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INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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Zimbabwe arrests unionists, opposition

Zimbabwe's ruling party and paramilitaries are conducting a terror campaign of arrests and captive meetings of opposition supporters before the presidential run-off election on June 27.

Police arrested the union president Lovemore Motombo and general secretary Wellington Chibebe of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) on May 8. Police charged them with "inciting people to rise against the government and reporting falsehoods about people being killed" during a May Day rally.

The General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe has said that 40,000 farm workers are "affected by the current terror campaign" that has led to violence and eviction from their workplaces.

Teachers in rural classrooms are among those being targeted as MDC

supporters. Two have been killed to date, with a third abducted by Zanu-PF paramilitaries. The teachers' union has received reports that the Zanu-PF are chasing teachers out of schools, beating them, and demanding "repentance" fines in the form of cash, goats and cattle, according to IRIN, a United Nations news service report. "The situation in the schools resembles war zones, and there is no way teachers can report for work to face those death squads," Raymond Majongwe, president of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, told IRIN.

"Our fear is that more could be under torture, or have been killed," said Majongwe.

The MDC has placed the death toll since the March 29 election at 43 people, with hundreds beaten and more than 5,000 people fleeing to the mountains

Continued on 3

African unions fight food crisis in streets

Unions are responding to rising food prices worldwide. Working class people are coping by cutting the number and quantity of their meals and by protesting the price increases in street protests.

In Morocco, four public service unions struck for one day on May 13. The unions are planning a general strike on May 21 to demand lower food prices.

In South Africa, thousands of Congress of South African Trade Unions members marched through the capital city to demand lower food and electricity prices said to be rising by 53 per cent.

Workers from the public and private sectors in Burkina Faso protested in the streets of the capital, Ouagadougou, struck for two days starting April 8. They demanded a 25 per cent pay increase in the public sector and a reduction in taxes on food and fuel.

"We need an equalisation between the cost of living and purchasing power,"

said Laurent Ouédraogo, the secretary general of the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Burkina (CNTB). While the Burkino Faso government has dropped import taxes on certain foods, it has refused to budge on pay raises.

The World Bank has reported that wheat prices have risen by 181 per cent over the last 1.5 years, while overall food is 83 per cent more expensive.

Africa is particularly vulnerable to food price increases because millions of people rely on food aid. The price increases have effectively cut food aid budgets, meaning fewer people get fed. The United Nations' World Food Program said it needed \$500 million to meet the shortfall.

Kenya, Namibia and other African countries are focusing efforts on increasing their domestic crop yields. However, fears of drought this summer across Africa are amplifying the crisis.



Photo: Carlos Guarita

Teachers in Bristol, United Kingdom, march as part of a one-day national strike on April 24 to protest a below-inflation pay offer by government.

UK teachers strike, first time in 21 years

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) held a one-day national strike in 50 cities across the United Kingdom on April 24 to fight low pay for teachers.

The strike affected 8,000 schools and one million students with a third of schools turning students away, according to a *Guardian* newspaper survey.

More than 130,000 civil servants and college lecturers also struck to press demands about low pay.

It was the first teachers' strike in 21 years, signalling a change in tactics for a union that has relied on lobbying to make its voice heard.

Continued on 3

E-Z Supply ordered to pay IWWs \$1 million

New York City IU 460 legal update

By Stephanie Basile

Since the New York City IWW began organizing in foodstuff warehouses three years ago, we've organized in ten workplaces with varying degrees of success. The employer's failure to comply with wage and hour laws is one common issue at every shop.

Many companies have retaliated by firing workers for their union activity. Workers have fought back through strikes, pickets, demonstrations, and selective legal action, among other tactics. We find legal action to be most effective when combined with these other methods, and when viewed as a means, not an end.

This is a report on the legal status of our campaign, but readers should understand that legal action is only one of many tools workers are using to win their demands.

About a year and a half after we began using legal action, several favorable rulings have recently come down and several settlements have been reached. Since the rulings are new, companies have not yet begun making payments.

E-Z Supply (now Sunrise Plus)

Thirteen workers were awarded a total of \$1.068 million in back wages and compensation. The owners have tried to escape liability by forming a new corporation called Sunrise Plus. The union has made a motion to define Sunrise Plus as an alter ego for E-Z Supply, which would hold Sunrise Plus liable for the judgment against E-Z Supply.

Handyfats Trading (now called HDF Trading)

Six workers were awarded a total of \$360,000 in back wages and compensation. The union recently made a motion to require Handyfats to pay interest and legal fees which could raise the total amount.

Giant Big Apple

Fifteen of seventeen workers have settled their claim for back wages and compensation. The fifteen will receive a total of \$325,000. The remaining two have yet to settle.

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May Day greetings from Japan's Freeters

To the Comrades of IWW,
We would like to introduce ourselves to you: we are the Freeters' Union. We are a Tokyo-based general union, established recently in the face of the out-of-control global situation in which neo-liberal capitalism is running rampant. As precarious workers suffering from working conditions that are becoming more and more fluid and amorphous, we are intensifying our struggles for freedom and survival.

At this moment, one of our new campaigns is to organize the Gas Station Union to confront Kanto Toyu Co., Ltd. —a Japanese member of the Shell Oil Group— that has begun to lay off an increasing number of part-time workers on the pretext of the rise of oil prices and financial instability. It is a necessity to fight this gas station chain and the oil-driven conglomerate which forcibly lays off its employees in order to make even bigger profits. We will continue to inform you about this campaign, so please keep an eye on our efforts.

In the past few years, we have been organizing the May Day of Freedom and Survival, a May Day by and for the "informal" workers, who are increasing not only in Japan but also the world

over. This year's theme will be "The Precariats Expand and Connect," expressing the idea of making a network of various groups and the people working with various types of informal workers, outside our union. That is to say, many movements of the precariats are appearing across the country outside Tokyo. We will report on these lively movements as well.

We know the glorious history of IWW in North America. We feel the past and present struggles of yours are very close to ours. We are seeking to share both your efforts and hardships, going beyond the barriers of ethnicity, gender, and historicity. We of the Freeters' Union send the warmest greetings of solidarity to all the comrades of IWW, who have been consistently fighting for workers' essential rights and social revolution beyond national borders.

Together let us fight against the aggression of neo-liberal capitalism by constructing a solidarity relation. Let us fight together for the liberation of the workers of the world beyond national borders!

noiz
The General Freeters' Union
Japan

Direct action statement confusing

Re: GEB statement in the May IW
I am concerned that I get mixed messages from the statement by the GEB.

On the one hand, I understand the necessity of stating clearly the bylaws, and describing what actions are appropriate in the name of the IWW, but, on the other, I am unclear as to why a statement about the suitability of ELF [Earth Liberation Front] militancy, in comparison, is useful.

I am concerned whether it is the role of the IWW to condemn the actions of militant reformers in terms of the actions approved of by the IWW, when the interest of the IWW is to organize workers to make confrontations with the

'employing' managing class by recommending direct action.

For all that is gained as a result of utilizing approved methods, I am unsure as to why the IWW GEB needs to tell the ELF what methods it should use.

Is the GEB giving Fellow Workers examples of how effective certain kind of direct action is, in order to make clear a mandate that we all should organize with a goal of direct action in accordance with the bylaws so we can carry out campaigns successfully?

Mark Wolff
Boston, Massachusetts

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The Voice of Revolutionary
Industrial Unionism

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EDUCATION
EMANCIPATION

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UK blood service protesters demand secret report be released to public

By Nick James, Indymedia UK

Health workers and supporters picketed the headquarters of the United Kingdom's National Blood Service (NBS) in Watford, England, on April 11, calling for an end to a centralization scheme that would cut 600 jobs and put timely blood deliveries at risk.

The lively demonstration, with people drumming and shouting, "Release the McKinsey report", was backed by community groups Hackney Solidarity Network, Stop Haringey Health Cuts Coalition, the West Midlands Coalition of Health Campaigns, and others. The noisy demonstration was an unusual sight in the otherwise quiet business district in Watford, about 19 miles (30 kilometers) north of London, with a Hilton Hotel complex and the central offices of pub giant Wetherspoons, as neighbors to the NBS headquarters.

The demonstration called for the NBS directors to release documents related to the cuts plans, promised months ago, which relate to a review forced by

the strong public reaction against the initial plan to cut the blood service. Top management consultants firm, McKinseys, hired to do the independent review, is said to have criticized the bosses and the cuts plan. The review and a reduction in cuts to the NBS in a revised plan, amounted to a partial victory for the campaign. However, cuts in the South West of England were left out of the review and are going ahead as planned.

Campaigners want to see the review documents made public, warning that a critical review of the NBS cuts in the south and west of England is also needed.

After half an hour, Mr. Evans, head of Human Resources, emerged and met with the crowd.

Evans told the assembled campaigners that there was no analysis or report produced by the management firm McKinseys. His claim resulted in a hot debate and Evans relented saying that the report documentation did exist and



Photo: indymedia.org.uk

IWW General Executive Board member Nick Durie confronts the head of National Blood Service human resources about a plan to cut 600 jobs.

would be released after all.

"The [NBS heads] are getting away with carving up a vital part of the NHS to try and break it up into bits that they can privatise. Already some patients have lost their lives as a result of all this shakeup and meddling. We need to put a stop to this," said Nick Durie, a member of the IWW's General Executive Board.

"These bosses think they are invincible, sat in ivory towers like this office

block in Watford, but what they are doing is absolutely outrageous."

The demonstration showed again that the NBS campaign is growing and it has again forced management to contradict itself in public and promise to release the McKinsey review.

To track the campaign, visit nbs-sos.blogspot.com or contact the campaign at nbs.sos@gmail.com.

With files from the IW.

UK teachers strike

Continued from 1

One-third of schools in the country were shut down due to the strike. Teachers toting signs saying that they can't afford to buy a house. Others said they are considering getting second jobs to help pay the bills.

The union has traditionally relied on lobbying to achieve its goals. However, the government proposal for a salary increase is below inflation and teachers are fuming. The government has put a 2.45 per cent increase on the table, but teachers are demanding a 4.1 per cent increase instead.

"If inflation is four per cent and you offer a pay award of two per cent, that's a pay cut in anybody's language," said Trade Union Congress general secretary Brendan Barber.

Government officials criticized the teachers for the one-day strike, saying it was hurting children's education and that teachers are well paid with an average salary of £34,000 (US\$66,000).

Teachers say that people are leaving the teaching profession to find better paying work. The result is fewer teachers, larger classrooms and less time to pay attention to individual children.

"If parents want the best teaching for their children, then this strike is essential," said Keith George, a NUT representative in western England.

Christine Blower, acting general secretary of the NUT, said that teachers accepted a deal with below inflation pay increases three years ago and "the prospect for a further three years of the same is the last straw."

Zimbabwe arrests unionists

Continued from 1

and elsewhere to escape Zanu-PF militias.

People who have tried to file complaints to the police are, in turn, detained and interrogated, said the MDC, which means few people are coming forward.

On April 25, armed police raided the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) headquarters in Harare and arrested more than 300 men, women and children who had taken refuge there from political violence.

National and international unions have condemned the Zanu-PF for the violence against union members and party activists.

Dockworkers affiliated with the Congress of South African Trade Unions in South Africa and dockworkers in Mozambique refused to unload a ship loaded with AK-47 machine gun bullets, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades sold by China to Zimbabwe. The ship returned to China without unloading its cargo.

In a speech to the Zanu-PF's Central Committee on May 16, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said Zimbabwean democracy was stronger than ever and blamed the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) for inciting rural violence to benefit Western political and corporate interests.

"Such violence is needless and must stop forthwith. Our fist is against white imperialism; it is a fist for the people of Zimbabwe, never a fist against them."

The same day, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai delayed his return to Zimbabwe, saying that his party alleged that the military planned to kill him and at least 36 other opposition leaders.

Tsvangirai had been lobbying neighbouring countries and the United Nations to pressure Mugabe to release and accept the election results.

While the MDC refers to Tsvangirai as the "President" on its web site, it has agreed to contest the presidential run-off in a bid to avoid violence such as that seen in Kenya after its election.

Despite the violence, MDC activists are gearing up for the presidential election campaign. The MDC said that 20,000 activists attended a rally in Harare.

"The people are very clear on what they want. They want change. The dictatorship is dead and on 27 June we must attend its burial," said MDC parliamentarian Nelson Chamisa.

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**.

Ultra-portable revolution

With gas prices soaring and food prices at a new high, this seems an odd time to raise the subject of things getting cheaper. But in one small corner of our consumer universe, one commodity that used to be owned only by the very rich has suddenly, almost overnight, become very cheap indeed.

I'm speaking about ultra-portable, ultra-light laptop computers.

A year ago, if you wanted to buy a truly portable computer, you'd be looking at a Sony Vaio, for example, weighing in at a couple of pounds, but costing something like \$3,000. Even Apple's latest laptop, the MacBook Air, costs \$1,800 in its cheapest configuration.

But in the last six months a new breed of tiny, powerful laptops has become available for \$400.

A 90 per cent drop in the price of a tool that can be so useful to unions is something that should make us sit up and take notice.

Why has the price of laptops gone into freefall? What are the implications for our unions?

I would say there are three reasons for the sudden fall in the price of light, small laptops.

The first is the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative. This brainchild of tech guru Nicholas Negroponte and endorsed by the United Nations, aimed to produce a net-connected laptop for \$100. Mass production began in November 2007. The first laptops are already in the hands of school children in developing countries.

If you can create a fully functioning laptop computer for \$100, it's kind of hard to make the case that the lowest priced laptops should cost 20 times that much money. The OLPC has changed the way the industry and consumers think about laptop pricing.

The second reason for the fall in price has to do with changed perceptions of what people want and need in a laptop. For many people, such a computer will be their second machine--keeping a desktop or heavy "desktop replacement" laptop for most of their work.

That being the case, the new ultra-lights don't need massive hard drives. You won't be storing your entire music collection and your digital videos on one of these.

In some cases, you can get rid of the traditional computer hard drive entirely, as Asus has done with its hugely popular "eee" range of \$400 mini-laptops (they've sold 1 million of them in the last six months). The "eee" uses a solid-state memory component rather than the traditional hard drive. This means that they can work faster, are more robust (fewer parts to break), and cost less.

A third and final reason for the emergence of the sub-\$400 PC is the rise of Linux. The Asus "eee" and other models run on variations of this free, open-source operating system. Most people who buy computers don't realize that they're paying for Windows when it comes pre-installed on their computers, costing hundreds of dollars extra. Simply replacing Windows with Linux can cut the cost of a laptop dramatically, as well as increasing its speed, power and security.

You don't have to buy an anti-virus software package either.

So what does this mean for our unions? If we accept the idea that computers can be useful tools (and I think most of us now buy into this), we have an opportunity to arm our organizers, activists, officials, and staff with tiny, light, powerful laptops that will give them Internet access, email, the web, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and just about everything they need, for a fraction of what these things used to cost. For example, the "eee" comes with Skype as well, and a built-in web-camera so you can do free videoconferencing on this \$400 machine.

Many union staffers, officials and activists do not have computers at home; they rely on desktops in their offices. Many union staff and activists are not allowed to do union business on the company's machines. Some have access only to older desktops which are limited in what they can do. Some have laptops that are portable only in name: huge, clunky machines that are unpleasant to carry around.

While Asus has produced the first successful sub-\$400 laptop, HP has followed with its Mini-Note (slightly more expensive, at \$500, with a larger screen and keyboard). Dell has just announced that it, too, will be manufacturing its own cheap ultra-portable. The price is going to fall, and the models will become more powerful. The best and cheapest of them will run variants of Linux.

This is not good news for Microsoft. But it is potentially great news for us.

Giant corporations don't really need very cheap laptops. For years, businesses have been able to afford laptops for their managers and others. But for unions and other organizations, the price has been a deterrent.

No more. Imagine a union where everyone had the very latest software, in a light, portable powerful laptop. Where everyone had wireless net access and wasn't chained to their desks.

It's a change as dramatic as the invention of the portable, battery-powered radio a few decades ago or more recently, the mobile phone.



WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

CHAPTER 14 WOMEN AGAINST SLAVERY

ENSLAVED BLACK WOMEN, WHOSE LABOR HELPED CREATE THE WEALTH ENJOYED BY BOTH PLANTATION OWNER AND TEXTILE MANUFACTURER, WERE SUBJECTED TO UNIMAGINABLE DEGRADATION. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE CELIA, A SLAVE WHOSE MASTER REGULARLY FORCED HER TO HAVE SEX WITH HIM. ONE NIGHT IN JUNE 1855, PREGNANT AND ILL, SHE BEGGED HIM TO LEAVE HER ALONE. HE IGNORED HER, AND SHE KILLED HIM. THE MISSOURI AUTHORITIES WAITED UNTIL HER BABY WAS BORN BEFORE SENDING CELIA TO THE GALLOWS.



OTHER BLACK WOMEN REBELLED, SOME FLEEING NORTH TO FREE STATES AND CANADA. ONE WHO DID WAS HARRIET TUBMAN, WHO ESCAPED FROM A MARYLAND PLANTATION AT AGE 29 IN 1850--AND RETURNED TO THE SOUTH 19 TIMES TO HELP OTHER SLAVES ESCAPE. CALLED "MOSES" BY HER PEOPLE, THIS INCREDIBLE WOMAN WAS HATED BY SLAVE MASTERS, WHO OFFERED A \$40,000 REWARD FOR HER CAPTURE, DEAD OR ALIVE. SHE WAS NEVER CAPTURED. AS A CONDUCTOR ON THE "UNDERGROUND RAILROAD," SHE BOASTED THAT SHE NEVER LOST A PASSENGER.



ISABELLA BAUMFREE BORN IN NEW YORK IN 1797, AS THE PROPERTY OF A DUTCH MASTER. WHEN NEW YORK ABOLISHED SLAVERY IN 1827, ISABELLA LEFT HER MASTER AGAINST HIS WISHES AND STARTED A NEW LIFE WITH A NEW NAME. AS SOJOURNER TRUTH SHE BECAME KNOWN AS A POWERFUL SPEAKER AGAINST SLAVERY AND FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS. SHE HELPED ORGANIZE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETIES THROUGHOUT THE NORTH.

E-Z Supply ordered to pay workers \$1 million

Amersino

Fifteen of sixteen workers have settled. Due to a confidentiality agreement, the union is unable to disclose the amount of money.

Top City Produce

The company was investigated by the New York Attorney General's office. Negotiations are currently underway for a settlement.

Wild Edibles

In September 2007, sixteen workers filed a lawsuit over illegally withheld overtime pay and retaliation. An ad-

Continued from 1

ditional eight workers have since joined the case. The plaintiffs are set to request class certification, which would expand coverage in the case to all current and former workers going back six years.

A few months after the suit was filed, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction ordering the company not to retaliate against any worker who is part of the suit.

The company has since allegedly violated this injunction several times, and the workers' lawyers recently filed a motion to hold the company in contempt of court. To date, 11 of the 24 workers involved in the case have been fired or constructively discharged.

Flaum Appetizing

A back wage case is proceeding against the company.

Penang Restaurant

Penang, a Malaysian restaurant in the Upper East Side, closed down in summer 2007. Workers at the restaurant had been working 12-hour days for under minimum wage when they chose to join the IWW in early 2006. The IWW carried out a heavy flyer campaign outside the restaurant after the boss refused to honor an agreement with the union.

HWH

HWH changed its name twice before closing down in Fall 2007. It was one of the most slave-like warehouses in the industry, requiring workers to put in as many as 116 hours per week, with drivers often working multiple days in a row with no time off. The union reached an agreement with the company in July 2007. Shortly after, HWH locked out the workers and changed its name to Dragonland, then to US Garden, before closing for good.

Jim Crutchfield, Daniel Gross, and Billy Randel contributed to this article.

Australian taxi drivers sit down for safety

By Viola Wilkins

More than 500 taxi drivers stopped their taxis and occupied a city intersection in Melbourne, Australia for 22 hours on April 30 to protest a nearly-fatal stabbing of a fellow taxi driver.

They were joined in their sit-down strike by other low paid, so-called unorganized wage workers.

Many Australian taxi drivers are international students from India who earn \$8 per hour working 12-hour shifts.

The day-long sit-down worked. Half of their demands were met: safety screens are installed for drivers who want them, pre-payment of

fares will become mandatory at night, police promised to take seriously reports of bashings and robberies, and the government agreed to waive parking fines incurred by the protesters.

The State Government will pay 50 per cent of the cost of introducing safety screens, with the balance to be paid by taxi operators. The capitalist racket means the privatization of profits so public taxpayers incur any losses.

For years the industry has been divided and ruled by investors in the \$500,000 licenses to run the 3,800 taxis.

Cab company owners and politicians do not pick up drunk racists at 2 am.

Politicians' mirror maze

Past Liberal and present Labor Governments have served the rich, the owners, and not their workers. Meanwhile, the Transport Workers Union and Taxi-Drivers Association compete in demarcation disputes.

Taxi drivers took a strong stand this time because the government had said "we'll look into it" before and did little after previous protests. In 2006, a protest that disrupted the International

airport at Tullamarine was ended before the boss lost any money with politicians' promises.

But cab company owners and politicians do not pick up drunk

racists at 2 am. Rather, they hire those desperate enough to sell their time and energy for 12 hours of aggravation for that. For two grinding years the pleas and complaints through the proper channels were ignored, leading to the April 30 uprising.

Cooperative: long-term solution?

One idea that could provide workers control over their jobs and working conditions would be a cooperative of drivers, organized on an industrial scale. A cooperative of drivers could organize work into eight hour shifts or less and



Photo: www.iww.org.au

Australian taxi drivers occupy a major intersection in Melbourne for 22 hours with demands for safety screens and pre-pay fares at night.

enjoy better conditions. Funding could come from the superannuation money of transport workers. An industrial union combining chauffeurs and taxi drivers, bicycle and motor bike couriers, truck-

ies, bus, train & tram drivers, airport & shipping would be able to take on the employers and bring industrial democracy to workers in this sector.

N. Carolina log truckers strike

By x361737

Eighteen North Carolina log truckers joined other transport workers across the country on May 1 by parking their rigs to protest the high cost of diesel fuel.

"Truckers strike all over the world, but this is the first time that I know of they've ever struck in North Carolina," said local organizer Roy Toler. Despite rumors of retaliation from Weyerhaeuser, which owns the majority of local log mills, the strikers did not back down and gave interviews with local media who covered the protest.

When asked why diesel prices are so high and why truckers do not have a transparent paper trail to ensure they receive full pay for their hard work, Toler responded, "I believe it might be something called greed, I'm not really for sure, but that's what I'm thinking."

I believe it might be something called greed.
—Roy Toler, organizer

Many workers expressed their frustration with paying upwards of \$1200 to fill tanks that only one year ago averaged \$500-\$600 to fill.

"The prices of fuel are getting so high that it's hard for truckers to maintain [a decent standard of living]," said local driver Levis Lane.

The truckers, identified as 'independent contractors' by the log processing companies that employ them, had one key demand: to secure a meeting with representatives of the truckers, representatives of

the loggers from whom they pull wood, and Weyerhaeuser management. Once all parties agree to come to the table—a demand to which the loggers and Weyerhaeuser have yet to respond—the truckers hope an equitable solution to the rising cost of diesel can be arranged and enforced.

California truckers in Stockton strike

By www.iww.org

Intermodal truckers in Stockton, California, led by the majority Sikh drivers, launched a strike over the issue of fuel prices on May 5, 2008.

In contrast to the April 1 and May 1 shutdown protests, the 300-400 Stockton truckers working out of the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern-Santa Fe railyards have shut down their industry until their demands are met.

Intermodal truck drivers carry goods from one transport hub to another, such as from a port to a rail yard.

Rather than demand the fuel surcharges paid by shippers that are often pocketed by companies rather than passed along to drivers, the Stockton truckers are asking for a dramatic increase in the rates paid in order to keep up with the increasing costs such as fuel.

While there is a history of Stockton truckers working with the IWW, this strike was taken on their own initiative.

On April 30, 2004, Stockton intermodal truckers were the first to join a west coast port truckers' strike which spread to southern and eastern ports. The issues were increasing fuel costs coupled with rates that had not increased, in some cases, for over a



Photo: J. Pierce

Stockton, California, truck drivers picket on the highway, urging drivers to join their strike over fuel prices, which amounts to "working for free."

decade. After six business days, rail yard officials announced an embargo on all container shipments to California in order to prevent a major backlog from occurring. The embargo forced employers to negotiate.

This 2004 example speaks to the power of intermodal truckers to create bottlenecks at ports and rail yards and halt the movement of goods.

Several hundred drivers briefly affiliated with the IWW after the 2004 strike.

Port Newark Drivers Federation stops work

By Maria Rodriguez Gil

Independent Port Newark truck drivers from the fledgling Port Driver Federation 18 (PDF 18) stopped work on April 30 in order to protest high diesel prices and poor working conditions.

They held a press conference at the Vince Lombardi Service Area off Route 95 in Newark, New Jersey, to protest conditions that threaten to put their members, along with thousands of other independent truckers across the country, out of business.

PDF 18 members explained that freight rates have not increased in years even though the price of fuel has quadrupled.

In addition, the companies they contract with are charging shippers higher fuel surcharges on their freight, but refusing to pass that increase to the drivers, which continue to get minimal amounts to defray fuel surcharges.

The PDF 18 members and sympathizers, included representatives from the United Auto Workers and the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local 1588, and IWW members. They gathered at the truck stop to

protest low hourly rates, lack of affordable medical insurance, lack of paid sick leave and vacations, and diesel costs that have risen 45 per cent in the past year.

Edison Villacis, one of the founders of PDF 18, says the lack of organization on the part of Port Newark's independent truckers has weakened their demands for better working conditions. He says the federation was founded to

give its members a voice that will be heard and can create lasting, significant change. According to its website pdf018.org, the drivers federation's purpose is to organize independent truck drivers at Port Newark in order to work together "inside and out of the ports" to ensure they can continue to make a living in the industry.

Without these guys, we wouldn't have a job.
—Robert Gantry, ILA

Among their immediate goals are obtaining affordable medical benefits for the membership, increasing their hourly wages, and finding ways of coping with the devastating effect of diesel prices.

The drivers have not received a raise in four years and must work 12 hours or more a day to make ends meet, making them prone to accidents due to exhaus-

tion and lack of sleep. Although a few can afford to pay a monthly deductible offered by the companies that hire them for medical coverage, that coverage is limited to on-the-job health conditions and does not cover medical problems outside of work. Family members are not covered.

PDF 18 member Luis Gaora, who has been in the business for five years and owns his truck, points out that many drivers are still making payments for their trucks.

Some have already lost their trucks due to the high cost of fuel, lack of adequate reimbursement for fuel surcharges, and low wages, he said.

Several PDF 18 members say the waiting times at Port Newark for loading their merchandise for delivery are

Continued on 7

Supermarket story: "Get out as fast as you can"

By Adam Welch

Working at a grocery store is a world to its own. Although the customers strolling through the aisles may not see it, the workers at a store can be like a family, brothers and sisters, older parent figures, crazy uncles. Just like a family, there can be generation gaps.

At my store, we had mainly two kind of folks, the 20-something-workers, many who were slowly working their way through community college, and the older workers we called the "lifers." It wasn't just how the young folks saw them, but how they saw themselves—stuck.

Gary the day trader

In the break room was where I would chop it up with the lifers. When the managers would do their paperwork in the early mornings, Gary, a lifer with words of wisdom, would sit across the break room table from me.

"You gotta get out of that credit card debt, start saving money right away. Are you going to school?" he would lecture.

With a stern look and a pointing finger covered by a rubber glove, he would talk straight to me like an older uncle. He would tell the story about back in his day, working at Safeway was like being a teacher, nurse, or a firefighter. It was a respected job that you could buy a house and send your kids to college with.

Not anymore.

Over and over, Gary and the other workers would tell me how it wasn't like how it used to be anymore. They would sigh and say, "Get out as fast as you can."

They wished they could, but they had worked there so long that they couldn't even think of doing something else. Most of the younger workers brushed it off, as they would be moving on.

But a few would wind up staying, like the ones who were getting married and needed the benefits, or those who just couldn't get themselves through school.

To the lifers, buying a house seemed out of reach. They couldn't afford to send their kids to college and they would always try to catch the occasional overtime or holiday shift where they could make double-time. Each of them had different strategies to get their own piece of the pie—their way of trying to get ahead when they were being pushed behind.

The kick-back produce department was where Gary worked. If you planned on sticking with the supermarket job, then this is where you wanted to wind up. The produce section was its own little castle. Unlike the check stands where management was always hawking over you, all the workers at the produce section had to do was meet their quotas, keep the stands looking clean and the manager didn't ever mess with them.

Another world is possible

Continued from 12
enforcement device."

The miners stayed out despite wage cuts and promised wage increases because Pope says what they wanted was "structural change" and a "new industrial order." The strikers organized themselves through pit committees that superseded the official UMW apparatus.

Pope concludes: "Throughout the struggle, John L. Lewis had been a step behind the local union activists. His celebrated organizing campaign was not launched until after rank-and-file miners had already rejuvenated the union. Once deployed, his organizers worked persistently to undermine the strike movement. [...] Thus, the sensational recovery of the UMW union—later touted by Lewis as a product of centralized discipline and federal government law-making—was in fact brought about by a democratic movement of local activists enforcing their own vision of the right to organize."

While most of the departments were on lower wage scales that topped \$15 per hour, all the produce people were on the highest wage scale that went up to \$20.

But you couldn't just walk off the street into produce. You had to work in the store for a couple of years and be approved by the older guys who worked there.

A middle-aged white guy, Gary, started working at my store as a bagger straight out of high school in the Sixties. Now, he has a mortgage and two kids in college.

His thing was day trading. Every morning, the phone in the backroom near produce would ring and someone would say, "Hey Gary, it's your broker." You could tell when the market was hot because you could hear him arguing about which ones to buy or sell through the whole backroom. That's how he was trying to make up for his lack of savings.

Two-job Jack

Then there was Jack. We would always talk when we worked in the check stands together on slow mornings. He always looked completely exhausted with his coffee cup in hand. He would drink five cups every shift and sometimes eat nothing for lunch, except more coffee. His hands were calloused and sometimes blackened because every morning at 3 am, he would wake up to deliver newspapers to vending machines around the city in his VW bus. He was married, though I got the impression he was never really able to spend any time with her.

Debra the climber

The person that everyone loved to talk smack about and hate on was Debra. She was a single mother who dropped out of college while studying chemistry some years back. Something told me she probably had her share of fun then.

Her strategy was pretty clear: she was trying to impress the managers so she could move up the Safeway ladder and become a store manager or work for the corporate office in Pleasanton.

Everyone knew she was working off the clock and on her days off. After she was promoted to supervisor, she would write everyone up for the slightest thing, even for being a minute late coming back from break.

Lotto liberation

Anytime the jackpot would get really high, say \$80-\$100 million, Brenda would organize the lotto pool.

She was a short Filipina who worked in the cash room that none of us were allowed into. Her husband worked at another Safeway too. When she would come by to give more change, count our drawers or refill our change machines, she would talk to all the checkers, especially if it was a slow day.

When it was lotto week she would come around asking everyone to pitch in \$5. Part of this ritual was everyone dreaming up stories of what they would do if we all won the money. Some would say we could all retire together in Hawaii, never having to work again.

While a few people would talk about being able to buy a big house, one guy would always talk up how he would buy the store up so he could burn the whole place down and laugh. He was a white guy who wore jerseys and sported his tattoos on the back of his arms on his days off. About 21, he was always trying to act like a thug, and his attitude always got him into arguments with the customers.

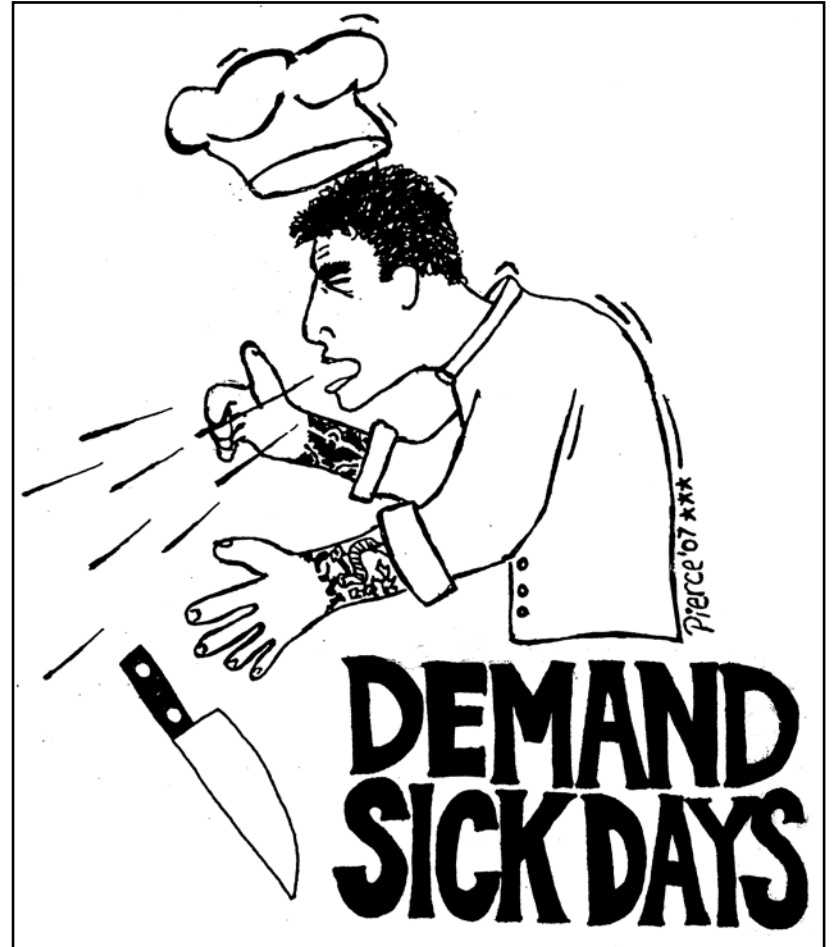
While I was sure that he would get fired one day for another argument with a middle aged housewife, he always thought his way out was his hip-hop T-shirt business that he swore would take off.

Untouchable Mr. McGoo

One of my favorite co-workers was this older, light-skinned, Argentinian checker, Alex. Having been the longest running checker at the store, he had a following of customers that would only go through his line. He checked so slow other workers would call him Mr. McGoo. But he didn't care. He only had a few years until he retired with his pension, and no matter how many "Productivity Training Sessions" management made him attend, he knew they couldn't touch him.

Checking began to make my back and wrist hurt all the time. Sometimes, I would even hear that "beep" sound in my sleep. But I loved talking with the customers every day.

I worked there for a year, and never ended up as a lifer. Yet, any of the younger workers could have become a lifer. We worked together and shared the same problems. We all dreamed of an easy way out. What we needed most, though, was a way to work together and make the industry meet our needs for once. Plainly, we needed a union able to give us hope and a practical strategy to making the supermarket something we didn't need to escape.



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First published in the Working USA journal, March 2008.

Indian guest workers launch hunger strike

Five Indian guest workers who worked and lived in poor conditions at Signal International in Mississippi, United States, launched a hunger strike in Washington, DC, on May 14.

They have set up camp at Lafayette Park, within view of the White House where President George W. Bush resides.

“We aren’t doing this for ourselves,” said hunger striker, Paul Konar, 54. “We need the system to change. If this weren’t about changing the system, there would be no reason to do all of this.”

The workers are demanding that they be able to remain in the US without fear of deportation so they can participate in a trafficking investigation into their former employer, Northrop Grumman, a labor subcontractor of Signal International and other American and Indian labor guest worker recruiters. Signal International denies any wrongdoing.

They also want the US Congress hold hearings into abuses of the guest workers visa program in the Gulf Coast area and that the Indian government take “concrete action” to protect future Indian guest workers.

On May 21, they held a rally against human labor trafficking. They have picketed the Indian embassy, attended rallies and marched through Washington to make themselves known. As of the press date, one hunger striker was hospitalized and six new hunger strikers have joined the campaign.

American backers of the guest workers include Jobs with Justice, and representatives from the AFL-CIO, metal trades workers, South Asian Americans

Leading Together (SAALT), Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Hip Hop Caucus, the Low Wage Worker Coalition.

The workers consider their hunger strike part of the *satyagraha* tradition of “truth-seeking” through non-violent resistance, a campaign style used by Mahatma Gandhi in his fight against British imperialism. They are drinking water only.

Their struggle first came to light with dramatic protests where they held signs saying “I am a man”, recalling Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous civil rights slogan. The workers say they were recruited in late 2006 to work at Signal International under the false pretense that their temporary guest worker visa would get them residency status and a green card allowing them to stay. They also said that the shelter provided by the company — 24 men per trailer, at a cost of \$1,050 per month — was inhumane.

When the company arbitrarily reduced their hourly wage from \$18 per hour to \$13.50, the workers tried to organize a strike. Knowing that without a job, workers would not be forced to leave the country, Signal fired the strike organizer. In response, 200 guest workers quit their jobs.

The hunger strikers have launched a blog nolaworkerscenter.wordpress.com to provide daily updates on their strike. They are asking people to sign a petition and to write Congress and the Department of Justice to demand an investigation into abuses of guest worker programs.



Photo: nolaworkerscenter.wordpress.com

Indian guest workers rallied on May 14 outside the White House to launch a hunger strike, demanding an investigation of Signal International for trafficking workers and making false promises of permanent residency status.

Extremists attack CNT France members

By CNT France, www.cnt-f.org

Extremists attacked members of the French syndicalist Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT) in two separate incidents on May 15, according to an email from the CNT international secretary.

Members of the fascist youth organization, Le Bloc identitaire, attacked the CNT block of protesters in Lille, northern France, during the civil service march against cuts. The CNT activists also clashed with police who were attempting to arrest undocumented workers marching with them.

In Paris, 25 activists of the Zionist Ligue de Défense Juive attacked CNT

activists with truncheons in the street. The activists had been attending a public solidarity meeting with Palestinian refugees, organized by the CNT’s Palestinian section and other groups.

One CNT member was seriously injured with a broken nose and rib, staying one night in hospital.

The attacks come less than a week before a major demonstration on May 22 by public and private workers to preserve pension and other benefits that are under threat by the government and employers.

Swedish syndicalists disrupt Bonniers to press stalled talks

By SAC, translated by Rickard Svensson

Members in the union at one of Sweden’s biggest media corporations, Bonniers, joined Solna LS, a local of the Swedish syndicalist union, the SAC.

Wage negotiations with the company had yielded no result. So the Solna local contacted the Gothenburg local for help and back-up, and they decided to cause a ruckus at the Swedish book and library fair in Gothenburg.

The theme of the 2007 fair was freedom of speech and union rights in Burma. The fair also happened to be the biggest public relations opportunity of the year for the multi-national Bonniers.

The morning of September 29, 2007, syndicalists from Solna LS, Gothenburg LS and Jonkoping LS stood ready outside of the fair with banners and their traditional neon-yellow strike-guard vests, handing out flyers, ironically saying “no freedom of speech at Bonniers.” The response from the visitors was good, and new flyers had to be printed over the weekend.

The next day alongside people with tickets, separate groups went inside, heading for the companies’ showcase, where they gathered and, on a given signal, took the company by surprise as

they put on their strike-vests and started mingling with the people and handing out flyers that informed them about the conflict.

Guards and police quickly got in place both days, and as the police started pulling out the activists that were inside on the second day, half of them sat down on the floor and threw up the flyers in the air, which spread all over the showcase.

After a 15 minute sit-in they, on the condition that they spread out in smaller groups, were allowed to keep handing out flyers and informing visitors about the conflict.

After a while, the CEO of the fair came down and struck a deal that if the syndicalists stopped handing out flyers, they would get to hold a press conference inside of the fair. The SAC accepted the offer and an hour later the activists left.

That same afternoon, the SAC’s Solna LS local held a press conference at the fair, where they informed onlookers and the media about how the owners of the fair’s biggest showcase treated their workers.

With files from the IW.

IWW red van helps organize day laborers

By x353554

Day laborers in and around Olympia, Washington are finding it easier to get to work these days, thanks to the IWW.

The Olympia IWW has launched a new organizing drive among day laborers using a beat up old, red van to get to day labor offices and jobs. The van itself belongs to a long-time Olympia wobbly, the insurance is being paid by the local Unitarian Universalist church, and the daily expenses are paid for by donations from the workers getting transportation and the Olympia IWW.

Transportation is a major issue among day laborers, along with minimum pay, no workplace health and safety, and companies that squeeze them for every dime. By providing transportation the IWW can demonstrate that worker solidarity can be used to meet the needs of each worker.

Day laborers are unique in that so many of them are homeless. An estimated two-thirds of the workforce is without a house. This means some workers must walk many miles at daybreak from their camps to the offices of the nearest labor shark.

Day laborers in Olympia, as elsewhere, must be at the corporate hiring hall several miles outside of town early in the morning in order to get their job placements for the day. Pay starts when they get to the job site and they are paid

the state minimum wage of \$8.07 an hour, for which the company charges between \$17 and \$22 per worker hour. The laborers must provide their own transportation to the job.

The Olympia IWW’s initiative to help organize with day laborers started with Jesse Shultz, himself a day laborer, who came to Olympia to help organize poor and working people. Shultz was a laborer long before many of today’s wobblies entered the workforce. His previous experience was at an organizing drive in Maryland that won concessions from day job agency Labor Ready for not offering to show up and pay workers that were overbooked by competing Labor Ready offices. Shultz wakes up at 4:30 every morning to drive workers to hiring offices and job sites.

Day labor sharks like Labor Ready, Labor Finders and Labor Works and others employ millions of workers across North America in every community. These workers are the baseline of the workforce and are some of the most victimized members of the working class. Conditions for laborers are often deplorable and often they have nowhere else to turn for work. They are frequently disrespected and treated as disposable people. For example, Labor Ready in Olympia closed its bathroom to its own day laborers, forcing workers to go out back to do their business.

Australian labor police

Continued from 16

are likely to discourage any involvement in industrial activity due to fear of the consequences.”

A Victoria official of the Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU) is facing charges for refusing to cooperate with the ABCC.

“Over 50 ordinary men and women have been forced and many more are still being forced to attend secret interrogations by Howard’s ABCC enforcers,” said the CFMEU web site.

Port Newark Drivers’ Federation

Continued from 5

so long they lose significant amounts of money because they work by the hour and don’t get paid for waiting.

ILA member Robert Gantry said he was there to support PDF 18 members “because without these guys, we wouldn’t have a job.”

Truckers had staged a slow-down on the New Jersey Turnpike in April that crippled Port Newark and slowed traffic to a near halt.

Haitian unions host IWW solidarity delegates:

A travel diary of the IWW delegation

By Cody Anderson, Nathaniel Miller, Justin Vitiello, Joseph Lapp

The Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) invited an IWW delegation to Haiti to learn about their fight against “le plan neoliberal” and recruit help in the form of material aid and solidarity. The delegation arrived in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince on April 24 to May 5.

Haiti in a nutshell

Haiti shares the Hispaniola island with the Dominican Republic, to the east of Cuba in the Caribbean. It has close to ten million people, with another four million living abroad, mainly in the United States and Canada.

Unemployment is a serious problem. For seven million people in the active workforce, there are only 200,000 formal jobs, split between 50,000 in the public sector and 150,000 in the private sector. The government has privatized much of its infrastructure and now is in the process of cutting public sector jobs.

Nearly \$1 billion sent from Haitians living abroad make up about 20 per cent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product, propping up the country’s economy. Yet, six per cent of Haiti’s population controls 85 per cent of the wealth. The richest billionaire in Latin America is Haitian, while Haiti has the most billionaires in the Caribbean.

Haitian political instability has marred the country time and again. Hopes rose in 1991 with Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s election, only the second elected Haitian president in its history, but he was overthrown shortly afterward in a military coup. Aristide returned in 1994 to resume his presidency, albeit with many US-imposed conditions, such as forced privatization. Rene Preval, a close political ally of Aristide, won the 1996 elections.

Aristide was elected president again in 2000 with a new political party, Fanmi Lavalas, but a US-backed coup forced him out of power in 2004. Rene Preval is currently Haiti’s president. Shortly before the IWW delegation went to Haiti, a sudden rise in food prices prompted riots throughout the island. In response, the government ousted Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis on April 12 in a non-confidence vote. However, the food prices problem remains.

CTH history and evolution

The Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) was founded in 1959 by workers in the sweatshops of Haitian dictator Francois Duvalier. Many were tortured, killed, and forced into exile for their union activity, but a small cadre remained and went underground. CTH organized as dictators and military governments came and went. In recent years, the CTH has struggled to rebuild amid the economic hardship facing Haitians. It is composed of 11 union federations covering as many industries, an office in every department of the country and three national commissions on women, health and youth, according to its web site www.haitilabour.org. The CTH is currently campaigning against privatization, which has led to the tripling or quadrupling of the cost of living over recent weeks. CTH organizing has found more support in this time of crisis as Haitians search for answers.

April 24: meeting our hosts

The IWW delegation’s hosts were Paul “Loulou” Chery, the General Secretary of the CTH, and his wife Ginette Apollon, also a union member. Loulou was born into a peasant family. He worked for his own education and obtained a degree so he could teach English. Not earning enough, he went to work in industry where he developed his

ideas and convictions to organize workers into unions. He specializes in conflict resolution, the formation of workers’ cadres, and international relationships, particularly with Canada, the United States and Venezuela. Unionists gaining the people’s trust and expressing their will is the basis of this work, he said. His vision for Haiti is justice and dignity for his extraordinarily creative and energetic people so his nation could be “one of the first order.”

Ginette introduced herself as a unionist, a nurse, and a member of the CTH Commission. She explained her main battles are for better health care, living and working conditions. Equally important for her as a feminist are the training, education, and equal opportunities for women in all social and economic sectors. Women are the majority in Haiti, she said, but most are victimized by patriarchy, machismo, lack of education and work, and objectification in the media. She joined the CTH because it had the most progressive approach to women in Haiti. Through the union, she feels women organizers must reach other women to raise their consciousness, empower them, and to develop female cadres. She works predominantly with younger women so her two main areas are women organized against violence and women fighting for justice.

April 25-26: Plateau Central

We left Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s sprawling capital, to visit the Plateau-Central, the poorest region of Haiti. The road that led us there resembled a mountain riverbed as opposed to a smooth paved highway, mirroring the life of ordinary Haitians. On the way, we witnessed acute poverty: shanty homes built of scrap wood and metal, sparse, but elaborately decorated vehicles loaded with mangoes and bananas, and people in the spaces left.

Arriving in Hinche, the capital of the Plateau-Central, we met with regional coordinators of the CTH, none of whom are paid for their union work. They represented: commerce, cooperatives, journalism, construction, youth work, transportation, women’s issues, agricultural workers, professional artisans, and others.

Their overwhelming obstacle is an utter lack of infrastructure such as transportation, irrigation, modern tools, meeting space, schools, drinkable water, electricity, hospitals, social security or services, job training, child care, and so on. For the 55,000 people on the plateau, the only options are subsistence work in the sugar cane fields of the racist neighboring Dominican Republic or informal economy work in the capital, Port-au-Prince. For many women this means prostitution. For many men, this means unemployment, begging or petty crime.

Our final stop in this area was in the countryside where we met with peasant groups affiliated with the CTH. We asked them whether they have received any of the international aid our governments claim to be giving to Haiti. The answer was a resounding and unified, “No!”

The peasants displayed a profound political consciousness, explaining that the United States and Canada did not want Haiti to be politically or economically independent because the people would use their independence to develop and redistribute the country’s resources. The farmers explained that the peasants are the motor of the economy because without food there is no work, singing us a song to dramatize their point.

They described six main points to



Photo: Cody Anderson

Farm workers breaking land for a landowner in Roche-à-Bateau. Agriculture is the biggest part of the Haitian economy, with most work done by hand.

improve agriculture and people’s quality of life: food, health care, education and job training, decent housing, dignified work, and leisure time. Basic irrigation could solve many of these problems. The meeting was held in a building used to raise pigs. Later that week a flood destroyed even this rudimentary meeting space.

April 28: Port-au-Prince docks

Today we visited Port-au-Prince’s docks, where the CTH has a presence with the trade union of the National Harbor Authority employees (SEAPN). We met with the union’s president and seven committee members. The docks have 1,800 employees, with 1,275 as union members. The port has just been privatized and 1,300 workers are about to be laid-off.

There is no opposition to the layoffs in the Haitian government. The port director Jean Evans Charles, the hatchet man, during a long debate in French with Cody said, “We are capitalists, we have to make money in a competitive system, and the best way to do this is to privatize.” No one from the SEAPN listened to the director’s spiel; instead, they talked on their cell phones, engaged in non-verbal communication with us, and one even fell asleep. As we left the port some Haitians shouted at us “CIA, CIA fuck off,” alluding to US cooperation with the port’s privatization.

We proceeded to the Parquet, a local courthouse, where 30-40 hospital workers stood in solidarity with their union’s president, who was arrested after an altercation between some workers and the hospital’s director. The workers had not been paid for seven months. The union president, Levy Mileot, was not even present at the incident.

In a crowd surveyed by plainclothesmen who carried M-16 machine guns and shotguns, we learned that a 35 per cent increase in hospital worker pay had been approved bon March 15, but it has yet to be implemented.

The judge did not show up for the hearing and Mileot was whisked away amid the outcry of those present.

April 29: Teleco workers demand compensation

This morning we went to a conference held by the Association des Employés Victimes de la Teleco at the CTH office. Since its 2004 privatization, Teleco has laid off over 5,000 workers. The workers received a 12-month severance package. They are now demanding an extension to 36 months.

Later we met with union representatives from Electricité d’Haiti (EDH), the state electrical company. There are 2,500 EDH employees, each of which support roughly 10 dependents. In October 2007, before the food crisis, the union concluded that the salary needed to bring a family of four up to the poverty line is \$450 a month. This means two meals a day, and does not include the cost of schooling and health care, both of which are now private. The average EDH worker’s salary is only \$80 a month. Currently, the EDH is striking in order to get the 35 per cent raise in salaries promised in March to deal with the increased cost of living.

The EDH is the next target for privatization following “le plan neoliberal.” The problem is practical, they said. How can you furnish the necessary service when 75 per cent of Haitians lack electricity, even in the capital city, where there are three hours or less of power per day? The EDH is calling for the state to invest in sustainable energy (solar, wind, hydro), but the state is not interested.

To date, the government’s argument for privatization has been that the public sector operates at a loss, but the evidence suggests that this is due to under-funding and theft. The EDH receives payment for only 50 per cent of all the electricity consumed in Haiti because people who have access to the

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Workers fight privatization, unemployment

Continued from 8

electrical infrastructure illegally tap into the electrical lines. Of course, people in the countryside and the shantytowns have no infrastructure, so there is no so-called theft in the countryside. The EDH believes that the government's underfunding of the EDH is a deliberate strategy to justify handing over potentially profitable public sector industries to corporations.

In contrast with the government's privatization plan, Venezuela and Hydro Québec have proposed a cooperative agreement that would build several power plants around the country. Venezuela has offered to provide their own technicians to start the project and would train Haitians to replace them. In addition, Venezuela provides Haiti with 14,000 barrels of oil a day at a reduced rate. Sixty per cent of the cost is paid now, while the remaining 40 per cent must be invested in state infrastructure and re-paid in 25 years time. Venezuelan President Chavez does not promise aid, he gives it, said the electrical workers.

While taking a break, we heard singing in the adjacent room. We saw that it was the union representatives, Hary Saint-Felix and Pierre Nadal, singing solidarity songs describing how the union fights not just for the betterment of its members but also for the betterment of the whole country. They said that songs demonstrate that "union members walk with their heads high, not down, they don't walk alone, but with each other." IWW delegate Nathaniel returned the favor, singing "Solidarity Forever."

April 30: Batay Ouvriye

Today we met with Paul Philome of the Batay Ouvriye (BO, Worker's Battle), a radical left coalition that coordinates workers, artisans, peasants and community organizations. Their biggest presence is in the free trade zone factories around Cap-Haitian, most of which make apparel and things like baseballs.

Paul described his basic ideology of consciousness raising, advancing the workers' struggle, and accusing the Haitian government of being the lackeys of the employing class. Paul believes the wage worker has direct contact with capitalism, not the peasant or the artisan, and therefore it is the wage worker that must lead the revolution.

He stated that the working class in Haiti has come to an *impasse*, where their misery is actually enforced to keep wages low and working conditions remain poor to maximize profits. A radical reorganization of society is required to "sever the umbilical cord" that connects the state to the people, said Paul. The delegates asked Paul if "there [is] enough political consciousness to restructure society?" He said there is, particularly with the current unrest that forces workers to "remove the wool from their eyes."

He said the Haitian Constitution makes it a legal obligation to raise the minimum wage to keep up with inflation. This promise has never been kept. The only adjustment to the minimum wage, a five per cent increase, was over five years ago and didn't match the then-10 per cent increase to the cost of living. Inflation has reached 100 per cent or more, said Paul. The minimum wage is about \$1.75 per day to cover transportation, gas (\$5 per gallon in Haiti), and meals. This leads to workers taking a shot of cheap, homemade liquor at lunch, in place of a meal, to give them enough energy to get through the rest of the day. This has led to *le vie de Clorox* or the life of bleach, which refers both to starvation pains and a means of suicide, such as that of his friend, Manu, who killed himself by drinking a bottle of bleach.

Batay Ouvriye has relationships with some politicians who are part of their

organization, when it can help the struggle, but it draws the line at supporting candidates or participating themselves in electoral politics. Paul told us how one of BO's supporters ran for senate because he believed that he could take the workers' fight there. He was shot and left for dead by assassins and was forced to flee the country. He has since returned to Haiti and serves as the BO's attorney. Paul mentioned that he himself had been shot in the leg, but differentiated between the authorities "shooting to deter" and "shooting to kill." He was only "shot to deter."

While driving us back to St. Joseph's he told us how Venezuela donated asphalt to Haiti for the construction of roads, but the current government turned around and sold the asphalt to the Dominican Republic for their own profit. He also said that Venezuela's gas is sold for profit, too.

Paul invited us to a conference on organizing in Latin America being held in Minas Gerais, Brazil on July 7-8 convened by the Latin American and Caribbean Workers' Encounter (ELAC, www.elac.org.br).

May Day

May Day is a national holiday in Haiti so people were out in the streets enjoying themselves. We arrived at CTH headquarters where the fired Teleco workers were gathering for a rally and march to demand their 36-month severance package. Their slogan, written in French, English, and Creole, was "do you want to hurt our people and country or fight with us against poverty and hunger." They concluded the first part of their demonstration by telling the gov-



ernment "our destiny is to struggle with you or against you."

May 2-3: Roche-à-Bateau

In the afternoon, we left for our trip to Haiti's South East to a town called Roche-à-Bateau. The road there was paved but littered with potholes. The highway is also a main artery for pedestrian traffic, which often comes dangerously close to oncoming vehicles. Drivers, most of whom are wealthy, seem to have an utter disregard for pedestrians.

Roche-à-Bateau is a radiant village beneath the mountains, next to the sea. It is in a horseshoe inlet surrounded by coconut palms, banyan, mango, and poppy trees. It could be a great place for small-scale, community-controlled



Laid off Teleco workers in Haiti march on May Day, demanding an extension of their 12-month severance pay to 38 months.

Photo: Cody Anderson

tourism, but it has no infrastructure to develop.

We met with town "notables" in the local school, which lacked bathroom and running water. There were only four women in a crowd of 35. Those present discussed the town's main problems: no drinking water; no recreation for youth; no spaces nor equipment for sports; no community center; no theater; no art or artisan materials; no fishing gear (in a seaside village). The state has done nothing.

The ultimate focus of our meeting concerned how the IWW could respond to these needs. Some of our thoughts are: 1) The importance of collaboration rather than charity, with the urgency of the citizens taking the initiative to realize their own needs, then acting together to attain them. 2) The IWW's commitment

Our next and last meeting was in LouLou's hometown, a small village outside Roche-à-Bateau. Despite a torrential downpour, 20 or so local peasant men and women congregated in the local school, which was little more than an open-walled concrete shell with a leaky corrugated metal roof. Many of the children present seemed disoriented, many were sick, as their parents left them to find work. The school seemed more like a daycare than an actual school.

Lamour Chery, Loulou's brother, welcomed our delegation emphasizing that the people congregated could expect something concrete from us, with real hopes for change. Loulou explaining the CTH had brought internationals to see how Haitians live, and to study conditions for which no one should be ashamed of other than those who create them, such as the state and particularly the US and Canada.

The people themselves, profoundly aware of their problems, made a seemingly endless list of them: Homelessness, housing in shambles; malnutrition and starvation (many who were there were clearly malnourished); ill health; sick loved ones without aid, medical centers, or even beds which to bring them; no potable water; no money for the school (one person commented "just look at it"); children so hungry they can't concentrate to last a whole day; no economic activity; no commerce; no work; no roads. They said in chorus "we have nothing."

Returning to Port-A-Prince we noticed one of the few rice paddies remaining, a vestige of Haiti's former self-sufficiency in rice production prior to the domestic market being undercut and destroyed by cheap, subsidized rice from North America. A white egret flew up from the paddy and disappeared above the Caribbean ocean. Cow herders walked to Port-au-Prince, driving their livestock at night to the capital, three hours away by car.

Back in the capital, torrential rains overwhelmed the city's hopelessly inadequate sewers, flooding the city in two-foot deep rivers of garbage.

During the visit, the IWW gave four computers and \$500 in material aid to the CTH and two computers to Batay Ouvriye. We returned to North America two days later determined to share our experience with all who will listen. Haitian workers need our solidarity in the direst ways and those interested in supporting their struggle should contact solidarity@iww.org.

For a full account of the trip, visit www.haiti.blogspot.org. This report is a edited account of the International Solidarity Commission delegation to Haiti.

May 1 ports shutdown

More than 25,000 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in the United States struck for eight hours on May 1 against the United States' "war on terror" in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A Pacific Maritime Association spokesperson said the action stopped 6,000 containers from being loaded at 29 ports during the work stoppage on the West Coast. The employer said it was an illegal strike, but the ILWU has responded that its members are exercising their First Amendment rights to free expression and free assembly.

The strike proved to be a rallying point for the United States peace movement and organized labor. Branches and members of the IWW were among the many who mobilized locally to support the strike.

ILWU International President Bob McEllrath framed the strike in patriotic terms in a media release.

"Big foreign corporations that control global shipping aren't loyal or accountable to any country. For them it's all about making money," he said.

"But longshore workers are different. We're loyal to America, and we won't stand by while our country, our troops, and our economy are destroyed by a war that's bankrupting us to the tune of \$3 trillion. It's time to stand up, and we're doing our part today."

Speakers at different rallies often referred to how there is always money for war, but never enough money for

education, health care and social services at home.

The General Union of Port Workers in Iraq announced their intention to join the work stoppage in solidarity with the ILWU workers. Reportedly, workers succeeded in closing down the Iraqi ports of Umm Qasr and Khor Al Zubair.

"The courageous decision you made to carry out a strike on May Day to protest against the war and occupation of Iraq advances our struggle against occupation." The letter detailed the challenge of being an independent workers' union, while the government is trying to impose a one-union certification scheme and "sectarian gangs" try to turn the unions into political tools or target them with violence.

"We are struggling today to defeat both the occupation and sectarian militias' agenda."

While the ILWU action took the media spotlight, thousands of people demonstrated across the United States for immigrant rights, access to citizenship, and an end to the round-ups and mass deportations of undocumented workers. There are an estimated 12 million undocumented migrants in the US.



Photo: J. Pierce

IWWs in the Bay Area, California rally to support the International Longshore and Warehouse Union anti-war port shutdown for 8 hours on May 1.

Indonesian workers protest food prices

By John Kalwaic

A spirited May Day took place in Indonesia as tens of thousands of workers and other activists gathered to commemorate the international holiday. The demonstrators called for an end to the rising prices of food and fuel as well as the government's unwillingness to protect workers against unpaid overtime.

Workers are forced to double shifts for less money, according to rally coordinator Samsul Arifin.

Dozens of labor organizations demonstrated in the streets, including the Labor Union of Indonesian People

(SPRI), the Labor Union of Indonesian Informal Workers (Serbiindo), the Labor Union of Indonesian National Maritime (SBMNI), the Labor Union of National Transportation (SBTN), and the Labor Union of Indonesian Automotive (SPOI).

Fifteen thousand police and security guards stood by with guns and water cannons. Both the State Palace and the US Embassy were heavily guarded with barbed wire placed around them.

Police dispersed a separate demonstration for the independence of West Papua from Indonesia.

Police attack May Day rally in Turkey



Photo: www.ituc-csi.org

Turkish police use tear gas and truncheons to disperse May Day protesters.

By John Kalwaic

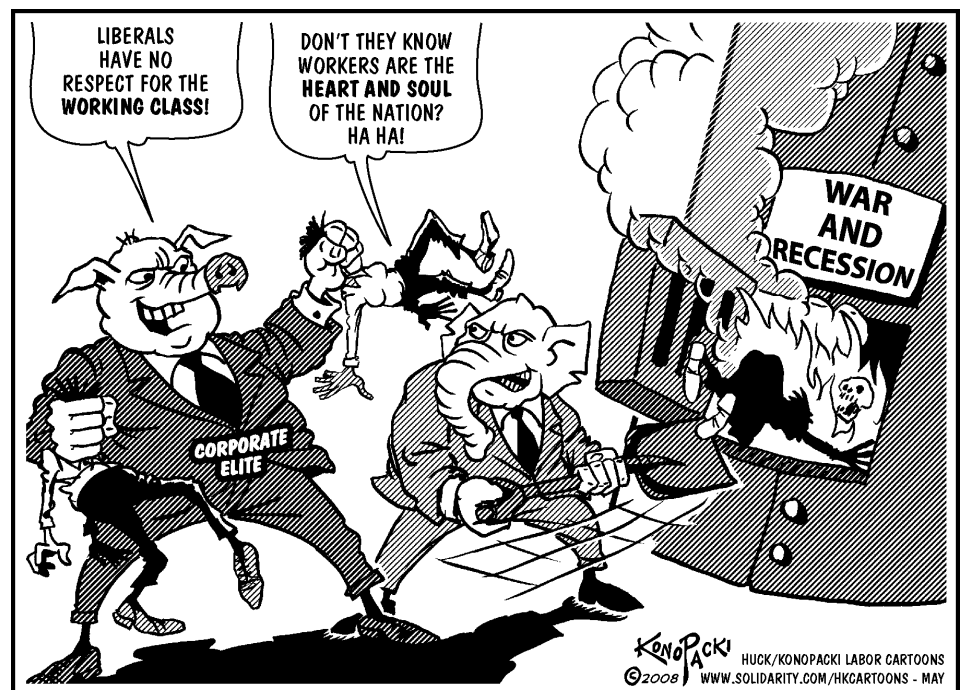
Governments repressed May Day rallies in Turkey and Iran.

In Turkey, the government in Istanbul was determined not to let the protesters reach their destination of Taskim Square, where in 1977, 37 workers were gunned down by unidentified attackers.

Riot police attacked demonstrators with clubs and tear gas. The number of people arrested ranged from 530 to estimates as high as 2,800 people, with 38 injured. The marchers were from the

major trade union federations, including The Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, The Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions, The Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions and the Revolutionary Confederation of Labor Unions.

This is one of the most severe crackdowns on workers since the July 2007 election of the Justice and Development Party or AKP, a conservative party bent on unpopular neo-liberal reforms.



Facebook labor activists arrested in Egypt

Egyptian state security officers arrested a man who used Facebook to promote a general strike on May 4 to coincide with the president's birthday.

While the strike fizzled, state security took notice.

Ahmed Maher Ibrahim, 27, was arrested on the street in the suburb of New Cairo, blindfolded and taken to a police station for interrogation. He was stripped naked and beaten repeatedly for 12 hours and asked for the password to his Facebook account and about members of the group. After threatening further beatings, he was released without charge.

"This is the work of thugs, pure and simple," said Joe Stork, Middle East deputy director at Human Rights Watch.

"If we allow ourselves to fear them, we won't do anything," he told the BBC before his arrest.

"Maher's treatment is part of a pattern of abuse and extralegal intimidation by state officials," said Stork.

Egyptian police arrested 500 people in the industrial city of Mahalla al-Kobra in the Nile Delta. They were allegedly involved in a call for a strike on April 6. Isra'a Abd al-Fattah, 29, was also using Facebook as a publicity tool. She was detained until April 23.

Independent unions defy Iranian govt.

By John Kalwaic

Iranian workers are in a constant struggle against employers and the government, facing repression and winning small victories.

The founders of the National Union of Unemployed and Dismissed Workers were arrested along with many others during May Day demonstrations. The union's former president, Sheia Amani, was arrested again, while he appealed the conditions of his release on bail.

Three thousand workers from the Haft Tapeh sugar cane company also struck to demand unpaid wages and an end to abuses by management.

Organizer released

Iranian workers and an international campaign won the release on April 6 of union organizer and baker, Mahmoud Salehi. Salehi, imprisoned since July 2007, had formed a local independent

bakers union known as the Saqez Bakery Workers Association and attempted to form a national independent Iranian Workers Organization.

On April 12, Iranian Special Forces drove bulldozers into the Kian Tire plant and arrested 1,000 striking tire workers. None of the workers' families or friends knew where they had been taken for 36 hours. Some workers escaped detention by escaping through the sewer system.

Four days before, the Kian Tire workers burned tires in protest of having not been paid in five months. Kian Tire has since paid workers two months pay.

Firefighters were ordered to spray boiling water on the striking workers; six of these firefighters were detained for refusing to spray the tire workers.

Independent unions in Iran are illegal as the government controls legal unions.

Unions listen! Another world is possible

By Staughton Lynd

What is the problem? What needs to be set right?

Currently, the mother of all wrong solutions is card-check voting, which would give more access to unorganized workers for the same top-down unions, with the same unaccountability to the membership because of the dues check-off, with the same ever-readiness to give up the right to strike.

Equally misguided, in my view, is the notion that the Taft-Hartley law represented a decisive turning point and that its repeal would release the original pristine impulse of the Congress of Industrial Organizations to flower again. All major trade union leaders beginning with United Mine Workers (UMW) President John L. Lewis have devised means whereby workers would give up the right to collective self-activity embodied in Section 7 in exchange for a mess of pottage.

So we, labor lawyers and labor historians, can only begin to be useful when we forego our endless apologies for the latest hoped-for “progressive” union leader. Our task is to envision an institutional “embodiment of the class self-activity discovered and imagined by E.P. Thompson and colleagues and par-

tially realized by the IWW in work that desperately needs updating.”

The new worldwide movement against “globalization”, meaning United States imperialism, and for a better day, has come up with a defining slogan: Another World Is Possible. The words remind us that a social movement is unlikely to bring about what it does not

management prerogative and no-strike clauses that exist in almost all collective bargaining agreements. These two clauses give profit-maximizing management the right to make the fundamental decisions and take away from workers the ability to do anything about it.

Another widely endorsed strategy is “card-check elections”. If enacted into

dia Act and the little Norris-LaGuardia laws of a number of states.

The indispensable precondition for a new bottom-up labor movement is to give up the quest for a magical new leader of the existing trade union movement who will make all well again.

Intellectuals associated with the labor movement have a special responsibility. In 1995, two labor historians circulated an Open Letter to President-elect John Sweeney, which greeted Sweeney’s elevation as “the most heartening development in our nation’s political life since the heyday of the civil rights movement,” assessed his election as “promis[ing] to once again make the house of labor a social movement around which we can rally” and pledged “to play our part in helping realize the promise of October.”

When Andrew Stern later denounced Sweeney and led several major unions into a new organization, Barbara Ehrenreich declared that “the future of the American dream” was now “in the hands of Andrew Stern” possessing a “vital agenda for change” and “a bold vision for reform.” This was presumably before Stern’s coalition with Wal-Mart.

The foregoing makes clear why it is so important to look again at John L. Lewis, to move beyond Saul Alinsky, Melvyn Dubofsky, David Brody, and Robert Zieger, indeed beyond the consensus of labor historians, concerning this paradigmatic figure. Here, the research of Jim Pope on the United Mine Workers drive in 1933 is the gateway to understanding the importance of rank-and-file activity as central to labor movement growth.

Pope has written that that the standard story is that section 7[a] of the National Industrial Recovery Act made possible a brilliant organizing campaign led by UMW President John L. Lewis that reestablished the mine workers’ union in the soft coalfields. Lewis in late May 1933 committed the union’s entire treasury to put 100 organizers into the coalfields “claiming ‘the President’ wants the miners to join the union. [W]ithin weeks of section 7(a)’s signing, the union enrolls the overwhelming majority of miners in the soft coalfields.”

In this standard story, Pope rightly observes that “coal miners rarely appear and strikes—if they enter the story at all—play a subsidiary role”. The victory was masterminded by Lewis. However, Pope saw something different had happened when the *New York Times* headline “Coal Men tell Roosevelt Code will be Signed Today: 16 Shot in Riots at Mines” caught his attention. Inquiry revealed that strike activity in the summer of 1933 involved 100,000 miners spread out over 1,000 miles of mountainous terrain. The self-activity of coal miners in southwestern Pennsylvania and West Virginia began before any initiative by Lewis and without his help. In Pope’s words, they “brought their common law of solidarity into the realm of public struggle.” Section 7(a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act “neither sparked the movement nor shaped its demands.” By May 17, 1933, when the NIRA was presented to Congress, “the organizing upsurge in garment and coal was already in full swing.”

From self-organization, the miners moved on, according to Pope, to enforcement from below. Lewis advised miners not to strike because the real action would be in Washington and announced that strike activity was unauthorized. When President Roosevelt intervened personally to broker a truce, striking miners refused to return to work. UMW Vice President Philip Murray then entered into an agreement with the owners that banned all mass picketing. The strikers, however, viewed picketing “not as a form of communication, but as an

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We must de-mythologize all leaders and we must re-conceptualize rank-and-file movements as something more than caucuses to elect new bureaucratic union leaders.

even try to achieve.

Current efforts to revive the US labor movement define their objectives so narrowly, that even if successful, they would not change anything fundamental. One such proposal is to “increase the amount of money spent on ‘organizing’ to increase the percentage of the labor force that belongs to unions. Such an increase in ‘union density’ might maximize the influence of existing unions, but would not change their entanglement in the

law, that procedure would very likely increase the number of bargaining units represented by existing unions. It would do nothing to change the top-down, bureaucratic character of those organizations.

Indeed, in the absence of prolonged election campaigns and vigorous public controversy, card-check elections might very well cause unions to become even less democratic than they now are.

Moreover, experience suggests that in the absence of legislation, in order to obtain card-check elections, unions often make significant concessions (about which the affected workers have no say) as to what will be in the contract after the union is recognized.

A third widely articulated strategy is “minority or members-only unionism”. The idea is that an employer should be required to bargain with any group of employees who request it, even if those workers are not a majority of the workforce. This is much the best mainstream formulation for improving the labor movement because it requires a union to prove its value through actions, not promises.

However, the idea has significant drawbacks. Those who favor minority unionism see it as an intermediate step toward majority support and recognition of the union as exclusive bargaining agent. Moreover, like so many other notions of labor law reform, it seems to require legitimation by some arm of government (such as Congress or the National Labor Relations Board) before it becomes real.

Better than any of these strategic visions would be a deliberate return to the essential principle of the labor movement: the principle of solidarity. The Knights of Labor and the IWW articulated this principle of solidarity for all time in the words, “an injury to one is an injury to all.” Certain applications of this principle are self-evident. For example, it would finally preclude the creation of separate wage tiers for workers who do essentially the same jobs and differ only with respect to their dates of hire. Again, it would require the labor movement to seek solutions that benefit both “workers who seek to enter the US” and “workers who are already here.”

In order to develop such solidarity unionism in practice, workers, labor historians, trade union officials, and labor lawyers must affirm the underlying idea that answers to the miseries presently experienced by workers in the US (and elsewhere) will develop from the bottom-up, not from the top-down.

We need to go back to the experience of workers in this country in the early Thirties who were unable to get help from either national unions or the national government, and who, therefore, turned to each other, improvising new central labor bodies to coordinate their local general strikes.

Rather than seek assistance from the courts, they sought to get the judges off their backs, through the anti-injunction provisions of the federal Norris-LaGuardia

South African dockworkers’ solidarity saves Zimbabwean lives

By X342055, *About Time*, IWW Australia

Everybody knew just what sort of “defence” the Chinese weapons would be used to inflict upon the population if they ever reached Zimbabwe.

All the politicians hummed and hawed and generally wrung their hands. South African president Thabo Mbeki told journalists that South Africa would not, could not, possibly, interfere in a legitimate transaction between Zimbabwe and China.

So, in the end, it was up to the workers. The 300,000-strong South African Transport and Allied Workers Union

(Satawu) said it would be “grossly irresponsible” to touch the cargo of ammunition, grenades and mortar rounds on board the Chinese ship *An Yue Jiang* anchored outside the port.

“Our members employed at Durban container terminal will not unload this cargo, neither will any of our members in the truck-driving sector move this cargo by road.

“South Africa cannot be seen to be facilitating the flow of weapons into Zimbabwe at a time where there is a political dispute and a volatile situation between Zanu-PF and the MDC,” said Satawu spokesman Randall Howard.

The London-based International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) said they were mobilising unions in China and Africa, including those in Angola, to take a firm stand and to stop the ship from offloading its cargo of weapons.

The ITF, which consists of more than 650 unions representing 4.5 million workers in 148 countries, is believed to have been instrumental in Mozambique’s refusal allow the ship to dock in Maputo, after ITF-affiliate Satawu asked it to intervene.

It is some 60 years after the revolution in China that brought the Communist Party to power, theoretically in the interests of the workers and poor peasants; nearly 30 years after Mugabe came

to power in Zimbabwe and solidified his regime with the help of troops from the 50-year-old so-called revolutionary Cuba; and 14 years since multi-racial elections were first held in South Africa.

Still, with all this political change and revolution, the workers remain where we have always been. We are on the bottom, forced to use direct action to protect the basic human rights of our colleagues. It is where we always were and where we always will be. A change of politicians is the joy of fools.

We can develop our economic power and solidarity on the job, however, by following the excellent example of the Durban dockworkers and making an injury to one an injury to all, the motto on the Satawu badge. If we do that, then we could push through some real change.

In South Africa, workers have shown that they are not passive victims of a neoliberal, commodity economy sitting on their fundamentals at the end of history watching the spectacle of it all. (Read: A flock of bloody sheep.)

Now Australia has supported calls for a global ban on arms sales to Zimbabwe. Only after workers had taken action, did Foreign Minister Stephen Smith announce how appalled he was about Mugabe’s delay of the election results.

“The continued delay demonstrates the Mugabe government’s utter contempt for democratic principles and processes,” he said. “I strongly support international efforts that prevent the Mugabe regime from being further equipped to commit further human rights violations against the already long suffering Zimbabwe people.”

This government position contradicts entirely the current law and Labor Party’s domestic policy. If Australian workers took the same actions as the South African dockworkers, they would be prosecuted for illegal action. It seems Zimbabwe is not the only country in need of change through solidarity.



Grad students organize at U of Chicago

By Joe Grim Feinberg

More than 100 University of Chicago graduate students have joined an organizing committee to found Graduate Students United, an independent graduate employee organization.

Organizing began last year when students set up a basic structure, organized two well-attended demonstrations, and collected about 500 signatures on a petition demanding health insurance for student employees and an end to graduate student fees. Dues are \$5 per year.

Our strategy is to build strength with a growing membership that can act in union to put pressure on the administration, to win concrete, work-related gains, and eventually to establish our organization as an organ of power for workers at the university.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) does not recognize graduate students at private universities as employees, and it gives us no special legal protection. It is likely that this NLRB decision will be soon overturned, but we have taken the opportunity to develop a strategy that does not depend on the NLRB for success.

We will continue to build our strength and not wait to be recognized by an agency from outside.

Progress from pressure

Already the administration has responded to our efforts by hinting that they will raise teaching wages approximately 50 per cent by the start of the next school year.

The administration also made the minor concession of freezing a yearly increase in graduate student fees. They recently tried to address the issue of un-

derfunded stipends and research grants by increasing the number of competitive scholarships available, a grossly inadequate measure.

The administration has hopes that students will be satisfied with the new state of affairs, but, so far, they have achieved the opposite, showing us how powerful we can be when we act together to an extent that no one predicted just over one year ago.

Graduate Students United maintains an open strategy for the future. It remains unaffiliated with any other union, but affiliation remains a possibility, with several supportive union locals at the university and nearby. Our goal is to unite university workers to democratize the university by the best means available.

The movement for graduate student organizing began in 1969 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, when teaching assistants affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. There are now some 23 legally recognized graduate employee unions across the country, including at some of the largest public universities such as the University of California. There have been long-running organizing campaigns at other places like Yale and New York University. In some places, such as Yale, graduate students have successfully won additional rights and benefits without ever becoming officially recognized. The Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions (www.cgeu.org) formed in 1992, connects these different groups, including ours.

Visit www.uchicagogsu.org for information about the union.

Song

The Work of a Graduate Student: A Study in Social Contradictions and Their Potential Sublation Or, Join GSU

By Joe Grim Feinberg

G Am G Am G Am G Am
Once more now students, workers, here the truth it will be told.
G Am G Am G Am G Am
It won't be long, now gather 'round, come young and come old.
G Am G Am G Em Dm C Am
Come all of you who seek and make the beautiful and true.
G Am G Am G Em Dm C Am
I am a graduate student...and I wish the best to you.

Oh, graduate studying is the hardest work I've ever done.
It sucks away your spirit, and it kills all of your fun.
In exchange for future dreams you give up years and hours.
And while others walk through poppy fields...we live with paper flowers.

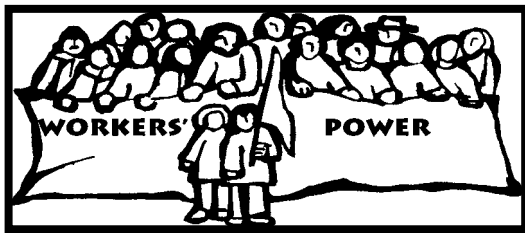
Whiles muscles wither in our arms we press our keys to dust.
We write about libido and forget about our lust.
We theorize utopias and live a life of slaves.
All for an ounce of prestige...and some letters on our graves.

We spend our youth in musty halls and laboratories cold.
We spend our nights in beds of books with lovers ages old.
Each day we say tomorrow then at last we will be free
Until we're tenured and retired then...(then) we'll finally live our dreams.

We dream of picking up our pens as swords to save the world.
Instead we work for warlords under flags of greed unfurled.
We teach of revolutions we forgot how to believe.
We've got to raise our pens to change...the University.

I am a graduate student and I wish the best to you.
Let's get together and transform this system through and through.
For if we act in union there is nothing we can't do.
Come one, come all, right now, come join...come join in GSU.
Come all of you good students now, come join in GSU.
Come all of you good workers now...come join in GSU.

3 years of organizing under Right-to-Work



By x359212

I live and work in a "right-to-work" state in the United States where all workers have the right to quit at any time, yet they can also be terminated at any time. Where's the benefit in that type of work environment?

For the last three years, that work environment has had a huge influence on my unionizing efforts.

At my place of employment I am the only IWW member. At times, it can be very discouraging, but I have learned that persistence is a must if anything is to be accomplished.

Successes

1. I have been able to get my fellow teachers together at a restaurant or someone's house a number of times where we have developed and agreed to a list of concerns that have been presented to our boss and her boss.

2. We have had three meetings with management with all teachers present.

3. We have all resorted to using work-to-rule tactics, i.e., we do only the absolute minimum by following the rules exactly.

4. If management tells us to do something more, "speed up", we ignore it. We make management get off their asses and come to us with their concerns and then we ignore them again. Management frequently doesn't ask again because it makes them work harder.

5. We keep labor journals and compare notes daily. For example, management will play favorites with employees.

They'll say one thing to one teacher and say something completely different to another teacher. When we compare notes, we find the most advantageous "saying" and then hold them to it. They hate that because not

only does it limit their ability to talk to workers, it also limits their ability to pit one worker against another. They lose power and control.

Learning from failure

Unfortunately, everything hasn't been bread and roses. Here are some examples of failures.

1. I have succeeded in signing one co-worker to our union. She then she moved on and discontinued her membership.

2. I have been unable to sustain my fellow workers' interest in being more militant. Once something improves they stop.

3. I have not been able to keep co-workers together. They leave as soon as they can for a "better" job. Consequently, there is a high turnover rate that hinders worker solidarity and makes it harder to keep the gains we have made together.

4. Beware the Canary Letter.

Once a year the company has all employees fill out a survey. The teachers made sure they were negative and unsigned. Our boss wanted us to turn them in to her. Instead I mixed them up with non-teaching staff then slid them under the Human Resources door unseen. Within 30 minutes our boss was running around asking all the teachers why everyone was so upset, etc.

How did the bosses know? It's called the canary letter. Each department will

have a different survey. It could be a different question, misspelled word, different numbered pages so that the boss can

that were either not agreed upon or were designed to sidetrack our demands and place the meeting into chaos. That was the first inkling that we had a faker.

The last episode was when he got in trouble for something that happened in his class.

From what we can gather, he unloaded

his guts about what the teachers really thought about everything.

In consequence, the teaching staff attended two "mandatory meetings" where the management asked everyone "what was really going on?" while the labor faker sat there with us.

None of us admitted to anything and the faker remains employed. Needless to say but we treat him as someone not worth our trust or loyalty.

We have all resorted to using work-to-rule tactics. If management tells us to "speed up", we ignore it.

know at least what department it came from, even if it is not signed.

5. The most hurtful episode was when we had a labor faker in our midst. He came out all gung ho for everything union. He expressed the same sentiments as everyone else. He had some good ideas.

All that changed when we were having a meeting with the two bosses. He acted like Rambo by expressing opinions

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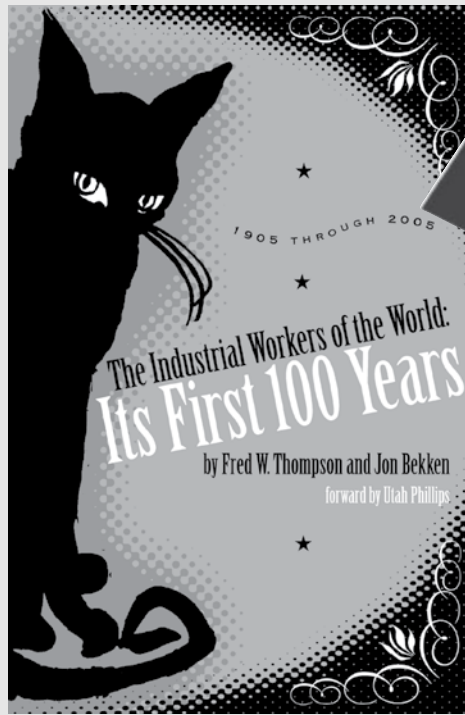
Maquiladora Workers, Farmers, and Indigenous Communities Speak Out on the Impact of Free Trade in Mexico
 Martha A. Ojeda and Rosemary Hennessy, Editors

Nafta From Below: Maquiladora Workers, Campesinos, and Indigenous Communities Speak Out on the Impact of Free Trade in Mexico

EDITED BY MARTHA OJEDA AND ROSEMARY HENNESSY

In testimonies from scores of maquiladora workers, campesinos, and indigenous communities from across Mexico, *Nafta from Below* details the impact of free trade on those it has most severely affected. First-hand accounts of workers organizing for their rights, of farmers and indigenous peoples fighting to preserve their land, and of efforts north and south to build alternatives document the courage of ordinary people who dare to join together and stand up for decent work conditions, just salaries, a clean environment, and lives with dignity. Published by the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, this book contains chapters on struggles in textile, electronics and auto parts manufacturing among many more. Especially inspiring is discussion on movements bulding alternatives to NAFTA's race to the bottom.

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

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

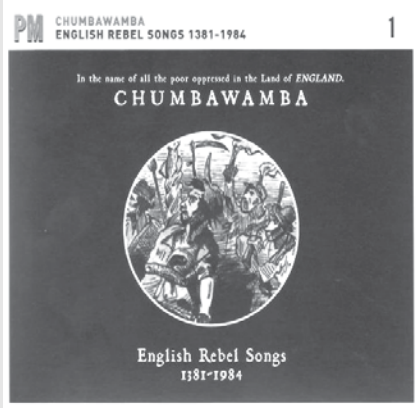
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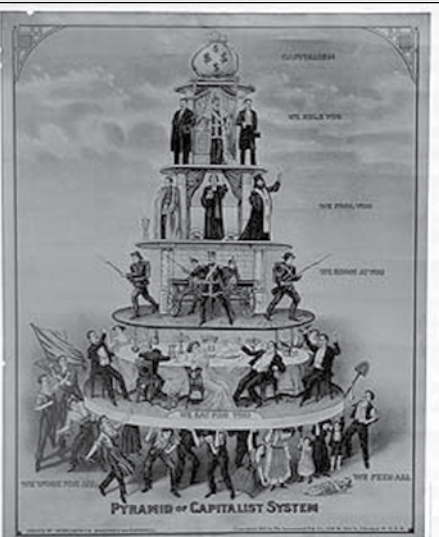


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Militant, independent, all-Cambodian union

Union perseveres despite murders, threats

By Erik Davis

Chea Vichea was the president and founder of Cambodia's largest and most radical union, the Free Trade Union of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC). In January 2004, he was sitting at a newspaper stand reading the morning paper, when a man walked into the shop and shot him repeatedly in the face and chest.

A few days later, the largest mass street protest in Cambodia's post-war history took place. Tens of thousands of workers and citizens dressed for mourning and proclaimed their love for this "hero of the workers." Over the next four years, three more union officials would be assassinated, and many more attacked.

Union keeps pressure on

Despite the violence, the Cambodian union movement continues to win victories. Most recently, the FTUWKC strategically organized to hold a national garment workers' strike during the 2008 election year in Cambodia. This forced the government to pressure garment manufacturing employers to agree to some of the union's demands. They won a US\$5 increase, boosting monthly pay to US\$55 per month. However, other demands, such as removing the five-year cap on seniority benefits, remained out of reach in this round.

"If workers didn't strike, they would not [have] reached this offer at all," said Chea Mony, the current union president, and brother to the slain Chea Vichea.

Enforcing the national agreement is the next challenge for the union, he said. "Many factories seem to [be] misunderstanding/rejecting to pay the workers properly," said Chea Mony in an email.

In January 2008, I was fortunate enough to visit Cambodia as a temporary delegate for the International Solidarity Committee. I met with the current president Chea Mony and two other officers of the union, Mann Senghak and Sorl Kimsorn.

Cambodia in crisis

Ten years after the final collapse of the Khmer Rouge and a 30-year-long civil war, Cambodia remains a country in crisis. The country is classified as one of 12 Least Developed Countries in the world. Transparency International recently ranked the country as the second-most corrupt in the world. Thirty-four per cent of the population survives on less than US\$1 per day. Out of 1,000 live births, 143 will die before they reach the age of five, according to UNICEF. Of those that survive past this age, 45 per cent suffer from malnutrition so severe that they are permanently stunted.

If you read the bosses' press, however, you get a very different impression of Cambodia. Last December, Cambodia became the world's sixth largest garment exporter. This is impressive for a country the size of Missouri, with less than 14 million people, more than 80 per cent of whom live away from the cities and factories.

Cambodia's garment factories use the country as an export-processing zone: the factories are owned and managed almost exclusively by non-nationals, with most of the profits leaving the country.

Along with economic 'development,' pressure on workers has started coming from land-related conflict. Land grabs have become the number one human rights issue. Violent conflicts between squatters and police are now commonplace. The squatters are called 'anarchists' (*neak anadhipati*) by the press and the government, but they insist that they have the legal right to live in their own homes.



Chea Mony, current president of the Free Trade Union of the Kingdom of Cambodia with fellow workers protesting his brother's assassination. Photo: FTUWKC

Mann Senghak: tactics to win

There are approximately 30 unions in Cambodia. Of these, only three are independent: the FTUWKC, the Cambodian Independent Teachers' Union (CITU), and the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union (CCAWDU). The others are all unions run by either the companies themselves or various proxies of 'big men' in government ministries.

The FTUWKC has over 70,000 members, 90 per cent of whom work in the garment industry. The other ten per cent work in a variety of other industries. Eighty per cent of all members are women.

Mann Senghak is the General Secretary of the FTUWKC, a post he has occupied for three years. Prior to that, he spent three years as a Deputy Secretary, one year as a union official, and before that he worked in factories as an ironing department supervisor. He joined the union because "I saw that the bosses had too much power over the workers; over their time, their hours, their days, and of course, their wages."

Senghak told me about some of the successful tactics employed by the union.

He helped organize a three-day strike in 2000, which resulted in a minimum salary raise from \$40 to \$45 per month. Senghak stressed to me that this strike was not solely a union strike, but was a solidarity strike of many different workers—including non-union workers—acting collectively against the Garment Association Manufacturers of Cambodia (GMAC), a consortium of roughly 50 manufacturers.

The garment manufacturers' have responded to union demands by saying that the garment sector faces an uncertain future in the coming global economic recession. The message is clear and one of fear: unions should stop making demands or the industry will close down. In effect, workers should suffer in silence.

Sorl Kimsorn: jailed, blacklisted

Sorl Kimsorn is a union official (*montrei*), a post he had held for one year. Prior to that he, too, was a production supervisor in a garment factory.

He joined the 2004 strike, and helped lead the strike in 2006 which raised the minimum wage from US\$45 to \$50 per month. He was arrested

but not charged for leading an 'illegal' strike. He was released after more than a month in prison, and is now illegally blacklisted from working in factories for five years.

Chea Mony: skeptical about "help"

Chea Mony, current president of the FTUWKC, now sits in the same union office where his murdered brother lay in state for mourners to see.

My discussion with fellow worker Mony focused on the possibility of our two unions working together. I was disappointed to hear that the general attitude from the officials was that non-Cambodian unions tend to see Cambodian unions as a sort of 'solidarity charity case.'

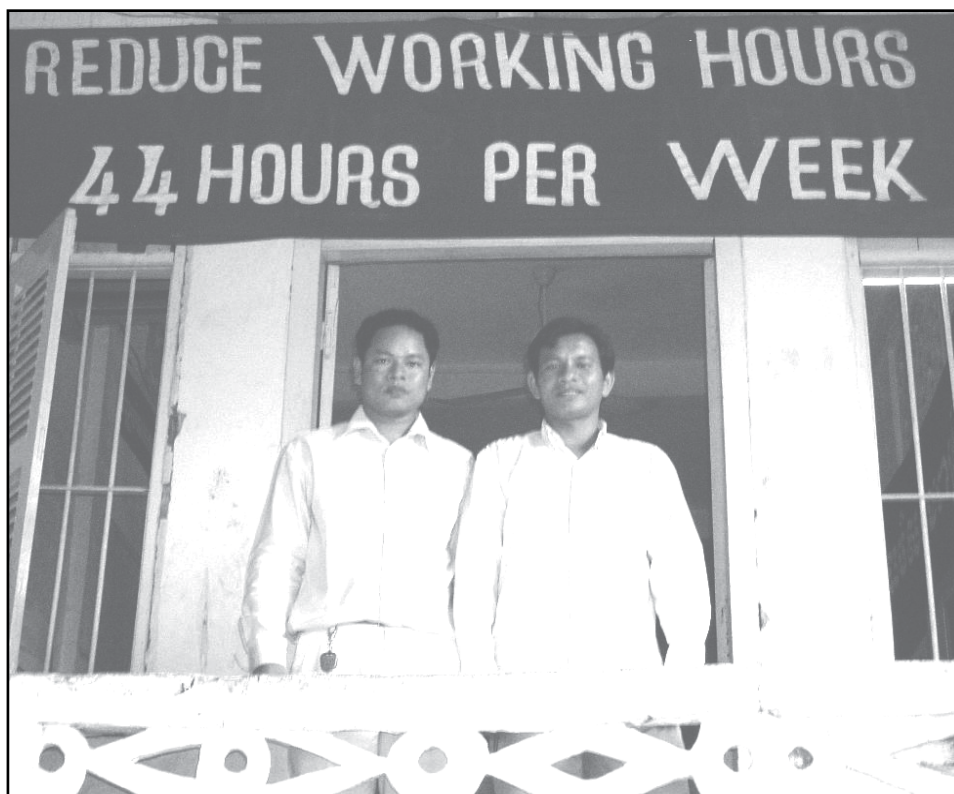
Groups like the AFL-CIO, Acorn, and others occasionally approach the FTUWKC (as I was doing) asking what it is we can be doing to "help" them. The results are what you might expect: one-time donations of cash to subsidize the printing of a pamphlet or educational materials, but little in the way of support for effective, direct action.

This perception of foreign unions was so pervasive that while Kimsorn and Senghak were friendly to the idea that foreign unions could perhaps 'help,' there was little point in working too hard to build such relations, since foreigners would likely never take the Cambodian movement seriously, let alone find themselves willing to learn from it.

Chea Mony stressed that the FTUWKC's history of working with other groups was not a positive one. Although originally founded by members of the Sam Rainsy Party, the union split from them in 2006, disenchanted with promises of political solutions or the possibility that non-governmental organizations would work with them.

The fellow workers in the FTUWKC and the other two democratic fighting unions in Cambodia are doing work that is not only important for them, but in light of their country's position as a major garment exporter, a possible pressure point for some of the international networks that compose modern capitalism.

We have a lot to learn from the FTUWKC. I hope we also find ways to effectively make our separate struggles one.



The Free Trade Union of the Kingdom of Cambodia have launched a campaign demanding a 44-hour week. Photo: Erik Davis

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

Solidarity with Dave Kerin and Union Solidarity

The ISC issued a statement in support of embattled Australian union organizer Dave Kerin, coordinator of the rank-and-file labor coalition, Union Solidarity. The Australian Workplace Ombudsman has issued Kerin with a "notice to produce documents" in relation to a recent strike at Boeing. If he refuses to give the government information that they intend to use against Union Solidarity and other rank and file union members by May 8, he faces as much as six months in prison. The ISC pledged its solidarity with Dave Kerin and Union Solidarity, while demanding that the Australian government call off this legal harassment.

Solidarity with Iranian tire workers

The ISC wrote a letter to the government of Iran expressing outrage at the arrest and beating of hundreds of Alborz Tire Manufacturing Company near Tehran on April 12, 2008. The workers had been protesting five months non-payment of wages. As a condition of release, workers were forced to sign letters guaranteeing that they would not protest again. The ISC condemned this gross violation of basic human rights, declared its support for the workers, and demanded that the government of Iran immediately release all remaining detained workers and withdraw the conditions on released workers. The ISC also insisted that the Alborz Tire Manufacturing Company and its corporate partners must be held accountable for violating workers rights.

ISC delegation to visit Japan

The ISC is sending a delegation of workers to Japan in late May and early June at the invitation of the Tokyo-based All Freeters Union and the G8 Action Coalition. During their trip, delegates will meet with independent unions and workers centers in Japan. As part of an international labor contingent, ISC delegates will also attend demonstrations and conferences against the Group of Eight (G8) summit being held in June. They may have the opportunity to speak to an international audience about the IWW.

The All Freeters Union is of special interest to the ISC. A new organization of class-conscious temp workers, the Freeters have published articles in the *Industrial Worker* and sent us an official letter of solidarity in early April. The ISC responded with an official statement of our own, declaring our desire to build a strong solidarity relationship with the

All Freeters Union. This delegation will help us to reach that goal. One of the delegates, Sabu Kohso, is a member of both the IWW and the coalition that the All Freeters Union is part of. Delegates have requested financial aid to help them make this trip. To help, please email solidarity@iww.org.

IWW Haiti delegation returns

Four ISC delegates returned to their homes on May 5 after a two-week trip to Haiti, where they met with labor unions, peasants' organizations and other segments of the Haitian population. The trip was a huge success and is being vigorously followed up. The delegation was documented extensively in writing, photos and video. A day by day report with photos is available online at iwwin-haiti.blogspot.com.

An article about the trip appears in this issue of the *Industrial Worker* on pages 8-9, with another article to be published in Z Magazine. A video documentary about the trip is being produced by IWW filmmaker Diane Krauthamer. To advance order a copy, email solidarity@iww.org.

May Day

The ISC issued a statement on May 1 honoring May Day, its origins and history, and the present struggles being waged by workers around the world.

The statement focused on the current crisis in Haiti and the ISC delegation that was sent to bear witness to the situation. The message was sent to all of the ISC's international allies as part of our first monthly electronic bulletin. In turn, the ISC received May Day statements from unions in Haiti, Japan, Iran, Palestine, and El Salvador.

International Workers Day is alive and well around the world and the ISC is honored to participate in it.

Workers Memorial Day statement

The ISC issued a statement on April 28, Workers Memorial Day, remembering the millions of workers who are injured or killed in industrial accidents every year, often as a result of unsafe conditions that could have been prevented by employers.

The statement, which was published in the previous issue of the *Industrial Worker*, paid special tribute to Ryan Boudreau, a bike messenger and IWW Chicago Couriers Union member who was killed in a collision on August 13, 2007. The ISC called for concerted industrial action around the world to secure the basic right of all workers to a safe workplace.

Australian labor activist resists forced disclosure

Union Solidarity coordinator Dave Kerin is now facing up to six months in jail for supporting striking workers at Boeing in Australia.

The Australian Workplace Ombudsman has issued Kerin with a legal notice to provide the government with information and documents related to the recent strike at Boeing.

The dispute started on April 7 when Boeing sacked a worker and suspended another without going through the agreed dispute settlement procedure. Boeing then threatened workers with legal action and possible fines.

Union Solidarity organized pickets and other activities to support the Boeing workers. Secondary picketing, among other activities needed for an effective strike, are illegal for the union on strike to do. So Union Solidarity steps in as a community group whose free assembly rights are not restricted by labor law.

Kerin is "being asked to 'rat', he won't," said a Union Solidarity email. "In the last election the Australian people voted overwhelming to get rid of anti-union laws. Union Solidarity operates within the spirit of that intention!"

Union Solidarity is asking people to

Mexican broadcasters ambushed in Oaxaca



Photo: The Voice That Breaks The Silence

Felicitas Martínez Sánchez, left, a volunteer, and Teresa Bautista Merino, right, at their radio station. Felicitas and Teresa helped found a community radio in Oaxaca, Mexico, but were killed in a highway ambush on April 7.

Two indigenous women broadcasters in the Oaxacan highland town of San Juan Copala, Mexico, were murdered on April 7, three months after helping bring a community radio to air.

Teresa Bautista Merino, 21, and Felicitas Martínez Sánchez, 24, were key organizers who helped equip, engineer and launch the community radio station, called The Voice That Breaks The Silence. They were killed while on assignment by automatic gunfire during a highway ambush, that injured other people.

"Indigenous, reporters, women. Vital intelligent young women with names, who could be our sisters, companions, our daughters or nieces, our granddaughters," said a message sent to the Oaxaca Sigue Sigue solidarity email group. The message called for people to protest their murders by calling, faxing and emailing Mexican embassies and consulates as well as politicians.

"Killing journalists is a heinous crime which harms the whole of society as it undermines the democratic right of citizens to hold informed debate and make informed political choices," said the director-general of UNESCO, the UN's cultural agency, in a statement condemning the murders.

Oaxaca was the scene last year of confrontations between teachers and community activists and the police of Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled Mexico for seven decades without significant challenge.

Mexican president Felipe Calderón, affiliated with a rival party that is seeking to take Oaxaca in the 2010 state election, has deployed the Mexican army to set up a base near San Juan Copala. Activists allege that the military do little to make the state safer and that their role is to indoctrinate and train paramilitaries in rural areas.

Australian unions demand repeal of labor police agency

Construction workers in Queensland, Australia, demanded the abolition of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner (ABCC) in May for undermining union rights.

The ABCC is a government agency brought in by the previous Liberal government in October 2005 to police building and construction trade workplaces.

The new Labor Party government had promised during its 2007 election campaign to abolish the ABCC by 2010. "Unions are calling for it to be scrapped

immediately," said a May 15 statement on the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) web site.

"It's totally unacceptable to us that any organisation has the ability to summon people to compulsory 'interrogations' with the threat of fines or jail and to make it illegal to discuss what was said there," said Glenn Thompson, assistant national secretary of the AMWU.

Most recently, the ABCC has asked union members to talk about what happened in union meetings. Testimony is compulsory and refusal means six months in jail. Workers who have stopped work to prevent the firing of a union delegate, who have taken sick days, and who have stopped work due to fears about health and safety, have all faced ABCC investigators.

An International Labor Organization (ILO) complaints committee condemned the law for giving the ABCC "expansive powers... without clearly defined limits or judicial control, [that] could give rise to serious interference in the internal affairs of trade unions." The ILO also noted that the "heavy and widely applicable penalties and sanctions...

sign a petition on their web site www.unionsolidarity.org to show their support for Kerin.

"Through the Community Assembly, attacks on workers' rights are dealt with in a whole-of-class way, based upon the old principle that 'an injury to one is an injury to all,'" said its web site.

"From now on it is irrelevant which industry we work in, or for which employer we work. It simply does not matter whether we are acting against an employer directly involved in a dispute, or against secondary employers who service the attacking boss."

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