters, and Foreign workers, who formed themselves into network, with some active students. PAFF's call for organizing the freeters union emphasized how the economic strategies of financial circles and the labor policies of the government have created the precarious conditions of workers in general. Hence, freeters' problems are not just limited to them, but affect the entire working population.

The freeters union is based in Tokyo, with associate organizations now spreading into many other cities. The registered members are approximately one hundred so far, but there are many sympathizers and associated groups in various fronts such as organizations of day workers, homeless support groups, foreign workers' organizations, and the anti-capitalist movement, consisting of anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups, including the Sanya Struggling Committee, Sanya Workers Center, and Asian People's Friendly Society (APFS).

There is also a strong tie with the Tokyo Managers Union (www.mu-tokyo.ne.jp), which was founded in 1993 and now supports the younger union by allowing it to use part of its office space. This collaborative rapport shows the situation in Japan is changing, that even the managers of chain stores are pushed toward precarity with constant overwork under the threat of lay-offs.

Exhaled from the factories and ghettos, the precariats are spread everywhere in the urban space, without any gathering places.

Targets

The campaigns of the union are basically planned within the Labor Union Law, but various types of direct action are used at the workplace: distribution of flyers and petitions, picketing, chanting, and performance protests with music and action.

The freeters union has a number of target companies which impose upon workers illegitimate hardships. What the union pays attention to most seriously is the labor brokers who dispatch workers in a way totally favorable to the companies. Today's successful labor brokers no longer look like *yakuza*, but more like hip, many-faceted enterprises. One typical example is the Goodwill Group (www.goodwill.com) whose unionization was realized largely thanks to the Freeters' Union.

Along the same lines, the union protests against the de-regulation of the dispatching law by the Ministry of Health and Welfare that causes the expansion of low wages and precarity.

After their work days, union members gather in the office in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo and begin to answer telephone calls. During the consultations, they carefully listen to the workers' claims. If the claims are judged severe, they ask the callers to visit the office and discuss the case in detail. A number of disputes have been taken up in this manner. One of the most important aspects of the consultation is to inform the workers of their rights. For the same purpose, the union has published a booklet on their website, www.freeter-union.org, called the Freeter Handbook—Notes on Labor Law for Survival. Presenting various case studies, it offers useful legal knowledge that workers can use for their survival as well as self-empowerment.



Photo: mkimpo.com

The Freeters' Union demonstrated in the street during the May Day 2006 'Freedom and Survival' action. Police clashed with protesters and arrested three.

The union organized Freeters' May Day 2004 in order to call wide attention to the situation that precarity is the major condition of labor today. Since 2005,

embodies denial of mono-vanguardism, rejection of control by all forms of violence, and decision-making by horizontalist discussion, said noiz. This position derived from a new cultural and political identity that grew among the young generation of the early to mid-Nineties, when the economic bubble burst.

In postwar Japan, a set of ideals—graduating from a good university, becoming an executive, marrying at an early age, buying a car and a house in the suburbs, having two children, and so on—was imposed on the whole nation. These achievements assumed the measure for the social hierarchy.

Today in the post-recession climate, these expectations have become nothing but absurd and cruel fetters for the youth.

Thus the new generation of freeters, inexorably questions the authenticity of the value system within which they have been judged and marginalized. By criticizing the value system, their politics and culture look for a way to get out of it. The generation of freeters seeks to embody the spirit of mutual aid and the aesthetic of willed shabbiness. Starting from commingling, they have begun to experiment on a new way of cohabitation and mutual aid. It is upon this spiritual ground that the new labor union has appeared in Japan to fight against capitalism.

The Freeters' union bears similarities with the contemporary IWW. Members of this new Japanese union share a huge admiration for the IWW and its history. It is seeking international cooperation and solidarity as both unions grow and organize.

the Freeters' Union organized May Day in collaboration with associated groups, renaming the event, May Day of Freedom and Survival. In 2006, they introduced the "sound-demo," a moving rave party and protest, which was developed during the anti-Iraq war protests and was very successful in involving passers-by into the action. More than 100 people marched in the street with a music truck. There was a clash between the police and the demonstrators, and three people were arrested.

New worker, new identity?

Thus, in Japan a labor union that fights as part of the network of radical anti-authoritarian movements has appeared or, one might say, resurrected from the anarcho-syndicalist unions of the 1910s and 1920s, such as the Shinyūkai printworkers' union and the Seishinkai newspaper workers' union.

What the members share as a principle is anti-neoliberalism and ultimately anti-capitalism, according to freeters union member noiz. Some members of the Freeters' Union are associates of the urban community and mutual aid society called the Alliance of Losers (*Dame-ren*), which appeared around 1992 in Tokyo in reaction to the winner-take-all individualism of the Eighties. For instance, they stressed the act of 'commingling' (*koryu-suru*). They considered gathering and talking crucial, where the topics were their life problems, that is, how they became "losers." But this practice was not for reforming themselves toward victory but for self-empowerment in common.

While the ideological background of the members is not uniform, the group tacitly follows a line of non-partisan radicalism that had already existed, which

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New column

WORKING FAMILY

Working Family is a column dedicated to issues that affect people who work and raise families in the many forms. Contributions to Working Family are very welcome. Just send your submission to iw@iww.org with Working Family in the subject line or by post to PO Box 52003, 298 Dalhousie St, Ottawa, ON K1N 1S0 Canada.

By Peter Moore

Capitalism's goal is to force open markets, even in areas that don't need them. Breastfeeding is one such market.

The global average for breastfeeding, according to the UN, is four years. The WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding recommends two years. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least one year and its guidelines say that "There is no upper limit to the duration of breastfeeding and no evidence of psychologic or developmental harm from breastfeeding into the third year of life or longer."

Breastfeeding has significant benefits for the baby. It lowers the risk of infant mortality and sudden infant death syndrome. It also reduces the risks the baby will contract diarrhea, ear infections, lower respiratory illness, meningitis, botulism, urinary tract infection, juvenile diabetes and a host of other nasty conditions and diseases. By breastfeeding, people have healthier babies, something of particular concern in countries such as the US that lack a comprehensive national health system.

Research also shows that the secondary but important benefit of breastfeeding is skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby, which reassures and stimulates the child's development. Aside from these health benefits, the parents don't have to constantly sterilize bottles, heat formula and delay feedings and undergo the stress of having a hungry baby. All the parents, family and community need to do is ensure the mother is well-hydrated, well-fed and relaxed.

Despite the health benefits, mothers in North America and Britain, particularly after the Second World War and the development of factory canning and food processing, were discouraged from breastfeeding their babies. Breastfeeding was discouraged by doctors and society, tucked away, and replaced by baby formula and prepared baby food. Mothers were told in advertisements and by doctors that breast milk lacked what these products could offer. At the same time, there was a revolution in women going to work. Women had to choose between breastfeeding and bottle-feeding to keep their jobs, which employers were loath to guarantee them. The market had stepped in and not only set up the competition with baby food, it had also set up a barrier to prevent women who wanted to breastfeed from doing so or they would lose their job. The majority of North American and British women fell into line and their partners accepted it as normal, too. For women who wanted to breastfeed and still work, hand and electrical breast pumps were invented and sold to that niche market.

The market broke the breastfeeding bond between mother and child and profits have rolled in by the millions for food companies. The consequence of this market intervention is that the United States has the second worst newborn mortality record in the 'developed' world, after Latvia. There are 6.4 infant deaths per 1,000 born in the United States or 27,520 babies in 2006. These deaths fall disproportionately on African-Americans, whose rate is 9.3 infant deaths per 1,000 born. In Canada,

the number is 4.6, while in the United Kingdom it is 5. The knee jerk reaction is that these babies die because of parental neglect. But the real answer is that these babies die because their parents are poor, have no support, lack decent medical coverage and services, and are forced back to work.

Yes, infant mortality is a class issue and breastfeeding is part of the solution. Enabling mothers to breastfeed for one year would reduce the risk of infant mortality significantly.

Socially, breastfeeding is becoming more acceptable again. While

Infant mortality is a class issue. Breastfeeding is part of the solution.

breastfeeding is making a comeback, the norm for breastfeeding in North America and the United Kingdom is about six months. This is a far cry from the global average of four years or the recommended goals of one to two years.

In the United States, the main barrier to breastfeeding is economic. Most mothers stop breastfeeding so they can go back to work. They are worried about losing their job or their families need the income.

While US politicians talk about the American family all the time, especially during elections, there is no political commitment to push back these pressures and create a space for women to breastfeed and nurture their babies.

US law only allows three months unpaid leave for people who work in businesses with 50-plus workers and have worked at least 26 hours per week for the last 12 months. If the father wants to be involved, then he and his partner must share those three months. The law treats maternity leave as if it were a vacation for mom and not a necessary part of motherhood.

Thus, this three months of unpaid leave is the shaky foundation of parental rights at work in the United States. Although it was passed just 15 years ago, this law is a bulletin board for the failure of US society to take care of its families.

A patchwork of additional benefits, partially paid leave, longer unpaid leave, is available, depending on the parents' employer or state of residence or insurance policy. So people who belong to a union, professionals, or staff

of large corporations are more likely to have maternity benefits. People who are working part-time or work in small businesses or are individual contractors (the so-called "self-employed") are left on their own. And women who return to work full-time too soon feel the pressure to wean. Life becomes a struggle and breastfeeding one's baby becomes a casualty.

Who benefits? Clearly, business does. US maternal leave is designed to minimize the ability of the mother to breastfeed her baby. It also has knock-on effects that include minimizing the time parents have to directly care for their children to three months for most

of its babies. Our goal as a class should be to extend maternal leave from three months unpaid to 12 months paid leave. The government and business should share the cost of this paid leave. Women should have the option of extending that leave beyond a year.

This demand is reasonable. In Canada, mothers get maternity benefits for 15 weeks and parental benefits for another 35 weeks at roughly 55 per cent one's salary. The United Kingdom maternal benefits are for 52 weeks, with the first six weeks at 90 per cent of the salary, with the rest of the time paid at a fixed rate.

Then there is Sweden with its 18 months paid leave at 80 per cent of the mother's salary. The government and employer pay it together. Is it just a coincidence that Sweden, which prioritizes parents caring for their children and backs it with policy and money, has an infant mortality rate of 3 per 1,000 births?

Working people in the United States must take the issue of infant mortality seriously and do something about it.

If the United States wants to support working families and lower its infant mortality rate, it should support breastfeeding through longer paid maternity leaves.




Unions like our own can advance this fight by demanding longer paid maternity leaves (and more) in their workplace and fight for it in their communities. Maternity leave is not a vacation for mothers; it is a time for mothers to breastfeed, to bond and to sink deep the roots of her new family.

people. For people who can afford it, there is daycare. For people who cannot, the effect is that one parent, most likely the mother, must quit work and stay at home to care for the newborn, particularly if there is more than one child.

In effect, this law acts as both a bulwark to protect the baby food industry from breastfeeding, it also protects businesses from the responsibilities of having employees with children.


Working people need to challenge the market's grip on the diet and health

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Opinion

Trafficking law targets consensual sex workers

By Maxine Doogan

I'm a new member of Industrial Union 690 and a founder of the Erotic Service Providers' Union (www.espu-ca.org) in San Francisco, United States.

While I'm hopeful about the organizing possibilities for the sex worker nation, we seem to be facing more oppression than ever, especially in light of the latest media hysteria over "sex-trafficked victims."

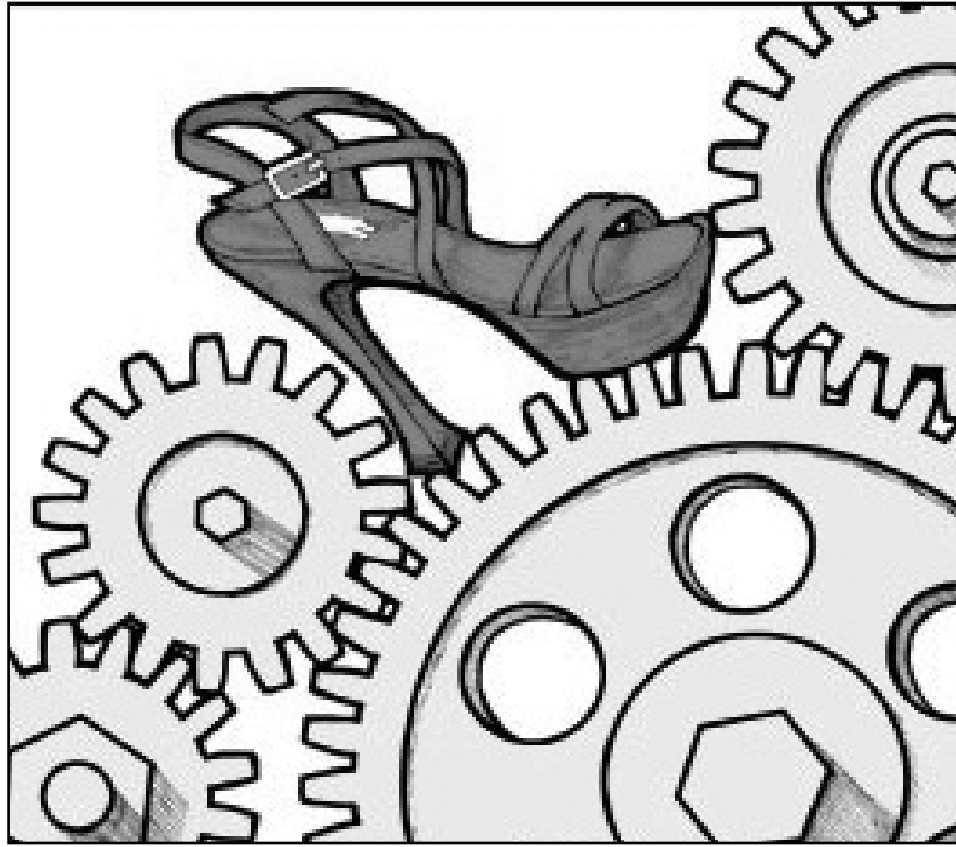
I'd like to share a few facts for the labor faithful from an actual sex industry worker.

The Trafficking Victims Protections Act (TVPA) is being used as a front for the sex-negative, shame-based, anti-prostitution feminists who have joined forces with religious groups. These are the same religious zealots who have successfully barred women's right to choose a safe, affordable and accessible abortion, now only available in 17 states to varying degrees.

The TVPA was made law in 2000. Previous Congresses had approved versions of the TVPA that claimed all commercial sex is trafficking, a form of forced labor. This means that all those who are working consensually in the commercial sex sectors are considered trafficked victims, including myself. I've worked in the business for 19 years and plan on working for another 19 years. The victim status doesn't square with my labor rights to associate freely and be self-determined.

The new TVPA reauthorization bill, H.R. 3887, calls for all migrant sex industry workers and our customers to qualify for federal felony charges when traveling for work and/or receiving sexual services. Despite the good intentions of this law to end forced labor, crossing state lines for work and sexual services would now qualify workers for 10 years in prison.

This conflation of consensual work with forced labor has been a strategic move that has resulted in the prolifera-



Graphic by America Meredith

tion of non-profits that actually serve the agenda of the United States' prison industrial complex.

These non-profits, such as Stand Against Global Exploitation (SAGE) San Francisco, get funding to spew anti-sex trafficking propaganda under the guise of raising awareness, while working with law enforcement organizations who receive money for training to identify trafficked "victims." These self-styled do-gooders manufacture rhetoric using photos of girlish feet with chains around them.

In 2005, Californians saw raids executed by 400 law enforcement officers resulting in the arrests of 105 Korean massage parlor workers and support staff. Fifty-nine were deported because they didn't want to identify as trafficked

victims. These workers turned down a chance to receive the special T visas, which would have allowed them to stay temporarily in this country while they attended ESL classes, received accommodations in shelters, healthcare, driver licenses, and job training. These workers didn't want to become witnesses for the prosecution in exchange for these benefits. It looks like 17 did decide to identify as trafficked victims, but there is no telling how long they were held up in jail before this looked like the best choice.

This predicament speaks to the TVPA's indifference to the plight of the migrant and/or sex industry workers. It contrasts with the reality of those of us who can't afford to risk our economic circumstances to report crimes against

us or those around us.

Additionally, the Government Accountability Office has stated that the US governments' estimates of trafficking are not based on sound data. The State Department has had to lower its estimates from 50,000 slaves arriving in this country every year in 1999 to somewhere between 14,500 in 2004.

The effectiveness of the TVPA is also questionable. Since its inception, the TVPA has funded 42 Justice Department task forces to spend more than \$150 million to find 1,400 people certified as human trafficking victims in the United States. That is \$10,714.29 per victim unit of service delivered by non-profits/law enforcement agencies that profit off of the criminalization of migration and prostitution.

Organized labor folks can usually see the predicament these non-profit do-gooders put us consensual workers in, especially those of us who don't have the right to associate and form unions, let alone negotiate for our wages and work conditions. Possession of a condom is now grounds for intent to commit prostitution in many states, a misdemeanor. Our support staff, which we reserve the right to contract, such as drivers, phone help and the like, have long been demonized as "pimps" which qualifies as a felony in most states. Likewise, criminalization of our customer base is a bad idea as well because it affects our economy to our detriment by diverting our income to the police state.

That is why employing basic labor principles to always put actual workers, especially migrant sex industry workers at the center, is important. Please join us in our campaign to oppose bad laws, such as the TVPA, and demand the repeal of all state laws that criminalize and regulate our occupation.

Decriminalizing prostitution and immigration is an organizing opportunity for sex industry workers and all workers of the world.

Working Out: Queer and labor's passionate affair

By Hana Wolf

The summer I was 15, I signed on for an internship with the now defunct American Stage Festival. At the time, the Festival was the largest Actors' Equity theater in my desolate home state of New Hampshire. This meant that the squirrels in the house outnumbered the audience most nights. We attracted such prominent summer-stock talent as the mom from the TV show *One Day at a Time* and one of the background nuns from the movie, *Sister Act*. But the Festival was close and able to award points toward my union membership for the hours I spent understudying background nuns and whispering cues into headsets.

The Festival was also crawling with queers. This, in my inner teen voice, was totally the most awesome part. I spent nights assigned to the lighting booth, where between cues I played highly educational games of "Have You Ever" with my filthy, filthy fellow workers. I spent days in wardrobe, stitching armpit guards into evening gowns alongside my adopted big sister, Jack. Jack was a former football player with bushy eyebrows, perpetually perfect lip-gloss, and an arsenal of queers-bash-back anecdotes that kept my eyes wide all through July. Once, after he described launching a homophobe in a tracksuit through the window of his own minivan, I looked up from my armpit guard. "Jack," I whispered, "what if I'm gay?" Jack stopped stitching and fixed me with his Maybelline gaze. "What if you are, doll?"

Theater has long represented a rare and notorious sanctuary for openly queer workers. It's also been one of the

most heavily unionized and politically bold industries in the United States. To call this convergence of outspoken sexual nonconformity and outspoken labor politics a coincidence would be either shortsighted or deliberately diminishing.

The fact is that from anti-McCarthyism to HIV awareness to domestic partner benefits, queer politics and labor politics have often held hands in public. But for every heartwarming example of the solidarity that dare not speak

to the department's faculty to explain himself. "And I was like, no! It's none of their business!"

Danny's boss reacted by fabricating accusations regarding his on-the-job behavior, which, until his transition had always been praised by his supervisors. "I asked the university union for help," said Danny, but he was disappointed. "The union didn't help me at all. They were really nice. They listened. And then they totally blew me off and I had no

The only difference between being gay and Red was your comrades in the auto factory would cut you dead because you're a pervert.

its name, there are multiple instances of workers' movements excluding or outright oppressing their queer, transgender or otherwise sexually radical brethren.

Danny came out as transgender in his fourth year as an administrative assistant at an Ivy League university. He rapidly lost his job and his union standing when he stopped dressing as a woman and started using the men's bathroom. "Human Resources notified me," he recalls, "that I was making the custodial staff uncomfortable. And that was hard for me to hear because these guys had been my friends... were still my friends, as far as I knew."

Danny asked what he needed to do to keep his job and was told that human resources wanted him to distribute a let-

idea what to do."

The university itself responded to this act of clear dishonesty and discrimination on the boss' part, by offering Danny a buy-out or immediate firing. "They offered me a nice package, and I didn't know my rights. So I took what they offered and I left. And years later I still feel like that whole situation was so messed up."

Danny has struggled to find consistent work since leaving that job. Would he ever consider going back in the closet for the sake of steady employment? He says no. "I wouldn't be comfortable not being out at work. It would be like wearing a suit... to me, even though I identify to some degree as male now, I can't wear a suit to work. I guess being out is in some way a class thing for me. I'm just

not going to get paid enough to feel right wearing a suit."

Danny isn't the first queer worker to connect his class-consciousness and his queer-consciousness. Radical labor organizer and founding Radical Fairy Harry Hay made the link in his 1998 interview with the *Progressive* magazine. He described his sexual coming out as "simply coming into consciousness. Which is the same thing you did as a Red... You were threatened in the same way... The only difference was that probably all your comrades in the auto factory also would cut you dead because you're one of those perverts."

Another queer comrade, Miles, who said without irony that he works in "back-end customer service," echoed Hay. He says his experiences as a working class queer person of color have strongly shaped his politics. "What most people in this country think about queer people is that they're letting you live and you should be grateful. That attitude motivated me to be an anarchist and also to separate myself from the gay community."

Miles explained: "Few communities are as openly racist as the gay community. I think that most people don't even see queer people of color, because the gay community has been marketed—especially to itself—as a Barbie doll."

"I wish that more queer people would be open to others who are queer in the bigger sense, in that they aren't normal, are too queer even for most queer people. That's absolutely what's next."

Essay

Which union is up-to-date?

By Louis Prisco

I have gone to events where the IWW was praised and celebrated—concerts where labor songs are sung, book parties that introduce new writing—and people applaud and everyone seems to love the Wobblies. Afterwards, I've heard some of the same people declare that the IWW was a great thing in the past, but today it has little to offer.

The up-to-date union is assumed to be the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) or its offspring, the Change To Win (CTW). If there is to be a resurgence of labor, they think it's more likely to come from Andrew Stern or other such leaders, not from an organization that allegedly died in 1919.

I believe, on the contrary, that the IWW is way ahead of labor bosses like Stern, Sweeney and Hoffa. A resurgence of union power can only come from the IWW or from something that resembles it. Here's why:

- 1) American labor law currently favors management,
- 2) The AFL-CIO and CTW rely too much on politics and are losing clout,
- 3) Labor's greatest gains have come from direct action and solidarity, principles championed by the IWW. Hence, only the vigorous practice of those principles can make labor strong again.

Labor law is bosses' law

The Wagner Act of 1935 made it illegal to fire anyone for organizing, and it obliges the employer to negotiate with a union of the workers' choice. A government agency, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), is charged with ensuring that the election in which workers choose a union is a fair and honest one.

Thomas Geoghegan, former general counsel for the United Mine Workers Union said in his 1991 book, *Which Side Are You On?*, that the Wagner Act "was fatally weak from the start. The [NLRB] had no power to enforce its own orders. It had to petition for enforcement to the US Court of Appeals, which could be a time-consuming process. But for a while this didn't matter, because employers seemed ready to obey the law.

The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 undercut the Wagner Act, but did not repeal it. Big Business recouped some of the concessions it had made during the crisis of the Depression. Workers and unions still enjoy legal protections and the NLRB still exists to ensure that the law has teeth.

Yet, the problem is that the law since Taft-Hartley no longer protects us well. Certain types of solidarity were made illegal. Sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts were forbidden, and unions could be sued if they failed to prevent strikes during the life of the contract.

The bosses soon wised up.

"Gradually, by the 1960s and 1970s, however, employers began to realize that the NLRB was weak. They could violate the Wagner Act and nothing would happen," said Geoghegan.

"Breaking the law, i.e., firing people is absurdly cheap. Like jaywalking. The best deal in America, in cold business terms." Geoghegan then cited a study that says the presence of a union increases wages by 20 per cent, so it would cost less to pay the \$3,000 penalty of the Wagner Act, if convicted years later, than pay a unionized workforce.

"An employer who didn't break the law would have to be what economists call an 'irrational firm.'"

The law, in other words, has a big hole in it. To be sure, a few workers fired for organizing have won court cases against their employers, but most have not, and even fewer have established a viable union.

Politicians are not workers' friends

An old Wobbly, Philip Melman, warned me about expecting too much from politicians or the law.

"The workers' best defense," he said, "is the union." The union's power comes from its ability to win strikes or to devise more imaginative kinds of direct action.

I have known AFL-CIO business agents who were good people and whom I trusted. But for the top ech-

So which union is living in the past? The one that clings to an archaic law that no longer has much force or the one that believes in workers' own self-initiative?

elons of their unions, job organizing is not necessarily the first priority. More union resources are devoted to backing politicians, mostly Democrats, hoping that, if elected, these politicians—who also receive corporate funding—will back labor in return. As part of the bargain, unions may put a brake on militancy lest it embarrass a candidate or an incumbent.

In 1981, President Reagan fired all of the air controllers. He refused to reinstate them. Yet the air controllers' union, PATCO, had endorsed Reagan and contributed to his campaign.

But the union movement learned nothing from this brutal experience. Instead of calling for a general strike to save PATCO, union donations accounted for one-third of the democratic National Committee's operating budget in the early 1980s.

The waste has continued into this year's presidential campaign and the last two elections. After the AFL-CIO's presidential candidate lost the 2004 election, it was businessman Pat Cleary of the National Association of Manufacturers, who discerned the meaning.

"When you put \$100 million down a rat hole each election cycle," said Cleary, "you're doomed. They have become much more a political organization than an organizing group. They've lost their way."

What if the millions of dollars donated and the battalions of volunteers mobilized to stuff envelopes and staff phone banks had instead asked workers to join unions and prepare for a general strike? Instead of these useful goals, what Big Labor seems to want is a resurrection of the New Deal brokered by Roosevelt. What unions crave is another pal in the White House, who will push friendlier labor laws through Congress and maybe even staff the NLRB with union sympathizers. This is a deceptive and destructive fantasy, not a practical goal.

Cooptation of direct action

The decisive factor in enacting Wagner was not the generous heart of Roosevelt nor the political savvy of CIO bosses like Sidney Hillman and John L. Lewis. What did the trick was the wave of strikes, both legal ones and wildcats, that swept the country after the stock market crashed in 1929.

In 1934 there were general strikes in Toledo, San Francisco and Minneapolis. In 1936, auto and rubber workers sat down in their factories and locked the bosses out. Unable to stop the strikes, Congress and the President hoped a "responsible" leadership would emerge to steer the rising workers' movement away from socialism.

The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) fit the bill. Unlike the AFL, the CIO organized on a mass basis; unlike the IWW, the CIO kept its radical organizers on a tight leash. The Wag-

ner Act was possible because Roosevelt agreed with the business unionists who headed the CIO: strikes could be controlled by letting workers win something. The Act allowed more than what many conservative businessmen would have liked, but less than what the most militant workers wanted.

"Their ultimate objective," said Staughton Lynd about the CIO's inner circle, "was succinctly expressed by

... Lewis, who in effect told the Senate committee sponsoring the Wagner Act, 'Allow the workers to organize, establish strong government machinery for dealing with labor questions and industrial peace will result.'" To decode: "Industrial peace" means "no strikes" or at least none that would cost the corporations much money.

The general strikes of 1934 and the sit-down strikes that began in 1936 are both examples of direct action. Lynd showed how the CIO, reinforced by the Wagner Act, suppressed this direct action movement and imposed a bureaucracy upon unionized workers.

In Flint, Michigan, for example, Lynd tells us, "[T]he contract ending the sit-down established a grievance procedure designed to circumvent the shop steward system and prevent wildcat strikes, so that after March 13, 1937, 'the continued militancy of Flint's rank and file violated official union policy.'"

The irony is that grievance procedures, which many workers today want but can't get, were instituted in Roosevelt's time to avert strikes.

Michael Moore's 1989 film, *Roger and Me*, illustrates the plight of Flint workers today. In 1937, a relatively generous contract helped to entice their predecessors away from direct action. However, recent contracts have not kept up. Therefore, new kinds of job actions are needed. This time, they need to unite the workers from many different countries into one movement.

Solidarity breached

A key battle for solidarity was lost after World War II, when the United Auto Workers went on strike for 113 days against General Motors. In addition to a pay hike, the union demanded that there be no increase in the sales price of a new car. Consumers both middle class and working class would have loved it. The auto workers got a substantial pay hike in 1946, but no say in pricing.

Unlike the UAW, other CIO unions did not have the vision to fight for workers' control over prices. Since then, unions have remained quiet while companies raised their prices and thus contributed to inflation. Media pundits then blamed inflation on the legitimate increase of workers' wages, instead of the executives and investors who controlled prices. In this way, many workers were fooled into resenting when other workers did well.

A few unions resisted the Taft-Hartley, including the Mine Workers, West Coast longshoremen and the IWW. However, most unions gave in since they would have lost their NLRB standing and been vulnerable to raiding by other unions. Thus, the threat of raids, another breach of solidarity as it sets unions against one another, was used to ensure compliance with the new bureaucracy.

Taft-Hartley also provided an excuse

for unions not to help one another, due to the ban on secondary picketing. Michael Goldfield, author of *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States*, has bemoaned "the inability or unwillingness of the official labor organizations to mobilize more than token support for ... coal miners in 1978, PATCO [air controllers] in 1981, Greyhound strikers in 1983, the Phelps-Dodge copper workers in 1983-84, and Hormel workers in 1986."

In Italy, workers have not forgotten the power of solidarity. When the billionaire Silvio Berlusconi returned to power in 2001, a move was made to amend the Italian statute of workers' rights. Under the proposed change, companies would be able to fire workers without having to specify a "just cause." Italian workers would have become like unorganized workers in the American private sector, who may in many cases be dismissed "at will ... for good cause, no cause or even for cause morally wrong."

Italian unionists responded with a demonstration in Rome on March 23, 2002, at which three million people gathered. The demonstration was followed up by a general strike next month, in April. The management associations abandoned their attempt at abolishing the "just cause" provision. Solidarity through a general strike won the day just six years ago in Italy.

In contrast, American unions get nothing in return for their submissiveness. Did they get a card check law? Nope. Did they get universal health coverage? Nope. Did they get an end to "outsourcing" and runaway shops? Nope. The only result of submission is a steady decline in the number of dues-paying members.

Which union is up-to-date?

The big union chiefs have forgotten the basics of solidarity. Instead, they trust in their own negotiating skills and the support they can deliver to candidates, which are never enough. The Andrew Sterns and John Sweeneys who are leading us down the supposedly easier path of business unionism have, indeed, "lost their way." They may well be groping towards a slicker and more sophisticated version of the company union.

What these union leaders have also forgotten is that the decisive factor has always been a major strike or the possibility of one, potentially extending from coast to coast in every industry. Capitalists have known since the Sixties that such a strike was less likely and have since then gotten away with shortchanging the unions and forcing workers to accept less.

While the big unions have the potential for strength through solidarity, they lack the principles and initiative. In turn, the IWW today is ridiculously small and weak. In most cities, we cannot even afford an office. Yet, as far as principles are concerned, the IWW is the wealthiest union in North America. Among these principles are democracy, direct action and solidarity, plus a form of organization—industrial unionism—that unites workers rather than dividing them.

Internationalism is another key IWW principle. American companies have moved plants overseas, leaving loyal workers jobless. Under the IWW program that would be difficult, since a strong union would be waiting for the company in its new location. It is no longer enough to "have fraternal relations" with foreign unions; there has to be a mechanism in place for instant cooperation, anywhere on the planet. Long before the word "globalization" was coined, the IWW anticipated this need in our pamphlet, *World Labor Needs a Union*.

The IWW is also dedicated to protecting the world from environmental destruction. Young Wobblies of the present generation have amended the IWW's

Continued on 4

AFSCME defeat births new convictions, strategy

Published by The Organizer, IWW Twin Cities GMB

As the academic school year began in September 2007, three American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) locals with 3,200 members struck for three weeks at the University of Minnesota. The main issue was a proposed 2.5 per cent wage hike, well below the 3.5 per cent increase in living costs. The strike ended in its third week, with the unions accepting the university's offer.

The settlements made clear once again the university's divide-and-conquer strategy. Of the three locals on strike, the two largest (clerical and technical workers) settled for a 2.25 per cent "cost of living" increase, whereas the health care local (which has roughly 150 members) settled for 2.5 per cent. The other employee groups at the university were offered and settled for upwards of 3 per cent, including the other major unionized group, the Teamsters.

This was the second strike in four years at the university. The IWW has a concentration of members at the U of M, including dual card members of AFSCME. Two IWW/AFSCME dual carders share their thoughts on the strike and the IWW's role. Jeff Pilacinski chaired the 2007 IWW Organizing Department Board. Emily Kreitzer joined the IWW due to her experience with Jeff and other wobblers on the picket line during the strike. A number of workers are now participating in the Twin Cities branch's Dual Card Project, to build solidarity and consciousness about the union's role.

Building solidarity

By Jeff Pilacinski, AFSCME 3800 * IWW IU 620

I am a member of the clerical union, one of four AFSCME locals that struck. I'm also a wobbly, an education worker in the IWW's Industrial Union 620.

I went on strike because there were no other immediate, viable responses to the university's position. With the workforce divided along craft or trade lines and the employer taking advantage of these splits, it was critical for me to strike in order to inhibit further division among co-workers and thus promote industrial organization and solidarity.

During the strike, I worked with others to organize picket lines at several loading dock locations. I engaged delivery drivers, student and other University workers, and community supporters in discussion about the strike's ups and downs while strategizing about how our collective action could later lead to solid workplace organizing.

The primary aim of any strike is to drastically diminish production. A few of us identified the docks as places where we could make the greatest impact on the university's everyday operations. Our actions forced the employer to respond to us. These actions' success exposed certain economic weaknesses of the university and inspired other workers to focus their time and energy on places that put the employer's business at risk.

We connected with workers interested in building effective networks across the many different work groups at the university, as many strikers recognized that these networks would mean real solidarity and thus increased workplace control. It's exciting to see workers use those experiences gained through collective action to formulate or re-formulate, their analysis of the class struggle and how organized labor fits.

One of the best things I experienced during the strike was seeing someone begin at one opinion and move to another in such a short amount of time. No book, course, or training can catalyze this type of reaction like solidarity and industrial action can. For one to acknowledge and then voice their frustrations with generally accepted labor practices such as contract negotiations, craft separations, and reliance on electoral politics... it's amazing for someone who days earlier swore by these practices. That person is now enthusiastic about workplace organizing and growing solidarity across groups of workers at the university and in the education industry.

Twin Cities IWWs influenced the analysis of many strikers and non-strikers alike with genuine support: financial contributions, numerous conversations with picketers, and many hours actively



walking the picket lines and helping to stop vehicles. The wobblers and their dedicated solidarity were a high point of the strike.

The strike ended as many initially expected and others sadly came to expect, with the unions settling for the university's proposal. Like most employers, for years the university has systematically cultivated divisions among its workforce, some of which is "organized", much of which is not. To its benefit, this employer has exploited these divisions among its workers. Even though certain groups of unionized workers claim to be united for negotiations, their clear lack of unity with other employee groups in the workplace leaves them quite vulnerable when it comes time to bargain contracts.

Real gains for workers have never been won at the negotiations table or through the charity of politicians or employers. The strike's outcome made this fact painfully obvious. Our strength as workers lies in the amount of control we have over the things we do at work. If we're not moving together to gain more decision-making power over how we spend our days, we'll continue to see workers, unionized or not, lose ground.

Though there were few material gains for AFSCME strikers, many workers at the university now recognize the significance of industrial organizing and solidarity. This collective recognition is key and will undoubtedly strengthen our resolve.

To win strikes, workers must be willing to stand together and do whatever it takes to bring production to a halt. The history of industrial strikes shows



AFSCME members picket the docks at the University of Minnesota.

Unions must connect

By Emily Kreitzer, AFSCME 3800 * New IWW

I didn't "decide" to go out on strike. That decision was made for me when AFSCME declared a strike.

To me, honoring the picket was not a decision I had to make. I feel that working in a job that is represented by a union comes with a responsibility to honor not only the union, but also the individual people within that union. Crossing a picket line would dishonor not only the union, but every single member within it. During the strike, I found not everyone understood this basic idea.

I tried out a few different picket lines in the first two weeks, but none "fit" for me. Marching, chanting, making noise isn't my thing.

By far the best thing was meeting the people I met the last week of the strike when I picketed the loading docks. Few would say that picketing is fun, but for me focusing on the dock combined with good company and a real feeling of being welcome and of solidarity with at least some AFSCME members at the University of Minnesota. Being at the loading docks, I not only felt I was making an impact, I could see it, which was very satisfying. It felt like the presence of every picket there was genuinely appreciated and the time, energy and personal commitment was well spent.

that an incredible amount of dedicated, industrial organizing happened before, during, and after the strikes. It typically didn't happen that tens, hundreds, or thousands of workers just walked off the job because it was the right thing to do. There was an understanding that flowed through the workforce about the importance of industrial solidarity and what it meant to stand together and fight, not just for the benefit of one, but for the benefit of all.

During this strike, there was a genuine discussion and culture that formed around worker solidarity, so real, in fact, it often extended into the communities where workers lived. This necessary discussion is almost completely absent and it shows. In the past few decades, the labor movement has managed to turn its back on workplace organizing and the concept of industrial solidarity. It is no surprise that strike after strike — the AFSCME strike included — is lost when unions put a majority of their time, resources, and energy into the political arena while intensely "protecting" the craft interests of their particular members only during negotiations.

To have won the AFSCME strike, much more workplace organizing across all employee groups would have been necessary before we walked. This didn't happen. Frankly, it won't happen now that we're back at work, unless workers take the initiative and do it themselves.

Continued on 4

Even though we "lost" the strike, just having the opportunity to meet people who have convictions and are committed to making positive changes made the strike worthwhile.

I think the strike ended the way it did because AFSCME has not done its job in making people aware of the union, each individual's role and responsibility to the union, or what the union does for each and every one of us.

There is a huge disconnect between the union and its members (especially fair-share members). Most AFSCME members within the university feel no connection or obligation to the union or their fellow union members; therefore, they did not honor the picket line. If a majority of a union's members will not stand behind the union, that doesn't leave the union with much bargaining power and strikes will end badly.

I think that an effort needs to be made to connect with each member on an individual level so every person knows the basics of what a union is and why it matters to them personally. Sending out periodic mass e-mails is fine, but the only way people will read the emails or care what they say is if they already feel a sense of personal connection and commitment to and from the union. I imagine it would be much harder to cross a picket line if you know and believe you are really hurting yourself.

It is a disservice to all involved to declare a strike without ensuring that every avenue was pursued to get all members to walk off their jobs. When members cross the picket line, the message the university, the media and the general public get is that we are satisfied with our wages and strikers come across as petty, demanding and confrontational.

If this union can get every one of its members to walk off the job when a strike is declared, we might be taken seriously.

If the next contract brings about another strike, people need to be assigned to picket locations and shifts before the strike starts.

People also need to feel like there will be a safety net provided by the union to cover basic living expenses for the duration of the strike. The single biggest reason I heard for crossing picket lines is, "I can't afford to strike."

The union should ensure all members in between contracts contribute to the Mutual Support Fund to make unacceptable the "I can't afford it" excuse.

Actively promoting full voting membership is also important; and once that happens, make it easy and clear where and how to vote.

I believe it is critical that the union makes drastic changes to do more education, maintain relationships between members and union officials, and improve strike preparation and organization.

Rail Workers build inter-union solidarity caucus

By Ron Kaminkow

Rail Labor activists from across North America are coming together to form a new cross-craft inter-union caucus that includes all rail workers in North America, including Canada and Mexico. Membership is open to union members from all the various unions (once known as the “brotherhoods”) in this new organization.

To build this broad based unity and solidarity, the activists have launched Railroad Workers United (RWU).

“We want everyone to understand that we are not creating another rail union to compete with those already in existence,” said Jon Flanders, member of Machinists #1145 in Selkirk, New York. “Instead, we are creating an industry-wide caucus where we can all come together to help each other build the solidarity, support, democracy and strength that is missing in our individual craft unions. Who knows what the potentials and possibilities could be for such an organization of all rail labor.”

Designed to be a dues-paying membership-based organization, RWU will include among its ranks, members of 13 unions (see sidebar, right).

“We have been divided—craft against craft, union against union, terminal against terminal—for too long,” said Joe Wyman, UTU trainman in Tucson, Arizona. Now, with the dramatic increase in trans-border freight movements between all three nations of our continent, and the gobbling up of major Mexican rail lines by U.S. based rail carriers, organizers suspect it is only a question of time before the carriers effectively play one country’s railroaders off against another. He added, “We know we will truly be stronger by including all railroaders in North America—from Canada and Mexico as well as the US.”

From the ashes of ROCU

The impetus and energy for the building of such an organization largely comes from Railroad Operating Crafts United (ROCU). Organized itself in the spring of 2005, ROCU’s goal was to end the warfare between the two unions that represent the operating crafts—the BLET and the UTU—and to unite them into a single powerful and democratic union. While the organization was extremely popular with the rank-and-file of both unions and had some successes, it ultimately floundered due to the failure of UTU and BLET union officials to reach accommodation.

Earlier this year, the BLET settled on a contract in master freight bargaining with the national carriers, while the UTU has been left out in the cold. In addition, some on-property agreements re-fueled the UTU-BLET conflict. Feeling betrayed by what it perceives as a hostile BLET, the UTU ran for cover into the arms of the Sheet Metal Workers, and has now merged with the SMWIA to become SMART – Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Workers, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO. With the BLET firmly affiliated with the Teamsters (IBT), an affiliate of the Change-to-Win Coalition, ROCU realized that hope for a merger between the operating craft unions was all but lost in the convoluted quagmire of twenty-first century business unionism.

“Rather than continue to beat our heads against the wall in face of the determination of the officials of the BLET and the UTU to remain separate and at war with each other”, said Ed Michael, a Union Pacific engineer in Salem, Illinois, “we decided to put our energy into building something that most of us already believe in, or have come to believe in, as a result of our experience in ROCU. We believe that an organization of all rail labor is the key to building real rank-and-file power in our industry.” While RWU continues, in principle, to support the

RAILROAD WORKERS UNITED



“The Rank-and-File in Action!”

concept of a united single union of the operating crafts (and all of rail labor), this will not be the focus of its work. Rather, RWU aims to build a solidarity movement of all rail labor in the struggle with the carriers.

“It doesn’t take a genius to see that the fractured nature of rail labor presents a stumbling block to achieving any real union power in the face of hostile rail carriers,” said Jen Wallis, a BNSF conductor in Seattle, Washington. Since the first rail workers began to organize in the 1860s, rail labor has been divided into these archaic and cumbersome craft

inform each other about our individual struggles, and to actively lend support and solidarity when one or another group of us is locked in battle with any carrier,” said Kevin Thompson, UTU conductor with Amtrak in Reno, Nevada.

To these ends, RWU will specifically engage in the following activities:

- Support candidates who actively support RWU goals and principles for leadership positions in the various unions.
- Support movements for democracy and accountability within the various rail unions

“Union leaders are all too often out-of-touch with the needs and wishes of their membership.”

—Hugh Sawyer, Local Chairman of BLET #316

unions which are more prone to compete than cooperate with each other.

The divisive nature of craft unionism was not lost on Eugene Victor Debs and other forward thinking rail union leaders of their day. In the 1890s, these leaders organized a gallant attempt to build a single union of rail workers to unite all under the banner of the American Railway Union. The organization was wildly popular with the rank-and-file of all crafts and within months the ARU had 250,000 members. The new organization was so successful that the carriers feared its awesome power to bring the railroads to their knees. Together with the federal courts and US government, the ARU was violently crushed, its records confiscated, its leaders jailed. But it had proven its strength and effectiveness, and the desire for such an organization lives on in the hearts of railroaders across North America. The name of Eugene V. Debs is revered among rail unionists to this day for this vision.

A new strategy

While RWU is not an attempt to build a new union like the ARU, there are similarities. RWU includes members of all the various craft unions on all properties. Membership is open to all railroaders who share RWU’s goal of building a “solidarity and unity caucus” among railroaders and to act as a support group for workers in their struggles. “We are building a network of railroaders across North America, to help educate one another about the issues,

- Build unity between unions at the next round of bargaining.
- Act as a solidarity organization locally, regionally and nationally by building awareness and support for each others’ job actions, strikes, etc.
- Develop a newsletter to be distributed continent wide with news and views about the rail labor unity movement and various struggles across North America.
- Develop and maintain an up-to-the-minute website to augment the newsletter, providing railroaders with timely information about rank-and-file issues.
- Support mergers between rail unions where they make sense and empower the rank-and-file.
- Build local chapters in terminals to more effectively recruit new members, build solidarity at the base, and support the general organization.
- Get behind national legislative campaigns that would benefit rail workers, facilitate union organizing, and benefit the working class in general.

But RWU is not just about building solidarity. Organizers claim that the problem of rail labor is not just its divided and fractured nature, but one of moribund bureaucracy and the lack of internal democracy.

“Union leaders are all too often out-of-touch with the needs and wishes of their membership,” claims Hugh Sawyer, NS engineer in Atlanta, Georgia, and Local Chairman of BLET #316. Through tightly controlled conventions,

Rail unions in alphabetical order:

ATDA—American Train Dispatchers Association.

BLET—Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, an affiliate of the Teamsters Rail Conference.

BMWED—The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, also a member union of the Teamsters Rail Conference.

BRC—Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, the largest TCU affiliate.

BRS—Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen.

IAM—International Association of Machinists.

IBEW—International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

International Association of Boilermakers, Blacksmiths, Iron Ship Builders, Forgers & Helpers.

NCFO—National Conference of Firemen & Oilers, an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

SMART—The name of the newly merged UTU and Sheet Metal Workers union.

SMWIA—Sheet Metal Workers International Association.

TCU—Transportation Communication Union, itself an amalgamation of seven previous rail unions. TCU is an affiliate of the Machinists union.

TWU—Transportation Workers Union.

UTU—United Transportation Union, the largest rail union, which represents most trainmen and yardmasters and some engineers.

no direct elections for top officers, and an entrenched “good old boy” network, rank-and-file members are excluded and alienated from day-to-day union affairs.

“Add to this, the pay, special perks and privileges enjoyed by the union hierarchy, and you have a union more concerned with the preservation and enhancement of the lifestyle of its officers than that of its members,” said Sawyer.

RWU has drawn up a Statement of Principles to act as a guide to its work. Those railroaders wishing to join the organization are expected to agree with and support RWU’s principles and goals which include:

- Unity of all Railroad Crafts
- An End to Inter-Union Conflict
- Rank-and-file Democracy
- Union Membership Education, Participation and Action
- Solidarity: “An Injury to One is an Injury to All!”
- Coordinated Bargaining—No to Concessions

An Interim Steering Committee drawn from the ranks of all crafts and all unions will guide the group until its founding convention, scheduled for April 11, 2008. It is planned to coincide with the *Labor Notes* Conference in Detroit that weekend. There, the delegates present expect to formally adopt a name, a Statement of Principles, a constitution and bylaws, and will debate and discuss various resolutions. Organizers are inviting workers from all carriers, all crafts and all unions in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

All rail unionists who support the interim “Statement of Principles” and are willing to join and pay dues are welcome to attend and participate in the founding convention.

For more information, including a copy of the RWU Statement of Principles, please contact the RWU at 206-984-3051, email info@railroadworkersunited.org or see the web site www.railroadworkersunited.org.

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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 and Saku Pinta

Greetings from the International Solidarity Commission 2008!

It is my pleasure to introduce this year's ISC, a truly international body. Mike Pesa, who hails from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States, returns as the lone member from last year's ISC, serving as the representative for Asia and the Middle East. Daniella Jofre, from Toronto, Ontario (by way of Chile), will be the representative for the Americas; and Saku Pinta of Leicester, U.K. (via Canada via Finland), will serve as chair and representative for Europe and Africa.

We hope to build on the past achievements of the ISC and make meaningful contributions in our efforts to help the union facilitate international worker-to-worker solidarity.

Saku Pinta, ISC Chair

Americas

In the US, the ISC supported bus drivers in St. Louis who belong to Laborers local 509. Faced with disrespect and poor working conditions at private bus company Laidlaw, the drivers went on a wildcat strike, without the support of LIUNA union bureaucrats. The ISC urged LIUNA officials to support their rank-and-file members.

In Argentina, ISC delegate Rhiannon Edwards (who returned to Canada this January) met with the FaSinPat collective that run the worker-occupied ceramics factory, Zanon. She presented the collective with an official statement of solidarity from the ISC. Fellow Worker Edwards has done incredible work during her time in Argentina and continues to write about her experiences in the *Industrial Worker* and *Solidaridad*, the IWW's new official Spanish language newspaper.

ISC delegate Alex Van Schaick has met with various workers organizations in Bolivia and plans to do the same in several neighboring countries, where he will be joined by fellow IWW Starbucks worker, Isis Saenz.

ISC delegate Justin Vitiello traveled to northern Mexico this December on a delegation with the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras. Although we had hoped to send more people, Fellow Worker Vitiello did some exemplary work on his trip, amassing over 40 pages of notes and interviews, which will be published in Spanish. He also gave a presentation to over 30 people in Philadelphia this January which garnered a story from a major city-wide weekly newspaper. The ISC has followed up vigorously with the delegation, sending financial contributions to a community project in Colonia Tamez and planning to host several presentations by CJM organizer Martha Ojeda during her upcoming tour of the United States and Canada.

The ISC also wrote a letter of support of members of Mexico's independent union, the FAT, who have been fighting for union recognition and against the closure of the Vaqueros Navarra jean factory of Tehuacan. The workers have won some major victories in this campaign.

Additionally, in January, the ISC signed onto a statement urging support the mineworkers of Cananea, Sonora, who are waging an epic struggle against their bosses and intense police repression to assert their rights and improve their desperate working conditions.

The next big project in the Americas region for the ISC is a delegation to Haiti. We have been invited by the Confédération des travailleurs haitiens - Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) to visit them and document their struggle. Four delegates—Cody Anderson of Alberta, Canada; Jim Crutchfield of New York City, Joseph Lapp II of Alaska and Justin Vitiello of Philadelphia, United States—are preparing to make a 10 day trip to Haiti planned for late April and lasting through May Day. The ISC is also conducting a material aid drive for Haitian workers. If you can contribute money, computers, organizing books in French, cameras, or any other useful items or if you wish to help collect contributions from others, please contact us at solidarity@iww.org.

Asia/Middle East

In Asia, the ISC continues to pay close attention to the apparel industry, with new interest from IWW members in the Bay Area and the German Language Area Regional Organizing Committee (GLAMROC).

ISC delegate Erik Davis of the Twin Cities GMB traveled to Cambodia for a month beginning in late December and met with unions there. Most recently, the ISC sent a letter to the government of Bangladesh urging it not to crack down on an ongoing garment worker strike wave that erupted in the Mirapur district of Dhaka following the tragic death of a factory worker. The ISC expressed support for the workers' stated demands of a weekly day off, protection from arbitrary firings, and other improvements in working conditions. The ISC also protested the later arrest and detainment of Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) field investigator, Mehedi Hasan.

Migrants are among the most oppressed workers in Asia. In December, the ISC wrote resolutions in support of migrant workers in China and South Korea. The ISC condemned violent attacks against organizers of the Dagongzhe (DGZ) Migrant Worker Centre in Shenzhen, China that occurred because of the Centre's efforts to raise awareness about China's new Labor Contract Law. The ISC similarly condemned the arrest and deportation of three members of the Migrant Trade Union in South Korea, which appears to be part of a general government crackdown on migrant workers.

Middle East

In December, the ISC wrote a letter to the government of Jordan expressing outrage at the inhumane treatment of migrant workers who went on strike against Classic Fashion Apparel Industry factories in the city of Irbid. Classic Fashion workers labor for 80.5-93.5 hours per week making clothes for the Gap, Wal-Mart and Gloria Vanderbilt. They are paid poverty wages and several women workers have been raped by factory managers.

Europe

The ISC wrote a letter of support for French syndicalist CNT postal workers who launched a day of action on October 23 to assert their union's right to represent them. The ISC condemned an agreement between the other labor unions in the French Post to keep the CNT out. The letter urged French postal workers

to show solidarity across jurisdictional lines and to support every worker's right to be represented by the union of her or his choice. Not long afterward, another postal worker strike required the ISC's attention, this time in Britain. The ISC urged British Royal Mail to put an immediate end to retaliatory firings and to pay the fired workers their full wages. In a statement, the ISC criticized the British High Court for issuing an injunction on behalf of Royal Mail against the strikers.

In December, the ISC issued statements about two labor disputes in Barcelona, Spain. A letter was sent in support of members of the CNT and several other unions who were occupying the Frap Behr factory in an effort to pressure the Spanish government to reject the factory owner's new labor force adjustment plan. In the other case, the ISC sent a solidarity letter to CGT bus drivers who were on strike against the TMB bus company.

Eastern Europe

The ISC sent a letter to the government of the Ukraine, condemning the unlawful dismissal of trade union leader Vladimir Demyan by the Metro Cash And Carry Company in the Ukraine and demanding his immediate reinstatement. In Poland, the ISC supported miners working in the Budryk mine. The workers went on strike demanding better pay and when the employer refused to negotiate, the workers occupied the mine. The ISC called on mine owners

The International Solidarity Commission of the IWW wishes to recognize...

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



We salute our sisters in struggle around the world and encourage all readers to support the women who are on the front lines of the global struggle.

to negotiate and concede to the workers' just demands. Also in Poland, the ISC sent a letter supporting members of the Worker's Initiative union in their struggle for recognition at Auchan Hipermarket. Auchan has repeatedly and flagrantly violated their workers' right to organize with the Workers' Initiative union.

In Serbia, the ISC expressed solidarity with the over 1000 worker-shareholders of Zrenjanin factories Bek and Shinvoz, who have been engaged in factory occupations since October and December 2007. The ISC condemned the method by which new factory owners force their companies into bankruptcy in order to effectively transfer ownership into private hands and nullify basic worker rights by canceling union contracts. In a letter, the ISC urged company officials to do everything in their power to back out of all privatization deals and operate the business in the interest of the worker-shareholders.

Africa

Last but not least, the ISC sent a letter of solidarity to the Central African Republic Public Sector Workers union who have been engaged in a general strike since January 2. In a letter to the government, the ISC expressed its alarm at learning that public sector workers have not been paid in seven months. The ISC urged the government of the Central African Republic to honor the agreements signed with the union on October.

One Jumbo Union answers:

See page 12 for puzzle.

Final Answer: A BIG BILL

HALLELUJAH
SONG BOOK
SAB CAT
JOE HILL
RED CARD

Be the eyes and ears of the IWW in Haiti



Haitian marchers demand a raise in the minimum wage.

Join the delegation! Donate!

On the invitation of the Confederation of Haitian Workers, the IWW's International Solidarity Commission is planning a delegation to Haiti in late April.

We intend to present Haitian independent unions with desperately-needed material aid. Some of the items that are needed include: money, megaphones (for protests), large stickers or t-shirts that can be customized with a union logo, laptop computers, labor organizing books in French, cameras and other recording equipment.

If want to donate any of these items, collect aid from your community or join the delegation, please contact solidarity@iww.org as soon as possible.

Thank you for your support!

Report

IWW delegate finds courage on Mexico-US border

By Justin Vitiello

Martha Ojeda of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM) was my host for the IWW's December 4-9 delegation to Mexico. We travelled to several of the border towns most deeply affected and afflicted by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): Reynosa, Rio Bravo, Valle Hermoso and Matamoros. We met with many compañeros, with working and disabled, deported and undocumented workers.

I am encouraged, after 45 years of activism, by the groups allied with the CJM composed mostly of people between 15 and 30 years of age: Worker Defense, Workers' Rights, Union Democracy, the Center for Workers and Communities, Youth for Justice, Human Rights and the House for Migrants' Rights.

We also visited many *colonias* of people living in slum conditions, that emerged or submerged after NAFTA was signed in 1993 by Mexico, the United States and Canada. NAFTA guaranteed that, with the complicity of the Mexican unions and government, multinational conglomerates could take by violence the *ejidos*, lands owned by peasants and small land owners; build industrial parks bigger than the subsumed border towns; and exploit the farmers forced into becoming laborers to accept what we call in the IWW, wage slavery.

This system gave displaced Mexicans a brutal series of "options": accept \$5 per day for 12 hours of work (with no time to eat or go to the bathroom) or return home to the poorer south of the country or become illegal emigrants in the United States, where employers exploit Mexican labor but give the workers no legitimate social or human status.



Housing in the *colonias* or neighborhoods for workers on the US-Mexico border regions is crumbling. Photo by Justin Vitiello.

During all the meetings with organizers and workers and visits to slums where people are fighting for their lives every day, I saw how they risk their lives, their health and their jobs (if they have them) by cooperating with the CJM and collaborating with its affiliate, Social and Economic Justice and Dignity.

But my hosts were frustrated that I was the only IWW delegate. They had prepared feasts of the best Mexican food for ten of us. Yet they never treated me like a gringo so I could break bread (tamales, mole, tacos) with them in a

solidarity I hope we can express better on our next delegation to Mexico.

I want to address what we can do at this stage of our development as a serious radical union.

First, we can look deep within ourselves to see if we are really committed to do what we say we do. Then, if we are serious, we can undertake so many projects, including: denounce corrupt governments for their complicity with multinational organized violence; organize our own General Assembly in areas of risk where we can work with our

true brothers and sisters in the US and internationally; and conduct research to launch appeals to the World Court to defend human rights against the war criminals who have committed these crimes.

We need to connect the IWW to the CJM's contacts, 150 organizations in the US, Canada, Mexico (especially Chiapas), Dominican Republic and Brazil. What can we add to this international network? Can we really fight NAFTA and pose an alternative? Can we learn from peoples more courageous than we are?

New York wobs demand Starbucks recognize MLK Day

By Nick Patti

The air was brisk and cold, but the mood was hot on this sunny winter morning on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 21, as forty protestors gathered in front of Starbucks headquarters on 33rd and 5th Avenue, Manhattan, and marched to a Wild Edibles Restaurant on the East side.

We chanted, sang, heard speeches, kept warm and danced to a jazz brass band for justice.

Our demands: Starbucks should pay time-and-a-half to recognize the Dr. King holiday as you do for other major holidays, and Wild Edibles, rehire the fired workers, laid off for organizing with the IWW.

Three people carried the red New York City branch banner, red, black, and red-and-black flags were held high, and numerous signs were waved, emblazoned with our black cat, the words "Starbucks Workers Union," and graphics of various coffee cups in vari-

ous stages of disarray or re-appropriated by our IWW union logos.

"The workers, united, will never be defeated!" went one chant, and "What do we want?—Justice! When do we want it?—Now!" went another. Also, "Escucha, escucha: ¡Estamos en la lucha!" (Listen, listen: we're all in the struggle!)

We brought out the owner of Wild Edibles, who appeared visibly perturbed.

After 90 minutes sharing good spirits among protesting Wobblies and SDS members from New York, Providence, and Boston, we split up into the cold, sunny early afternoon, through the tall building canyons of Manhattan, New York. Some joined the Martin Luther King Day rally organized by the International Action Center across town, some called it a day and went home. A good time was had by all, except, of course, by the boss.

Australian workers rushed onto individual contracts before law changes

Union leaders denounced that employers are rushing thousands of workers per day onto the individual contracts they condemned so vocally during the recent election campaign.

Employers are afraid the new Australian Labor Party-led government will remove the Australian Workplace Agreements in the Industrial Relations law.

Australian Council of Trade Unions president Sharon Burrow said the employers' efforts to lock their workers into individual contracts with lower wages and conditions is "disappointing. "Given the emphatic rejection of

Work Choices at the recent Federal election it is well and truly time for all employers and the Liberal and National Parties to abandon their support for AWAs and begin sitting down with their employees and unions to negotiate collective agreements," she said.

"The fact is that AWA individual contracts give too much power to employers and the vast majority of Australians recognise this as a bad thing." Two hundred delegates attended the Australian Council of Trade Unions conference in Canberra to plan its post-election Industrial Relations strategy with the new government.

France: Ready, get set, march in May

By Black Cat

Since October 2007, protests have happened against the social breakdown organized by President Nicolas Sarkozy and company. Little Nico, elected last May, without a doubt thought that the spirit of resistance among French workers had lost its edge.

Well, the workers did everything they could to show him to the contrary. Of course, there are the battalions of the civil service, the RATP, the railway workers as well as the students who were at the forefront with paving stones in hand. However, it forces one to take pause from this struggle to think of the attitude of the mainstream union which didn't hesitate (save the CGT) to sign the agreement over new employment contracts.

On January 24, the civil servants were again in the street, notably demonstrating about their falling purchasing power. According to the unions, 55 per cent of the staff were on strike during the day of action.

For the students, it is a time of relative calm. However, there is nothing to indicate that they will not once again kick up dust in May, the fortieth anniversary of May 1968, to protest the Pécresse law whose goal is to put the University at the service of the market and bosses. Moreover, the retail workers have yet to move.

It helps that there is a historically styled unity movement composed of the Force ouvrière (FO), CGT, CFDT unions.

Colombian palm growers investigated

Colombia's national public prosecutor of Colombia announced in January that it is investigating up to 23 palm-growing businesses in the Antioquia region for using paramilitaries to displace local people and take their land.

The people displaced by the paramilitaries were primarily black and indigenous communities near fertile land

in river basins.

"The paramilitaries ... were sought out to do the work," said a statement by the CUT, the main labor federation in Colombia. The prosecutor received more than 100 testimonies and conducted judicial inspections of the companies to compile enough evidence to launch a formal investigation.

What will be the consequence of the movement's struggle? Could the fall of Sarko in the polls (41 per cent satisfied on January 2) become a lever for strengthening the social struggle? Only the future can tell and it could be that you will find us among the paving stones next May.

Translated by Peter Moore.

The CGT estimates that 80 per cent of retail workers were affected by the strike movement (buying power, working conditions). Managers imposed part-time hours. Ninety per cent of stores were open part-time. Contracts were, for example, cut from 31 to 26 hours for a self-service employee.

A Carrefour cashier explained. "I earn €850 per month for 30 hours per week. I pay €350 in rent, I have a car payment. For me to make it, I work another job as a delivery driver, 12 hours weekly. So I get up at 5:30 am and finish at 9 pm."

For cleaners, the national employment service, l'Anpe, is offering contracts of 3 to 5 hours per week to wash windows. For the newspaper deliverers, the number of copies they can deliver is increasingly restricted (150 papers per day for a regional daily newspaper).

In conclusion, more and more French workers are holding a number of odd jobs, looking a lot like the politicians who themselves hold a variety of offices, but with benefits enough for living the good life.