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Starbucks Barista Unjustly Fired, Demands Justice

By John O'Reilly

Starbucks management began yet another losing battle when they fired Azmera Mehrbatu. What they did not know was that Mehrbatu—known to her customers and fellow workers as "Aizze,"— would not simply accept losing her job for an unjust reason. Mehrbatu and the IWW StarbucksWorkers Union (SWU) are standing up to management's unjust decision and fighting to get her job back.

Mehrbatu was accused of theft from her store in St. Paul, Minn., but management have yet to provide a shred of evidence that the barista—well-known by her coworkers for her accuracy when counting down her till—stole a penny. Instead, Starbucks district manager Clair Gallagher took Mehrbatu into the back room after a shift in early July and kept her confined there for an hour and a half until she signed a statement of guilt and a promissory note that forced her to pay $1,200 to the company. As an immigrant from Ethiopia, Mehrbatu's English skills are limited, and when she made it clear that she did not understand what management was accusing her of, Gallagher and a representative from Human Resources on the phone simply repeated themselves over and over. Most shockingly, the management implied that if Mehrbatu did not sign the note, the police would be called. Fearing for her three children, Mehrbatu signed the note that she did not understand, admitting to an offense she maintains she did not commit.

When IWW barista Anja Witek heard about the situation, she tried to get in touch with Mehrbatu and found that her coworker felt ashamed and bewildered by the way she had been treated. Witek contacted other baristas in her store and in stores around the Twin Cities, who agreed with her that they would not let their friend and coworker be targeted.

"We couldn't just let this go," Witek said. "Clearly something very wrong had happened here and we weren't going to sit back and watch our friend be submitted to this kind of racist discrimination."

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Azmera Mehrbatu speaks to supporters at a rally on August 15. Photo: Erik Davis

Philly Cab Drivers Demonstrate Against Parking Authority Ticketing

By J. Pierce

Market Street was lined for blocks with taxi cabs parked in the turning lane, giving the July 22 rally an air of ominous excitement. Three of us from the Philadelphia IWW showed up at the midday demonstration. Organizers with the Unified Taxi Workers Alliance (UTWA), donning their white, collared union shirts, agitated the large crowd of cab drivers, many of them needing little instigation to be pissed off. Large neon posters denounced the Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA) and its twisted addiction to ticketing vulnerable cab drivers. With Mayor Michael Nutter in a bitter fight against the City's librarians, sanitation workers, and myriad paper pushers, 5,000 Philadelphia cab drivers must look like sitting ducks to City Hall revenue hunters.

The rally in front of the 31st Street PPA headquarters filled the sidewalk with cab drivers of every nationality. There were visible numbers of West Africans, South Asians, North Africans and Middle Easterners, along with a sprinkling of white and black native-born drivers. It was a thrilling sight to see taxi workers of every background standing together against the PPA and its corporate cohorts.

We witnessed a short string of speeches and then everybody mobilized like fighter pilots for a caravan downtown. A cab driver, Abdul, scooped us up in his cab and we were off to the PPA adjudication building at Ninth and Filbert Streets.

Abdul is from Morocco and has four kids. He has been driving a taxi for seven years and recently received a $300 traffic ticket for picking up a customer while parked in a handicapped spot. He could have moved, documented the situation, or argued with the PPA ticket writer, but he was not given the chance to do any of these things—his license plate number was simply written down on the fly and the ticket was mailed to him weeks later. Tickets like these are difficult to dispute because the PPA accuses you of an incident that you can't remember and that maybe never even took place. Drive-by ticketing has become the practice of Philadelphia's hated PPA, an agency so reviled that spite for it has gone national by way of the popular TV show "Parking Wars."

The fight with the PPA has been a long and bitter one for the recently-merged Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania and the Unified Brotherhood of Taxi Cab Drivers and Owner-Operators. In the last several years, the now-combined UTWA has organized two 24-hour strikes and 20 to 25 demonstrations, while combating every counterattack from the government.

As we zoomed through Center City surrounded by a sea of honking cabs, Abdul told us how every time the UTWA advances with a mass action, the City and State retaliate with more harassment, rules and fines. The three of us Wobblies were thrilled with our rank-and-file view of the demonstration and flew our IWW flags out of the cab windows. As union drivers filled the streets around City Hall, honking and blocking traffic, we could see the City's apparatus swing into action. They dispatched special cops in suits to block off roads in

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Sydney Bus Drivers Take Wildcat Action

From libcom.org

A six-hour strike by 130 bus drivers in western Sydney, Australia, on August 24—carried out in defiance of their union—has led to furious denunciations from the media and an industrial court judge. The drivers walked out at the Busways Blacktown depot at 3:30 a.m. against the imposition of new timetables that would impose shorter times for routes.

Drivers said that the new timetables, scheduled to commence in October, would be impossible to meet. The timetables would force buses to run late, which would not only inconvenience and anger passengers but cut short the drivers' break periods. The drivers said that with the new timetables, they would be under enormous pressure to drive over the speed limit.

Months of trade union talks with the company have failed to halt the onerous new conditions. Angered by the lack of support from the Transport Workers Union of Australia (TWU), the drivers conducted their own stoppage, giving no warning to the union or management. The TWU opposed the strike and intervened to end it as quickly as possible.

Drivers said the timetables would add to Sydney's public transport shambles, which has seen the state Labor government in New South Wales cut the frequency of rail services and scrap plans to extend the rail network to new outlying suburbs. In many outer western and southern suburbs, the so-called public transport system depends almost entirely on heavily government-subsidized private bus companies.

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Letters welcome!

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

Mailing address:
IW, PO Box 7430, JAF Station, New York, NY 10116, United States

In November We Remember

Announcements for the annual "In November We Remember" *Industrial Worker* deadline is October 2. Celebrate the lives of those who have struggled for the working class with your message of solidarity. Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to IWW GHQ, PO Box 23085, Cincinnati, OH 45223 USA.

$12 for 1" tall, 1 column wide
$40 for 4" by 2 columns
$90 for a quarter page

Offended By "The Reader" Review

Dear *Industrial Worker*,

I just read Mike Ballard's film review of "The Reader," entitled "A Love Story In Post-World War II Germany" on page 8 of the the August/September 2009 *Industrial Worker*.

I'm shocked by what an uninteresting review this is of a great movie. Boiling down this movie to a statement about complacency and about how good people are able to ignore horrible crimes as they are occurring is ridiculous. The film is so many steps beyond that simplification. This movie is about a conflict between generations, and about how illiteracy and ignorance are exploited, amonst other things. I just think that this review is terrible. It was made even worse by the choice of the naked women in the bathtub photo. Otherwise, the August/September issue looks good. I like this movie a lot and I think the review of it is ridiculous.

Sincerely,
Kenneth Miller

Dear *Industrial Worker*,

I am writing regarding Mike Ballard's review of the movie "The Reader." I can certainly agree that there has been more than one holocaust and indeed there are occurring today holocausts, however as a Jew who has relatives who died in the Shoah I have to say that I find this review sickening, incoherent and offensive in its insinuations and omissions. Today's prison guards and accomplices to mass murder should be condemned by all, but former Nazi death camp guards are sexy and attractive. Great. Perhaps the question of anti-Semitism, along with racism and sexism needs to be addressed in the IWW and in the Left in general? Or are we forever going to endlessly repeat the socialism of fools, whose adherents in France, French Algeria, Austria, Germany and Eastern Europe were the intellectual forebears of National Socialism?

Sincerely,
X344127

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Photo: facebook.com/twincities.iww

IWW graphics make for great pumpkin carving designs, and pumpkins are an inexpensive medium to spread the word! What better way to demonstrate your affection for the OBU?

Don't forget to to send in photos of your IWW pumpkins, costumes and other ideas to the *Industrial Worker* for publication. This IWW Pumpkin photo is from the Facebook page of the Twin Cities GMB.

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Cambodian Government Challenges Independent Garment Union

By Erik W. Davis

More than five years after his elder brother was murdered for his own union efforts, current president of the Free Trade Union Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC) faces a new threat. The Cambodian government intends to charge Chey Mony with libel, which carries with it the possibility of prison time. Coming during a challenging period for Cambodian unions, this prosecution could be devastating to the Cambodian workers movement (see "Independent Unionism In Cambodia: Severe Challenges As Garment Industry Takes Hit" on page 1 of the February/March 2009 *Industrial Worker*).

The Royal Government of Cambodia announced that it would use the notoriously corrupt Cambodian judiciary to seek sanctions against FTUWKC president Chea Mony for accusing the government of organizing his elder brother's murder in 2004.

After a decade of organizing workers in the nascent garment industry of newly post-socialist Cambodia, Mony's brother, Chea Vichea, had become the most famous and effective organizer in Cambodia. He was known for exalting workers: "Dare to express yourselves. Have no fear. Strength lies in unity." More than high-minded rhetoric, Vichea presided over the creation of the first mass rank-and-file union movement in Cambodia's history, organizing nearly 80,000 of Cambodia's then-roughly one million garment workers into the union, with all gains won through direct action and militant struggle. He never retreated to an administrative role, but remained at the front lines of the struggle. He had just been fired from a factory job for organizing workers into a union when two men entered the newsstand outside a Buddhist temple where Vichea read the newspapers every morning and put one bullet in his head and another in his chest. Vichea died at the age of 36, leaving behind a pregnant wife and young child, who now live as political refugees in Finland.

Chea Mony leading a large parade of mourners in 2004. Photo: FTUWKC

Only days later, the capital city of Phnom Penh was brought to a standstill while a peaceful, unpermitted march of mourners occupied the streets carrying signs identifying Vichea as the "Hero of the Workers (Virachun)." Vichea's younger brother, Chea Mony, took up the mantle of leadership and has continued to build and defend the union, despite the constant threats and economic difficulties of the moment. Mony is slightly shorter than his brother, and speaks with a soft, high-pitched voice. Like his brother, Mony appears fearless. He receives death threats every week, and has not abandoned his leadership of the union.

The murder of Chea Vichea. Photo: FTUWKC

Chea Mony has not feared to point fingers. Like nearly all other residents of Phnom Penh, he believes that members of the government—specifically from within the Ministry of the Interior and the Police forces—arranged his brother's murder and hired the killers.

Responding to international outcry after Vichea's murder, the government arrested two clearly innocent men—Sok Sam Oeun and Born Samnang. According to the men's alibis, which were confirmed by entire villages, they were outside of the city at the time of the murder. After a speedy show-trial they were convicted of the murder. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other organizations condemned the convictions as sham efforts by the government to protect the real murderers.

While the government has done nothing to catch the real murderers of Vichea, the falsely accused killers Oeun and Samnang have been largely acquitted and were apparently released by the courts on August 17. Applauding the decision at the time, Mony repeated his accusation against the government to the press.

"I maintain my stance from the beginning and acknowledge that [Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun] were fake killers, and I urge the court to find the real killers...I am ready to take responsibility and dare to be imprisoned for my conclusion about my brother's case, which is that the government prepared a plan to kill my brother," Mony told the Phnom Penh Post.

Khieu Sopheak, spokesman for the Ministry of the Interior, has since made clear that the government will use all available measures to prosecute Mony for libel and slander. These charges, rendered by the corrupt Cambodian judiciary, are used frequently to silence critics of the regime. Opposition politician Mu Sochua was found guilty of similar criticisms only the previous week and may be sentenced to prison time.

IWW Constitution Preamble

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.

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Education First!

By Jim Crutchfield

I've been thinking a lot about the three stars of the IWW constellation: Education, Organization and Emancipation. They don't represent a time line or a hierarchy, really, but I think there's a reason why Education comes first, and I think we need to re-examine our current priorities in light of it.

Capitalism de-educates workers. It actively works to make us dumber and more ignorant. It encourages us to waste our brains on entertainment and pre-digested "news" and other propaganda, so that our natural mental abilities atrophy or never develop. As the Sex Pistols put it, "God save the Queen/ And the fascist regime/ That made you a moron/ A potential H-bomb."

The average worker today believes what the state tells her to believe, seeks protection under dependency, and spends more mental effort on sports statistics and celebrity divorces than on understanding her place in society. She looks on education as a burden or a threat, and on educated people as aliens, often hostile aliens who are going to make her speed up at work or give her job to a machine. She is no more fit to run an industry than the average bank president is to carry a load of bricks up a ladder. In her present state, the average worker can't be the self-disciplined, self-directed rebel worker of our dreams. She's fit only to be a member of a mob, or the passive, obedient stooge of a business union or vanguard party.

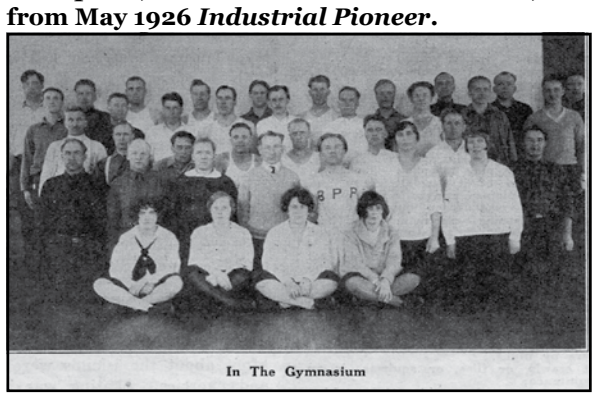
I'm not talking about anything to do with the modern worker's inherent qualities and capabilities: I'm talking about what workers in modern society are taught and trained from birth to be and to do. Anybody can be made a moron. Just look at rich kids—whose parents may be brilliant and accomplished—but they waste their school years drinking and doping and competing for social status, and never put a minute's effort into improving themselves mentally. They'll be taken care of, of course, and may even become President of the United States some day, but they're still morons. Workers' kids—who are inundated from day one with pleasing distractions from mental development, and are taught to hate and fear education—are even more likely to turn out ignorant and stupid, because they aren't even exposed to educational opportunities beyond the basic schooling that's needed to thresh out the potential engineers and actuaries, so that they can be steered towards college.

The average worker today may be angry and dissatisfied with her lot, and may instinctively know that something is badly wrong with our system. She may even seek out learning on her own, and develop a certain level of intelligence and insight into the problems of our society. But the vast majority of workers under capitalism are taught and trained to be passive, to fear change, to obey orders and to only look out for themselves. At this point, few workers are really Wobbly material; which may explain why the great majority of Wobblies, at least in the U.S., seem to be children of the petty bourgeoisie—of school teachers, preachers and small-business owners.

The early 20th century IWW poured massive resources into education and propaganda. Every delegate carried a stock of pamphlets for sale, and the pamphlets weren't just about organizing. They were about economics, history and the operations of the industries in which Wobblies worked. The field in which they labored was much richer than what we're faced with today: there was tremendous pressure among working-class families to get educated, especially among immigrant families; there were far fewer distractions; reading was encouraged and widespread; workers formed study groups and self-improvement societies; and Socialist propaganda was available everywhere. Hundreds of thousands of workers actually read Marx, as well as other socialist, anarchist, and otherwise radical writers. Today, workers are far more likely to read only the sports pages, or entertainment magazines, if they read at all.

We latter-day Wobs glorify and fetishize organizing above all else, yet we have scarcely organized anybody or anything. For years our organizing efforts have mostly been complete failures, and those efforts that haven't failed have generally been either window-dressing or business union-style service operations with virtually nothing to distinguish them as IWW shops. I think that's because we have grossly neglected the educational aspect of our mission. We seem to think that simply encouraging workers to organize our way will somehow turn them into free, thinking men and women, who know how to make smart decisions, develop winning strategies, and stick together when things get scary. We are kidding ourselves.

Students focused on socialism and worker education at the Work People's College in Duluth, Minn. These photos appeared in Clifford B. Ellis' piece, "What Life Means to a Worker," from May 1926 *Industrial Pioneer*.



I submit that we will never build up a successful, revolutionary, and fully democratic industrial union movement unless and until we educate ourselves and our fellow workers to understand what the problems are that make revolution necessary, to exercise our mental muscles and to rid ourselves of the bigotry, stupidity and ignorance that capitalist society forces upon us. I don't mean that "we" need to teach "them" proper doctrines and enlightened attitudes—that's bullshit and mind-control. I mean that we need to teach and train ourselves and the rest of our class to use our brains—to think critically, to judge ideologies skeptically, to be inventive and audacious in our strategies, to assess and understand the past and the present, and to develop realistic and rational plans for building a better future. We who have already come to some level of intelligence and joined the IWW need to rid ourselves of the New-Left nihilism, egoism, utopianism, and naive idealism that characterize so much of the discourse within the IWW today, and learn to think as free individuals within communities, basing our ideas and actions not on philosophical constructs or mental categories, but on a rational observation and deep understanding of the flowing, changing world around us.

To that end, I propose that the IWW stop focusing single-mindedly on organizing here and now; not that we give up on organizing, but that for the next several years we devote the majority of our energies and resources to preparing the ground before we try to build the great edifice that is to be the One Big Union of All the Workers. If we fail to educate ourselves and the workers we want to organize, then the best we can hope for is to become a vanguard—an enlightened elite at the head of a mass of pure and simple, unthinking foot soldiers capable only of destroying the old society, instead of building a new and better one within the shell of the old. That has happened many times before, with disastrous results for humanity.

More realistically, if we fail to focus on education, we're just likely to remain what we are now—an irrelevant bunch of discontented misfits (I include myself in this description), full of thrilling words, but incapable of doing much besides fighting among ourselves and fooling trusting workers into staging little revolts that will only lose them their jobs and their union.

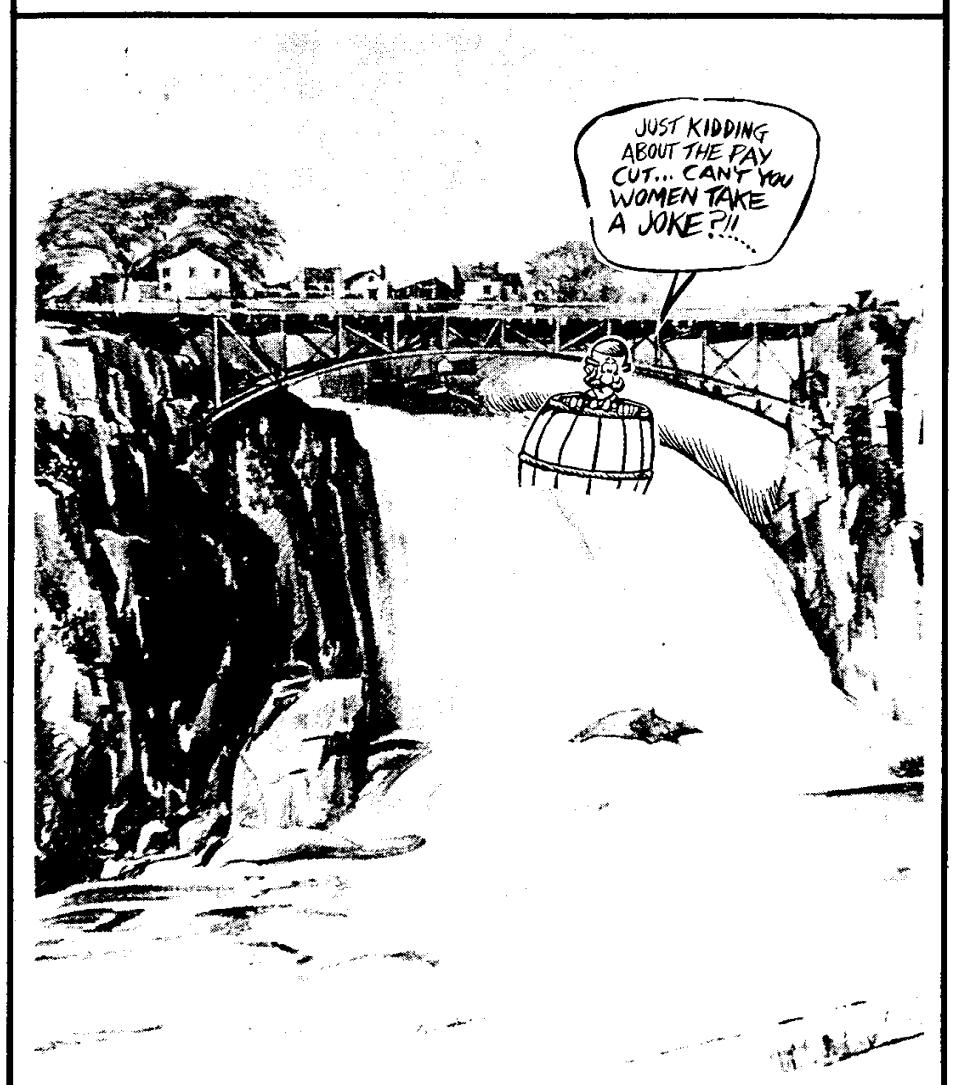
We can organize all the workers of the world into One Big Union. But we can't do it without first preparing the workers, including ourselves, for Organization and Emancipation. The key to that preparation is Education, and we have a tremendous amount of it to do before we can hope to reach the other two stars of our constellation. It's time we got to work at it.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 27 Victory in Paterson

With the great depression of the 1870s over, workers were in no mood for further pay cuts. In Paterson, New Jersey employer greed collided with worker anger to produce one of the biggest strikes ever known in the United States of that era.

When Robert and Henry Adams, owners of textile mills in Paterson, announced the third pay cut in less than a year, the 550 unorganized mill workers, mostly women and children, walked out. On June 20, 1878, they appealed "to their fellow workingmen and women throughout the United States to aid them in their struggle against starvation and poverty."



Several demonstrations and processions took place during the strike; a highpoint was a demonstration of some 10,000 on July 20, which featured a march through Paterson to the Passaic Falls. Wearing their prettiest dresses, the defiant mill women carried placards proclaiming "We ask to live comfortably and educate our children."

When the Adams brothers brought strikebreakers from New England, the strikers met them at the railroad station, convinced them not to scab, and paid their way back home with funds raised in the community. After nine months, the company gave in -- and offered a wage increase instead of a pay cut.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

Guards File For Union, Supporters Rally To "Welcome Change"

By James Generic

PHILADELPHIA — On September 6, approximately 100 members of Philadelphia Jobs With Justice, Students for a Democratic Society, faith leaders and other supporters rallied in support of the Philadelphia Security Officers Union (PSOU)—the independent grassroots union of the security guards who watch over the most precious art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art—which had filed a request for legal recognition of their election of the PSOU as their union by the security company Allied-Barton and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They were joined by the Rude Mechanical Orchestra, a radical punk marching band from New York City who had come down to provide music and to lead the protest. The theme of "Welcoming Change" targeted incoming Philadelphia Museum of Art president Timothy Rubb in the hopes of ushering in a positive new beginning, to show the support the guards have, and to point out that labor law needs to be totally changed (showing support for the Employee Free Choice Act, which would have given guards instant recognition). Several speakers—guards, clergy, organizers, and more—spoke after a long, lively procession around the museum. Several guards remarked afterwards on how good it was to see their supporters out in force, since the battle on the inside of the museum will be heating up while the company pushes back against the union through intimidation and fear mongering.

The rally capped a nearly five-year campaign called POWR (Philadelphia Officers and Workers Rising) in which security guards and Philadelphia Jobs with Justice, itself a coalition of labor unions, students, progressive clergy and faith leaders, along with other community members, have fought to reform the security industry in Philadelphia. AlliedBarton, which hires nearly 90 percent of the security guards in Philadelphia, pays poverty wages of approximately $10 an hour with medical benefits that are too expensive for the guards' meager wages. The security guards in AlliedBarton in Philadelphia are 95 percent African-American, the majority of whom are women. Historically, security guards have been excluded from many legal protections and must form guard-only unions for fear that unionized guards would join other unions in strikes. (Other low-wage workers excluded include domestic workers and farm workers.)

After targeting Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania, POWR won paid sick days and wage increases at those locations. This is the first attempt to establish a union at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The decision was made by the guards at the Museum to form an independent union after no big union with resources would take up the cause because of previous truces and agreements with AlliedBarton. This entirely independent union, formed with the support of organizers from Jobs with Justice, Eduardo Soriano and Fabricio Rodriguez, represents the very basics of a union: workers getting together to fight back against the injustices at their jobs and the culture of fear within AlliedBarton instead of just quitting.

The Rude Mechanical Orchestra performing on September 6. Photo: Paul Gottlieb

The campaign battle at the museum is the latest of escalating yet respectful tactics by supporters to put pressure on the Museum to force AlliedBarton to recognize the PSOU. There had been several rallies outside the museum in the previous year. Members of Jobs with Justice attended the "Art After 5" event and handed out DVDs of the documentary "Welcoming Change," detailing the Museum's struggle with the security guards. When AlliedBarton took away a promised 25-cent raise, members of Jobs with Justice took up panhandling outside the museum to get spare change to make up the difference in a symbolic protest.

The next steps in the campaign will be to support the guards as they fight to escape poverty through collective action throughout the 45 days until the election. Philadelphia Jobs with Justice and its allies will keep trying to rally support to prevent AlliedBarton and its silent accomplice, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, from crushing the independent worker-led union. Junita Love of the PSOU quoted Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Teed Off At Deutsche Bank: Tenants Disrupt Forecloser's High-End Dinner

Community protests Deutsche Bank. Photo: Diane Krauthamer

By Diane Krauthamer

BOSTON – Equipped with megaphones, banners, and golf clubs, nearly 100 community members "teed off" at Deutsche Bank's gala dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel on Boylston Street. In the early evening of September 2, Boston-area labor and housing activists—representing such groups as City Life/Vida Urbana, Jobs with Justice, Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, Community Labor United, Mass Alliance Against Predatory Lending and the SEIU—demonstrated at the dinner, which kicked off the bank's annual PGA golf championship. According to organizers, Deutsche Bank forecloses on more homes in Massachusetts than any other financial institution in the state.

"Deutsche Bank is the largest predatory lender in the state," said Grace Ross of the Mass Alliance Against Predatory Lending. "Meanwhile, Massachusetts is losing $59 billion every two years because of the foreclosure crisis. This crisis wasn't made by you and it wasn't made by me. It was made by these large banks who wanted to make a quick buck."

At the hotel, Ross joined local labor and community leaders to present a notice of eviction for Deutsche Bank to vacate the state of Massachusetts. Security guards blocked the demonstrators from entering, yet the noise and momentum of the demonstration remained strong.

"Deutsche Bank has refused to work with us since day one," commented Melonie Griffiths-Evans, of the Bank Tenants Association (BTA). The BTA has directly asked Deutsche to renegotiate mortgages and stop thousands of evictions each year, yet the bank continues to refuse. "Their only interest is to make money off our backs," she said.

"Financial institutions lie to people who suffer the most," added Jean Wassell, a retired social worker and volunteer with City Life/Vida Urbana. "When the (financial institutions) give out mortgages, they leave out people who can't afford it. Now the shelters are jammed, and this is creating a rise in homelessness." In providing legal services for recently-evicted tenants, she has noticed that City Life/Vida Urbana is "certainly assisting a lot of people who are losing their jobs."

Wassell said both housing and labor rights have suffered drastically thanks to the economic crisis, but now is a more important time than ever to stay motivated and keep up the fight for economic justice.

"Everyday more and more people are being laid off and more and more people are being evicted from their homes. We cannot back down to these financial institutions, and we certainly will not let them control our lives," Wassell said.

Gourmet Exploitation?

Workers Picket Upper East Side Specialty Market

By Stephanie Basile

NEW YORK — A group of workers and supporters picketed outside Agata and Valentina on August 15 as part of an ongoing labor dispute with the company. Workers are calling on the grocery store to respect their right to organize and to stop engaging in illegal anti-union activity.

Agata and Valentina, located on 79th Street and 1st Avenue, is one of many upscale gourmet grocery stores in the Upper East Side. Local 1500 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has been organizing the largely immigrant workforce in the gourmet supermarket industry. In recent years, Local 1500 won union contracts at two specialty grocery stores in New York—D'Agostino and Gristedes.

Approximately 15 people were on the picket line. Picketers held signs, handed out flyers, spoke to customers about the dispute and chanted pro-worker slogans. Members of Brandworkers International— a Queens-based workers' center that works in solidarity with Local 1500—joined the protest.

In the summer of 2008, Agata and Valentina workers began meeting with UFCW organizers and decided to assert their right to join a labor union. The supermarket responded by using tactics of misinformation and intimidation to scare the workers from joining the union. In March 2009, Roberto De La Cruz, a counterperson in the produce department, was terminated for his union activity. "I was called into the office and fired. They told me it was because I supported a union," said De La Cruz.

UFCW Local 1500 has been holding daily picket lines outside the supermarket for more than six months, and will continue to do so until the company settles with the workers.

This story originally appeared in Next Left Notes (NLN)*, August 19, 2009.*

Quad City Die Casting Workers Lose Jobs, Benefits

By UE Local 1174

MOLINE, Illinois – More than 100 employees of Quad City Die Casting permanently lost their jobs on September 4 after Wells Fargo did not continue to offer financing to the company, forcing its closure. But they did not go out quietly. Instead they ended their last day of work with a protest to demand that Wells Fargo cough up checks for the pay and benefits they are still owed.

United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) representative Tim Curtin said that workers were scheduled to come in that morning and work their regular shift, but found the doors locked when they arrived. Curtin said the third shift was asked to leave at 4:15 a.m. and the first shift was cancelled with no notice. "I think the company was nervous and they locked the plant today," Curtin told local television station WQED. "I don't know what they were anticipating, but I think people in Quad Cities know the UE workers mean business."

The laid-off workers are owed earned pay and benefits, but Wells Fargo is telling Quad City Die Casting that they must not pay the workers—instead, says Wells Fargo, all the proceeds of the liquidation must go to the bank. Wells Fargo was a recipient of $25 billion in federal bailout funds and is refusing to allow payment of legally owed pay and benefits to the Quad City employees.

In August, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced it will issue a complaint against Quad City Die Casting, stating that workers are legally owed vacation pay and payment of benefits as a result of the illegal cancellation of their health insurance in May. The NLRB is seeking voluntary settlement of the money owed.

"We are angry that Wells Fargo is refusing to pay us what we have earned and we won't stop fighting for justice. We have the whole community supporting us, and we won't give up until Wells Fargo pays us what we worked so hard to earn," said Keith Shribner, President of UE Local 1174.

Special Report: 2009 DelCon

September Delegate Convention Ushers in New Era of IWW

By Cristina D.

CHICAGO – Industrial Workers from Europe, Canada, and the United States gathered in Chicago on Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4-6, for the union's first Delegate Convention in decades. The event was hosted by the Chicago General Membership Branch and held at the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) hall on Ashland Avenue. Convention attendees were welcomed at the hall Friday evening before relocating to nearby Union Park—which features a statue of our old Fellow Worker James Connolly—for a barbecue and socializing. Saturday marked the start of the business weekend, during which committees presented reports, officer nominations were made, and proposals were discussed.

The Proceedings

General Secretary-Treasurer (GST) Chris Lytle called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. General Executive Board (GEB) member Bryan Roberts was elected as temporary chair, aided by Marshall Arnold from Chicago, who was elected as the meeting's temporary secretary. Some significant motions were considered on Saturday morning, including a resolution from the Credentials Committee to give full voting rights to all delegates who received credential cards. The motion was approved, and every delegate present was enfranchised. A Rules Committee comprised of Fellow Workers Arnold, Hargis, and Powers also laid the groundwork for the weekend. The committee moved to adopt Rusty's Rules of Order as well as a process in which the floor would alternate between speakers who are for and against motions. They also moved to limit each delegate's speaking time to one-and-a-half minutes. All attendees had the right to speak, but only credentialed delegates could vote. Chicago's Pat Brenner was later voted in as the meeting's permanent chair, assisted by John Hollingsworth from Ottawa as the meeting's permanent secretary. The Planning Committee presented an agenda, which the attendees then agreed to adopt.

Fellow workers listened Saturday afternoon as branch, shop, and Regional Organizing Committee (ROC) representatives reported on a multitude of organizing campaigns. IWW members from New York City discussed progress with the Starbucks campaign. Starbucks Workers Union members recently protested a rise in their healthcare premiums (see "Starbucks Workers Union Fights For Health Care," page 7). They also reported new members in stores that are not yet public. Finally, they updated the convention on the status of the Food and Allied Workers Union (IU 460). Workers from these shops are in the process of fighting for and winning back pay.

Joseph Sanchez, who was recently laid off from Havas Media Planning Group (MPG), is trying to recover a severance package in an ongoing battle against his former employer (See "NYC Wobblies Storm MPG's Headquarters," below).

Angie from the Chicago Couriers Union (CCU) reported on their organizing victories and the creation of a Building Issues Committee. The committee has improved conditions for messengers in several downtown Chicago buildings by preventing security guards from sexually harassing female messengers. This is an issue that had been threatening the workers for some time. The CCU has also published a "Rookie Rider's Guide" to the city. The guide grades messenger companies on how well they treat and pay messengers. Another success for CCU is the formation of the Ryan Bourdreau Memorial Fund. The fund—named after late CCU member Ryan Bourdreau, a messenger killed on the job two years ago—distributes money to messengers injured on the job.

Angie reports the Chicago Couriers Union's recent work. Photo: Cristina D.

Delegates cast their votes during the weekend's proceedings. Photo: Cristina D.

Milwaukee Industrial Union 310 Treasurer Virginio Miranda presented a report on the General Construction Workers' organizing developments. The branch now has more than 50 members and anticipates continued growth. IU 310 runs English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and is putting together a workshop on workplace health and safety standards, covered under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The class will be open to both workers and their families. Milwaukee workers are also planning on participating in the upcoming Milwaukee Labor Fest.

The GEB reported on the chartering of a new General Membership Branch in Burlington, Vt. and a new educational workers branch in Binghamton, N.Y.; the revival of the Central New Jersey branch; contact with existing branches; and the recently-completed U.S. Department of Labor audit of the union's finances.

The Organizing Department reported on the ongoing Starbucks campaign, the IU 460 campaign, and efforts to connect workers in IUs 530, 540, 560, 460, 330, and 640. This past year, organizer training sessions have been held in Houston, Washington, D.C., Albuquerque, N.M., Lancaster, Pa., and Raleigh, N.C. The department is working on translating organizing materials into Spanish, French, and German, and are encouraging future organizer trainings.

The Spanish-language publication *Solidaridad* continues to be produced and distributed. Additionally, the Literature Department, the Finance Committee, the Constitution and By-Laws Maintenance Committee, and the *Industrial Worker* submitted annual reports to the convention. The Dues Reform Committee continues its efforts to create dues parity between members in North America and those in Europe.

A preliminary report is to be submitted in February and a final one by July 1, 2010.

Nominations were submitted for next year's General Officers: General Secretary-Treasurer (GST) and the

Continued on next page

NYC Wobblies Storm MPG's Headquarters

By Diane Krauthamer

NEW YORK — When Joseph Sanchez walked into the Lower Manhattan headquarters of Havas-owned Media Planning Group (MPG) to demand the severance pay that the multimillion-dollar advertising company owed him, management gave him the cold shoulder and escorted him out of the office. On August 20, Sanchez—accompanied by members of the New York City Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)—marched into the offices of MPG, demanding economic justice and restitution for the unjust lay-offs of more than 50 former employees.

"MPG seemed caught off guard with us entering their office to speak to my former coworkers," Sanchez said. When Sanchez walked into the office, one of his coworkers came downstairs to speak with him. She told him that being called downstairs made her nervous, and said that every day she and her coworkers were worried about getting fired. After moving past the desk and upstairs to the cubicles, Sanchez and his team of Wobblies handed out leaflets to his former coworkers, who were both glad to have the support, yet reluctant to engage with the union out of fear of losing their jobs. The IWW's message was straightforward—the union is offering free legal and advocacy support to workers concerned about the possibility of future layoffs.

In a sign of its increasing frustration MPG responded to the know-your-rights event by filing a criminal complaint with the New York Police Department.

In April 2009, MPG cut 11 percent of its staff, or 50 workers, from its offices in New York, Boston and Chicago. The multi-million dollar advertising giant only gave these workers a four-week severance package. In order to receive their severance pay, MPG required that the laid-off workers sign an "Agreement of Separation & Release," which included the stipulation that the former employees would not "in any way denigrate any aspect of the company." The agreement made no mention of the company not denigrating any aspect of the employee.

Photo: Diane Krauthamer

"After the layoffs, I asked MPG to consider some changes to the severance agreement they offered me," Sanchez said. "MPG doesn't want me to be able to sue them, but they want to retain their right to sue me. They also do not want me to denigrate the company yet are not concerned about denigrating me," Sanchez said. "I refuse to accept these one-sided conditions. Now, MPG is refusing to pay me any severance."

Despite the seemingly fruitless battles, the IWW has caused quite a stir for MPG's top executives. Sanchez's coworker said that everyone in the office had heard about the IWW's campaign to pressure Kmart to stop advertising with MPG—through weekly informational leafleting and rallies at two Kmart locations in Manhattan—and management is not happy about the negative publicity. He said that confronting MPG's management in their headquarters is the next step in an escalation campaign to show MPG that the IWW means business.

"MPG said that they view our visit 'as a very serious matter' while I view the disrespectful and unfair severance agreement that they are peddling to us a very serious matter," said Sanchez.

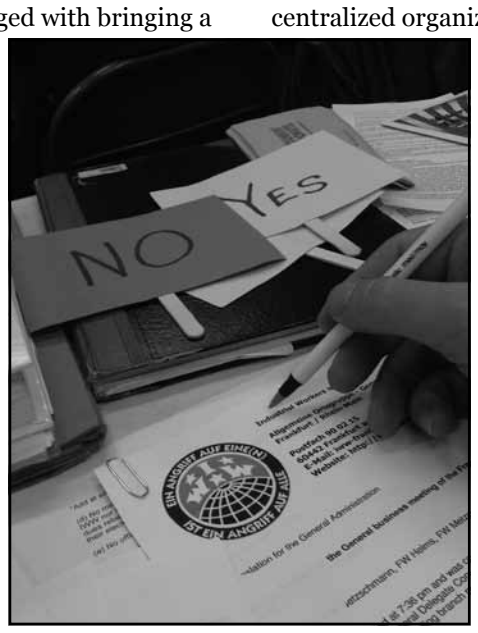
"Management realizes now that we are not just going to go away," he added.

Special Report: 2009 DelCon

A Report On The Union's Annual Meeting In Chicago

Continued from previous page
General Executive Board (GEB) members, the Organizing Department Board (ODB), International Solidarity Commission (ISC), General Defense Committee (GDC) chair, Committee on Industrial Classification (CIC) chair, and the Finance Committee.

This year's Convention saw the formation of the International Structure Committee. Elected members of the committee are charged with bringing a proposal to next year's convention on how to structure the IWW on an international level. This is in recognition of the fact that we now have two highly functioning Regional Organizing Committees (ROCs) in Europe, with Canada in the early stages of forming their own ROC as well. We also expect that the Australian ROC will undergo a revival.



Casting votes. Photo: Elmar Stuhlfauth

The final order of business was a report from the IWW Women's Caucus on their efforts to include women's issues in organizer training sessions and the preparation of welcome packets for new women members.

Edmonton, Baltimore, Twin Cities, New York City, Dallas, and Los Angeles were proposed as sites for the 2010 Convention.

Thoughts on the Convention

"Our branch meetings comparatively have a smaller group of people," said Christi Cogswell of Chicago, "so it's been really interesting to watch Rusty's Rules used consistently throughout the entire meeting and being used productively." This was Cogswell's first IWW annual gathering. For her and many new leaders in the union the Delegate Convention was an opportunity for her to witness diplomacy across branches and regional organizing committees.

Graphic: DJ Alperovitz

"The most important issue for me is meeting members from other branches," said Joe Tessone of Chicago. "It's important to understand each other and our differences and figure out ways to move forward as an organization."

"Being here is not only about making these delegate decisions and administrative or constitutional matters, but about getting to know people," said Elmar Stuhlfauth of Cologne, Germany, who stressed the importance of social connections made throughout the weekend.

After decades of work with anarcho-syndicalist unions in Germany, in 2006 Stuhlfauth was drawn by the IWW's centralized organizational structure. Previous groups with which he was involved were autonomous to a fault; cohesion was lacking between similar groups based in different cities and, in some instances, countries. He believes the Internet is a powerful organizational tool, but that it lacks intimacy for comrades, who may never have the opportunity to meet in person. "It's not the official thing we do here, but most of the time, getting to know each other is much more important than those formalized things" (See sidebar, "Thoughts on the 2009 Delegate Convention: Cristina D. interviews Elmar W.").

Long-time IWW member MK from the San Francisco Bay area compared this year's Delegate Convention to past annual meetings. This year will make his sixth in attendance. "This one has more proposals than I've ever seen by far at one convention, but it's pretty similar," said MK. "There's debate, sometimes people yell, sometimes it gets heated, but really most of the time people are working together and trying to solve problems in a comradely way."

As per tradition at each year's general meeting, the weekend drew to a close on Sunday evening with Industrial Workers joining in a spirited singing of Ralph Chaplin's "Solidarity Forever," our longtime anthem. Delegates left the Convention confident of our union's continued growth and influence in the current era of capitalist collapse and the ongoing irrelevancy of the business unions.

Steve Kellerman contributed to this story.

Thoughts on the 2009 Delegate Convention: Cristina D. interviews Elmar W.

Elmar Stuhlfauth in Chicago

Cristina: *So, if you could just tell me who you are, where you're from, and what offices you hold, that would be great.*
Elmar: My name is Elmar, I am the delegate of the General Membership Branch in Cologne, Germany.

C: *Have you ever been to any General Assemblies or Delegate Conventions? If so, how do they compare with this one?*
E: I was in London last year for the General Assembly. A lot has changed. This is a different style of organization right now because here we have delegates who represent branches, instead of general membership representation. I think there's a division between the delegates and the rest of those in attendance. Delegates follow all the things with plenty of concentration and sometimes it's quite hard to stand..

C: *What do you mean "hard to stand?"*
E: What we do here is not really fun. It's boring and it gets on your nerves. There are people who play tricks with the constitutional provisions, and in life you would treat these folks very much different than you would here. In this room, we have to maintain a formal structure and be polite to one another. If somebody were to accuse me or treat me negatively in my personal life I would treat them very much different. So this makes it somehow hard, but I think this is all necessary to maintain the civilized organization of a democratic union.

C: *Do you feel like people have overall maintained pretty good diplomacy?*
E: Yes, they have. I expected it to get much worse, especially after reading up on all the arguments before I came here. There are many people who would not understand why I would come all the way to Chicago for this type of "entertainment." But of course I don't think it's entertainment—it's an important job to do.

C: *So, why did you join the IWW?*
E: I have a long history of organizing in social/political activities. Prior to joining the IWW in November 2006, I was a member of an anarcho-syndicalist union in Germany, but my branch in Cologne dissolved. I joined the IWW because I think that it has a better concept of organizing workers and social activities than the anarcho-syndicalist union in Germany had. In the past I have been a squatter and an antifascist activist, and I have grown to understand that it's important for us to get a foot into the working class and working life. Personally, when I got older I was faced with issues such as how to find a job, how to survive at the job, and how to raise my family and so on.

C: *Do you feel like the IWW is structured better than the syndicalist groups you've been a part of?*
E: Yes, the IWW is more centralized. It sounds strange because centralization to many people means more control and dictatorship and such things. I experienced the opposite in the anarcho-syndicalist union; they are so autonomous that they don't want to share. They struggle around city against city, country against country, and the movement seems very separated on territorial issues. To me they are quite illogical—they are lacking a common base. I mean this feeling of being a part of "One Big Union" gets lost very often in the anarcho-syndicalist world, at least in Europe.

C: *Do you have anything else to add?*
E: Yes! Of course coming here is not just about making delegate decisions and working around the administrative and constitutional issues. It is about getting to know people. This was my main intention. I mean even if I would not have been regarded as a mandated delegate, which was an option I had, what I could have done—this was quite nice. I met many interesting people and made good contacts that will help us in the future. It's wonderful for us to stretch over the ocean like this. For me, the "unofficial business" of socializing and getting to know each other

Starbucks Workers Union Fights For Health Care

By Benjamin Ferguson and Joe Agins, Jr.

Signs, chants, leaflets and a large media turnout characterized the Starbucks Worker Union's (SWU) demonstration on August 17 in New York City against the company's decision to nearly double the premiums workers pay for health insurance. The public was very supportive of the SWU's protest andthe topic seemed to resonate with everyone who passed by. The cops were not terribly supportive, as they attempted to keep the sidewalks clear in front of the Starbucks store, located below the company's regional headquarters.

In New England, Wobblies went on a 15-store blitz in Boston and Needham, Mass., and in Dover and Portsmouth, N.H. Three IWW members—Steve Kellerman, Bill Bumpus and Joe Agins, Jr.—comprised the IWW Starbucks New England organizing team. The team went out in smoldering heat to reach out to Starbucks workers, propagating for the union and telling them about the health care hike that Starbucks is imposing. They explained that the fight is for the workers and to improve health care. One manager warned workers not to read the union's leaflets, but Kellerman spoke over the boss, saying "It's for your best interests." Additionally, the store workers in New Hampshire thanked local organizer Joe Agins, Jr. for dropping by and were pleased to know that there is a union for them.

"I won't stop organizing for New Hampshire and Massachusetts until workers have a voice and the boss learns to respect them," Agins, Jr. said.

Starbucks baristas and supporters protest in New York. Photo: Benjamin Ferguson

Book Review

A Provocative Assessment of the U.S. Labor Movement

Early, Steve. "Embedded With Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home." *Monthly Review Press, 2009. 288 pages, paperback, $17.95.*

By Randy Shaw

Steve Early is known for his strong opinions on the United States labor movement, and his often biting critiques of Andy Stern's leadership of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). But Early's new book offers an amalgamation of essays and diversity of perspectives that include even strongly pro-SEIU assessments, and even those who disagree with Early's core premises will benefit from reading his arguments. "Embedded with Organized Labor" surveys nearly every prominent book written about the U.S. labor movement over the past three decades. Early's thoughtful, critical, and, yes, often controversial analysis of the labor movement is likely unmatched in any other single volume, and the best part is that he consistently uses labor's past decisions and strategies as a guide for future action. Whether you share his conclusions or not, Early has given book groups and labor activists a wealth of material to discuss in every chapter, contributing to a much needed debate on the best strategies for building worker power.

During Steve Early's 30-year career with the Communication Workers of America, he found time to write over 300 articles on the labor movement. Those familiar with his writings know he has strongly held views, but the essays in this book show Early preferring intellectual and empirical arguments over emotional appeals, and eager to stimulate debate rather than insisting upon agreement.

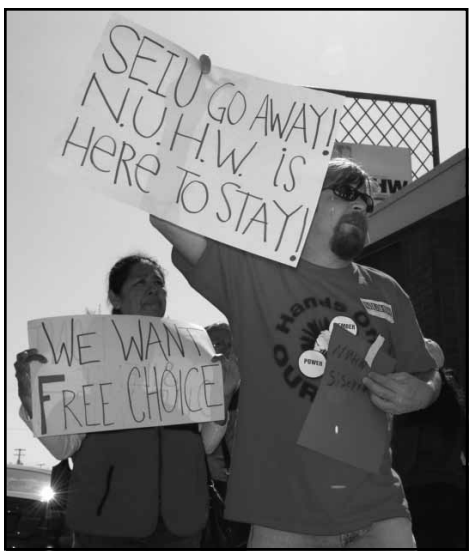


Photo: indymedia.us

NUHW activists protest SEIU trusteeship in St. Louis on May 27.

Labor's Unfulfilled Agenda

This is a book for those who seek to strengthen the labor movement, and are interested in past and current critiques of how unions have often failed to fulfill their promise. Early shows how critics have long questioned labor unions over internal democracy, ideology, and organizing prowess, and how this criticism increased as labor's power has declined over the past four decades. Early discusses many of these trenchant critiques, showing a union movement so badly out of step with the times that pro-NAFTA Bill Clinton was elected as the first Democratic President in 16 years without much labor backing.

Early reminds us of how John Sweeney's ascension to AFL-CIO President in 1995 raised hopes for an invigorated labor movement. He analyzes the basis for such optimism, and why it dissipated as the revitalized labor federation was unable to stop union membership loss, particularly in the private sector. By discussing books written when hopes for Sweeney were highest, Early reminds us of a time that seems far more distant than fourteen years. Early makes a convincing case that Sweeney was never capable of being an inspiring turnaround specialist, and that the dream of rising labor power associated with his presidency was never realistic for many reasons, particularly the AFL-CIO President's lack of power to require unions to increase organizing.

Change to Win

The next phase of books reflecting rising hopes for labor surrounded the creation of the Change to Win labor federation in 2005. Early was clearly no advocate of Andy Stern's decision to lead SEIU out of the AFL-CIO, and the recent SEIU-UNITE HERE split and the effective dissolution of Change to Win at least retroactively confirms opponents concerns over the move. I found this section of the book the most thought-provoking, as Early raises a number of questions about the route to building a powerful labor movement that deserve greater discussion.

For example, consider the Andy Stern-Change to Win strategy of bringing in progressive activists from outside the labor movement to run locals. Many saw this move as essential for unions to provide the activist and creative leadership they long lacked. We all knew stories of SEIU and UNITE HERE chapters whose local leadership defied international union policies toward diversity, organizing and progressive change, so the idea of replacing this dead wood with quality leadership appeared quite attractive.

But Early cites a number of SEIU leaders brought in outside the ranks of workers who seemed to have little understanding of how unions operate. He suggests that such outsiders often lack a real connection to the workers they represent, and owe their allegiance less to rank and file workers then to the international officials that appointed them. Early argues:

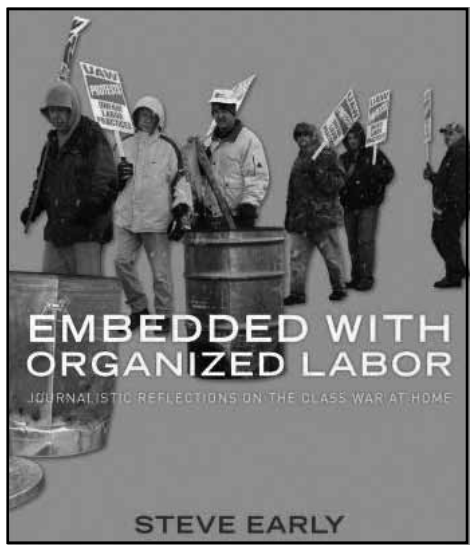
"Too often in labor today, particularly in several high-profile 'progressive' unions led by onetime student activists, participatory democracy is missing. Membership mobilization has a top-down, carefully orchestrated character that subverts real rank and file initiative, decision-making, and dynamism."

Early's criticisms of outside leadership deserve debate. But it is worth noting that until its recent demise, the Change to Win (CTW) labor federation was far more progressive and activist oriented than the AFL-CIO. While Early claims that there is "little evidence" for Ruth Milkman's argument in her "L.A. Story" that "CTW unions, with the exception of SEIU and perhaps HERE, have responded more effectively" to the political and economic transformations of the past thirty years, Early undermines his critique by essentially eliminating the two unions that best prove Milkman's case. And when one considers the always on the defensive and longtime anti-clean air UAW, and recall Tom Buffenbarger, president of the Machinists' union, ridiculing Obama supporters on the night of the Wisconsin primary in 2008 as "latte-drinking, Prius-driving, Birkenstock-wearing, trust fund babies," it's clear there are strong cultural differences between the two federations.

Early also questions the SEIU/ Change to Win recruitment of idealistic young college grads as organizers, instead of primarily relying on longtime workers. While many recent college grads became great organizers—like SEIU Local 11's Eric Brakken, whose role in the successful 2006 University of Miami janitors campaign is discussed in my book, "Beyond the Fields"—many unions have cut back on college recruitment due to high turnover. Again, one does not have to agree with Early to appreciate his raising the issue for debate.

Labor's Future

Early ends his book with two previously unpublished chapters, one on the SEIU/ National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) battle in California and the other whose title reflects the author's clarion call for "Reading, Writing and Union Building." Early cites a



Graphic: beyondchron.org

publisher's warning that authors seeking large audiences should "not write books about and for trade unionists," as the movement does not "buy and read books that are written for us." Savvy strategist that he is, Early then goes about trying to convince labor unions to recognize the importance of marketing union-oriented books. He provides detailed instructions on how unions can benefit from marketing labor books, and I wish him the greatest success in this campaign. The self-interest of labor authors aside, Early's passion for a labor movement that prioritizes union democracy requires the encouragement of rank-and-file reading, and providing workers the skills and education they need to effectively run increasingly complex labor organizations.

If workers are educated in organizing and political strategies, fully understand their contracts, and know the past history of their bargaining unit's relations with management, then strong and effective leadership will likely emerge from the rank and file. But if workers remain uninformed, uneducated and unskilled in labor strategies and the bargaining process, then outside leadership becomes essential for effective union management.

Although unions should heed Early's call to invest in books promoting the labor movement—after all, the business community spends enough to ensure books touting corporations become bestsellers—this is unlikely to happen. But Early's quest speaks to his continued idealism in the face of 30 years of union decline that could have easily left him cynical about the prospect for the United States ever achieving a progressive labor movement. Early can be a strong critic, but he insists that those seeking union democracy and greater worker power keep hope alive.

This review originally appeared in Beyond Chron, *May 28, 2009.*

chicago iww

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We Won! But Did We Do It Right? Reflections of a Union Organizer

By Peter Marin, *Linchpin*

On July 31, the post-doctoral fellows at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario became the first post-docs in Canada to form a union and win a contract. As a member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 3906, I was involved in this campaign, first as an organizer and later, after the successful union drive, as a member of the bargaining support team.

By the standards of most union organizers, this union drive was an all-out success. Besides breaking new ground for unions in a growing sector, the post-docs won significant gains, including higher wages and benefits, more vacation time, paid leaves and professional development funds.

But as a Wobbly I measure success in any social struggle not only by what was won, but also by how it was won. In the case of unions, we want to see directly democratic unions controlled by their members. As our aim is to empower our coworkers to run their union, organizers must use methods which empower workers to get involved and take matters into their own hands. Our means of struggle must be radically democratic, regardless how big or small the struggle.

So how does our post-docs campaign measure up by these standards? First, it should be said that from the beginning this was going to be a traditional union campaign where workers would be asked to sign union cards and go through the legal process of joining a union and getting a first contract. While Wobblies do not refuse to use these methods no matter the context, all would agree that they are not empowering. This encourages only passive involvement of workers who are asked only to sign a card and later to vote. The campaigners and bargaining team take care of the rest, returning to the membership only once a deal has been hammered out with management. A contract ties workers' hands by taking away the right to withdraw labor during the course of the contract and channeling disputes into lengthy and legalistic grievance processes that do nothing to empower workers.

However, using mobilization and direct action to force the university to voluntarily recognize the union and its demands without going through the labor board and without a formal contract was never an option. It was clear from day one that while the post-docs wanted a union, we were not dealing with a militant group of workers with a history of collective action. For the vast majority, this was their first experience coming together as workers to improve their working conditions. Given that a post-docs' career depends in a big way on keeping friendly relations with their supervisors—a confrontational approach was simply not in the cards. To refuse to compromise on my principles would have meant not participating in the campaign. This would have gone against another principle: that we should be active in the struggles of our coworkers and neighbors at whatever level they happen to be.

We did attempt to organize in a way that allowed the maximum involvement of post-docs and other rank-and-file members. The organizing committee and bargaining team were made up entirely of local members, most of them rank and file. This meant we had a rank-and-file-run organizing committee, allowing those involved to pick up a lot of organizing skills and union know-how. The entire bargaining process, from determining priorities to deciding which ones to keep and which ones to compromise on, was open to all post-docs and other rank-and-file members. A great deal of effort was put in by an over-stretched group of organizers and staff to encourage post-docs to take control of the process.

Despite these efforts, few post-docs chose to participate, although those that did had a big impact on the process. While we had their passive support (a majority voted to join the union, and they unanimously voted in favor of the final agreement), getting their active support was more difficult.

Overall, it could be said that we attempted to organize in ways that empowered workers under difficult circumstances and within the restraints of a traditional union drive. Some of us were no doubt empowered through the process, though our numbers were small compared to the total of all the workers involved. So what lessons can be drawn from this experience for union organizers?

I think this campaign shows that when there is a low level of struggle, we must be flexible in our approach if we are to be active at all. Perhaps we can be guided by the following notion: compromise only when our weaknesses force us, never miss an opportunity to apply our principles where we are strong enough, and work really hard to overcome the areas in which we are weak.

I hope the lesson here is that we must pay as much attention to how we organize as to what we are fighting for, or rather, that the two things are directly connected. We cannot overcome the crisis of the labor movement simply by organizing more workers or by making more gains. If the labor movement is to once again become a fighting movement led by rank-and-file workers and their communities, we must organize in ways that encourage individual and collective empowerment.

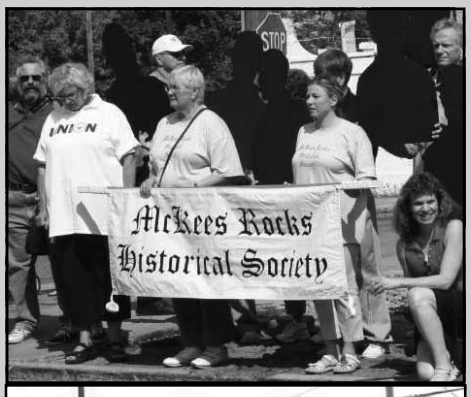
Wobblies Commemorate McKee's Rocks Strike

By Kenneth Miller

McKee's Rocks, Pa. – On August 22, 2009, the annual gathering of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society held its annual gathering to coincide with the Centenary of the McKee's Rocks Pressed Steel Car strike and its "Bloody Sunday" massacre. The day's activities included a march and a picnic, along with the erection of a second official State of Pennsylvania historical marker on the site of the massacre.

The Pressed Steel Car Company provided worker housing at substantial cost to employees, keeping them in constant debt. During the 1909 strike, immigrant workers were evicted from their company homes. The eviction led to the August 22 "Bloody Sunday Uprising," in which at least 11 people were killed. The houses were sold after the company ceased operations in 1949.

The original historical marker erected in 2000 reads: "1909 MCKEE'S ROCKS STRIKE – On July 14, unskilled immigrant workers led a strike against the Pressed Steel Car Company. Strain among the strikers, replacement laborers, and state police erupted into a riot on August 22. Eleven men were killed near this footbridge. Strikers were aided by the Industrial Workers of the World."



Photos: Pittsburgh IWW

Members of the Pa. Labor History Society and the McKee's Rocks Historical Society worked closely together to involve the community in this Centenary event. Evan Wolfson of the Pittsburgh IWW spoke at one of the panel discussions at the Ryan's Arts Center. Pittsburgh 's Mike Stout and his band, the Human Union, played for the Historical Society's Dinner on August 21, and at the picnic. Mike wrote a song that tells the story of this strike–every IWW member should listen to this song and it should be considered for the "Little Red Songbook."

The IWW is a fighting and singing union, and the tactics that worked in McKee's Rocks in 1909 still work today. We need a labor union that juxtaposes the nationalism and jurisdictionalism of the trade unions, and with the IWW, we organize the worker, not the job!

Starbucks Barista Unjustly Fired, Demands Justice

Continued from 1

Witek and her coworkers talked with the SWU and came up with a plan to get Mehrbatu her job back.

The SWU held a picket for Mehrbatu on August 15 outside of the store where she worked. Hopes were high as several dozen union members and supporters waved signs supporting Mehrbatu and calling out Starbucks for its discriminatory behavior. According to workers inside, the picket slowed business to a crawl inside the store and gave Starbucks the message that the union was not going to let Mehrbatu fight this battle alone. After a fruitless call with Starbucks' Human Resources later that day, the SWU remains committed to getting Mehrbatu her job back and getting Starbucks to throw out the promissory note they pressured her to sign.

"District management now won't have their meetings in our store because they know they are wrong and they are afraid of that," said Witek, adding that the union continues to fight and is "not going to back down."

This article originally appeared in The Organizer, *September 2009.*

Philly Cab Drivers Demonstrate Against Parking Authority Ticketing

Continued from 1

Photo: Diane Krauthamer

Center City as chaos surrounded. Some pedestrians were shaking their fists, coming up to the cab windows and asking questions—sometimes even uttering a rude disapproval about the noise and inconvenience. In the middle of all this, Abdul kept his cool and helped people pull out and change lanes, helped pedestrians cross the street, and even got out of his car to help guide a person out of the protest traffic. When I asked Abdul about the nationalities of Philly's cab drivers, he responded, "They are from everywhere. Many are from here. Many are from other countries. That's why they call it the United States. All of us come together to make one. All from different countries; all here together."

Every cab company was represented in bright colors. Activist drivers scouted out shirking drivers still "open for business" during the demonstration and harangued them with invitations to join the protest. The action amounted to a short protest strike that lasted for only two hours, yet it gave the City a sharp spanking in the process.

"Give me a quote for the *Industrial Worker*," I said to UTWA press secretary John Hough as he waved our IWW flag in the middle of the street. "PPA has got to go!" he replied succinctly. "PPA stole $75,000 of our money last year. Where did it go? Nobody knows."

This $75,000 is the UTWA's aggregated estimation of the money drivers have reported missing from their accounts. When a passenger pays with a credit card, Verifone—the credit card processor—takes a painful 5 percent fee off the top and is then supposed to deposit the rest of the money into the driver's account. Instead, drivers get mysterious chunk deposits that bear no relation to, and no itemization for, their receipts, hence the missing $75,000. John, or "Chicago" as they call him, is just as pissed as any other taxi driver because, in addition to being a union officer he's also a working cab driver—the same holds true for all of the UTWA's staff.

After the union's press conference at Ninth and Filbert Streets, a cab driver, Sebastian Chuwko, took us back to 31st Street. He told us that Verifone had recently held his earnings for a week before depositing them. In the time between when he expected them and the time the funds were released, Sebastian incurred two overdraft fees from his bank, totaling $70. His two debit card expenses, not surprisingly, were for gasoline.

In addition to his daily airport routes, Sebastian is the UTWA's treasurer. Back in Nigeria, Sebastian was an elected member of his local government. He said that that experience helps him in his work for the UTWA. It's still very hard to work full time and do his volunteer union work, he told us. I replied that we in the IWW could identify. We too have to build our organization and fight the bosses while exhausted from overwork.

AGITATE! EDUCATE! ORGANIZE!: American Labor Posters
by Lincoln Cushing & Timothy W. Drescher

"We seek to inform as well as to celebrate. The best posters about American workers and the jobs at which they labor make up a visually fascinating body of work that rewards our attention. The posters were produced with a dual purpose: to entertain and to inform. They were also vehicles for working people to present themselves visually, which is rarely as straightforward as it might seem because the labor force itself is not monolithic. Nor are the posters about just paid or wage labor. They repeatedly demonstrate that labor issues include both the workplace and the outside community and often portray families and neighbors, not just fellow workers."

—from *Agitate! Educate! Organize!*

In *Agitate! Educate! Organize!*, Lincoln Cushing and Timothy W. Drescher share their vast knowledge about the rich graphic tradition of labor posters. Lavish full-color reproductions of more than 250 of the best posters that have emerged from the American labor movement ensure that readers will want to return again and again to this visually fascinating treasury of little-known images from the American past. Some of the posters were issued by government programs and campaigns; some were devised by unions as recruiting tools or strike announcements; others were generated by grassroots organizations focused on a particular issue or group of workers-all reveal much about the diverse experiences of working people in the United States.

American labor posters are widely scattered, difficult to locate, and rarely archived. Cushing and Drescher examined several thousand such images in the course their research, guaranteeing a truly representative selection. The presentation of the posters is thematic, with a brief history of activist graphic media followed by chapters on Dignity and Exploitation; Health and Safety; Women; Race and Civil Rights; War, Peace and Internationalism; Solidarity and Organizing; Strikes and Boycotts; Democracy, Voting, and Patriotism; History, Heroes, and Martyrs; and Culture. Along with the stunning color images, the text contributes to a much deeper understanding of the politics, history, artistry, and impact of this genre of activist art and the importance of the labor movement in the transformation of American society over the course of the twentieth century.

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In his life, Utah Phillips was many things - soldier, hobo, activist, pacifist, union organizer, storyteller, songwriter. He was an oral historian who documented the events of the working class and turned them into stories and songs. And in the folk tradition, he passed them on to others.Righteous Babe Records continues that tradition with *Singing Through The Hard Times*, a 2CD set that celebrates the music that Utah sang and loved. Included are performances from Emmylou Harris and Mary Black, Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton, John McCutcheon, Rosalie Sorrels, Gordon Bok, Ani DiFranco, Magpie, Jean Ritchie and many others - folksingers whose music springs from the same rich vein of the people's history that Phillips chronicled throughout his life.

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Just Passing Through
by Paco Ignacio Taibo II
In this elegant and literate mystery adventure novel set in 1920's post-revolutionary Mexico, Paco Ignacio Taibo II is searching for a hero, specifically a leftist hero, and he thinks he has found him in the person of Sebastián San Vicente. But everyone, including the baffled novelist, is trying to figure out exactly who San Vicente really is. There is some record of San Vicente in FBI records during the Wilson era, and some mention of him in anarchist records and rumors, but the rest has to be filled in. And who better to do this than Taibo? Meanwhile, with Taibo busy in the background trying to resolve the mystery of his hero's identity, San Vicente goes about his heroic avocation of organizing strikes against the capitalists, dodging thugs and hiding out from the Mexican Army.

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on sale: $8.00

Harlem Glory by Claude McKay
Written in the 1940s, this semi-autobiographical novel by the renowned Jamaican poet and novelist evokes the life of Harlem in the Great Depression and New Deal. McKay captures the exuberant clash of social movements and ideologies, acutely sensitive to the vitality and diversity of Black culture and drawing on McKay's experiences in the IWW and the socialist movement.

112 pages, published at $12.00,
on sale: $5.00

Break Their Haughty Power: Joe Murphy In The Heyday Of The Wobblies by Eugene Nelson
Joe Murphy, chased out of his Missouri hometown by anti-Catholic bigots, hopped aboard a freight train and headed west for the wheat harvest. Within weeks, the 13 year old Joe became a labor activist and organizer for the IWW. Eugene Nelson, a longtime friend of Joe Murphy, recounts many labor and free-speech struggles through the eyes of 'Kid Murphy.' This biographical novel relates Murphy's adventures in the wheat fields, lumber camps, and on the high seas. Historical events include the 1919 Centralia massacre in Washington state; the Colorado miners' strike of 1927; and the 1931 strike by workers building Boulder Dam. Nelson also relates the young Murphy's reflections on meeting Helen Keller, Eugene Debs, and Bill Haywood. A classic slice of labor history brought to life.

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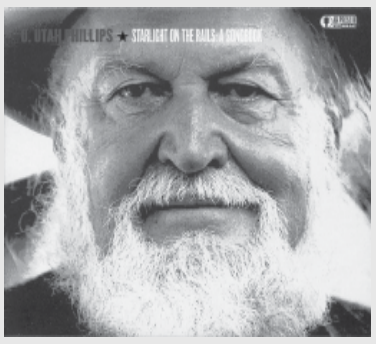

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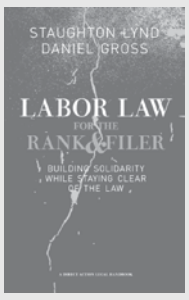

Labor Law for the Rank and Filer: Building Solidarity While Staying Clear of the Law

BY STAUGHTON LYND AND DANIEL GROSS

Have you ever felt your blood boil at work but lacked the tools to fight back and win? Or have you acted together with your co-workers, made progress, but wondered what to do next? *Labor Law for the Rank and Filer* is a guerrilla legal handbook for workers in a precarious global economy. Blending cutting-edge legal strategies for winning justice at work with a theory of dramatic social change from below, Staughton Lynd and Daniel Gross deliver a practical guide for making work better while re-invigorating the labor movement. Illustrative stories of workers' struggles make the legal principles come alive.

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Ladismith Cheese Stinks:
Farm Workers In Rural South Africa Fight For Their Rights

By D.M. Kloker

Behind the veil of a new South Africa are the economic remnants of its apartheid past. Fifteen years after the end of political apartheid, economic apartheid still exists for far too many of South Africa's citizens. Informal communities where "colored" South Africans (the South African classification for people of mixed ethnic descent, usually the descendants of slaves) live in shacks without sanitation or heat have sprung up around cities like Cape Town. Khayelitsha is one such settlement that is home to an estimated one million people. Citizens that were promised homes are finding themselves literally walled off from public view as the ruling ANC (African National Congress) prepares to host the World Cup in 2010. In our so-called globalized economy, the worst economic exploitation often occurs as far from public view as possible. Such is the case for the workers at Ladismith Cheese, a leading producer of cheese and butter for South Africa and internationally.

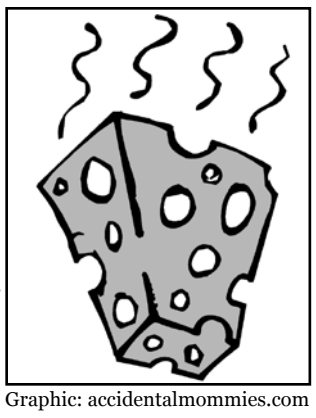
Ladismith Cheese is 249 miles outside of Cape Town in a very rural area. The workers at Ladismith are dependent on the farm owners for housing, electricity, and what can barely be referred to as sanitation. I toured a series of the homes of Ladismith Cheese workers, where the walls were caked with soot from the stoves used for heat and cooking. The corrugated metal roofs leaked, and plumbing consisted only of outside spigots. The workers at Ladismith are geographically isolated, making it very difficult to leave these company-owned shacks. Their current minimum wage of 2,700 Rand ($337) per month puts most workers at or below the local poverty line. The workers' conditions at Ladismith are very similar to the conditions of the rural California farm workers which the IWW organized almost 100 years ago.

There is also a racial component to the struggle of workers at Ladismith Cheese, where almost all of the workers are "colored", but every single manager is a white Afrikaner. There are very few voices within South Africa right now that are willing to state that while political apartheid may have ended, its economic dimensions are still very much in effect. International support could encourage these workers to continue speaking the truth about their exploitation.

The workers at Ladismith Cheese are currently organizing against the appalling conditions they live in. The Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers' Union (CSAAWU) is representing workers at Ladismith. CSAAWU is a socialist union that represents a left alternative to the much larger Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), whose close associations with the ruling ANC have prevented COSATU from taking bolder stances against the continuing economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa.

On July 4, several hundred workers from Ladismith Cheese marched from the town center of Ladismith to the factory gates and demanded the owner publicly accept their list of demands. The size of the rally was particularly impressive given the transportation difficulties faced by the workers at Ladismith. These workers are geographically isolated from one another and dependent on taxi cabs to take them from their homes to the town center. After a long while of singing and making speeches from a loudspeaker, it became clear the factory owners would not publically accept the demands. Eventually, a small faction of workers was sent into the factory to deliver the workers' demands: an increase in the minimum wage paid to employees, better living conditions, and a transformation of the white-only management structure.

Retaliations from the management at Ladismith Cheese have been swift. Workers who came out of the factory to stand on the other side of the locked, razor-wired gates in solidarity with the marching workers are having their pay docked for leaving the job. CSAAWU is currently being sued for correctly asserting that Ladismith is engaging in "apartheid-style management." The management at Ladismith is even threatening to take the CSAAWU to the Human Rights Commission in South Africa for defamation, which is ironic considering the Commission was set up to counteract the kinds of human rights abuses Ladismith is committing. In addition, the workers who are participating in the campaign are facing individual threats of eviction and increasing charges for electricity. However, the workers at Ladismith are well organized and clearly ready for a long struggle.


Graphic: accidentalmommies.com

The outcome of the struggle at Ladismith Cheese may yet serve as a bellwether for the global economy. If workers under these conditions are able to make gains, it will be more difficult for corporations to sidestep labor gains by going overseas. Inspired by the struggle at Ladismith and elsewhere, workers in even the most remote corners of the world will be actively standing up for their rights.

Lost Mountain: A Song By John Martin Holland

Big trucks screechin', blowin' down the road
Jake brakes explodin', holdin' back sixty tons an' more
Dust so heavy gotta have a breathin' tank
Big King Coal, it's him we gotta thank!
Rained hard last night, shacks 'n' trailers washed away
Never happened once back then, then they dragged the coal away
Used to be a mountain, now all that's left is toxic mud
Chockin' up the hollers, 'n' runnin' in our blood

Gotta have power, from coal fired plants
Nothin' lives on Lost Mountain, not even ants have got a chance
Grandpa used to hunt, everybody used to fish
There's a black cloud hangin' down
Livin' in the dying now, at the flick of a switch
Blast away the mountains, 'til it's worse than desert sun

Graphic: Ned Powell

Hold the little people hostage at the point of a gun
It's a few jobs got for lottsa lives destroyed
In just a few short months we'll all be unemployed
It's coal, black gold, runs in the veins
Plain greed, the devil's deed, brings both riches and poor pains
Generations chained forever, every time it rains

Why do we treat our people like worms 'n' pesky bugs?
Why do we faun 'n' grovel at the law of the cold coal thugs?
When will we ever learn their kind knows nothing of the truth?
Hear the ghost of Lost Mountain, an' see tons and tons of proof
Towns like graves covered over with rocks
Nothin' ever changes 'cuz of EPA talks
Don't scab for the bosses, they'll tell the same old lies
Better make a strong union, help each other organize

Sydney Bus Drivers Take Wildcat Action

Continued from 1

The Busways Group is a large private operator, holding lucrative government contracts to run more than 600 buses—and employ more than 700 drivers—on approximately 100 routes in the Sydney and New South Wales Central Coast regions, and about 30 more routes in the state's mid-North Coast area.

Like employers across the board, Busways is utilizing the economic crisis—with the backing of the state government—to demand a productivity speed-up. With unemployment continuing to rise throughout Sydney's western, working-class suburbs, the company is actively recruiting drivers willing to accept the new conditions.

The mass media launched a scathing attack on the drivers for halting services from the depot during the morning peak period, claiming that their actions had seriously disrupted and traumatized commuters, as well as school children and parents. As drivers pointed out, this was sheer hypocrisy as passengers were frequently left stranded by delays caused by the existing, already over-stretched timetables.

What really provoked the media's wrath was that the drivers had defied the TWU and took matters into their own hands. The *Daily Telegraph* labeled them as "rogue drivers" who had acted "without consulting any official of the Transport Workers Union." An editorial declared that a "bolshie minority" had staged a "wildcat strike" because their "tempers led them to ignore even the instructions from their own union."

In the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Whales, Justice Frank Marks accused the drivers of "industrial thuggery of the worst kind ... in the face of opposition from their elected delegate and without consulting any paid TWU official." The judge ordered the TWU and its members not to take any further industrial action over the timetable issue.

The response portrays how nervous the establishment is that the drivers might set an example which would encourage other workers to defy the trade unions and take independent action to defend their jobs and conditions. Over the past three decades, the unions have been the essential instrument in sabotaging any resistance by the working class to the pro-market agenda imposed by successive Coalition and Labor governments on behalf of big business.

Photo: libcom.org
Bus drivers picket Glendenning depot.

During the past year, as the global recession has deepened, the TWU and its counterparts throughout the union movement have worked hand-in-hand with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Labor Party government to help large and small companies impose far-reaching cuts to jobs, working hours and conditions.

The reaction to a relatively small wildcat strike by Busways drivers reveals just how dependent governments and big business are on the unions. The reference to "bolshie" workers—that is, drawing a parallel between the Busways drivers and the Bolsheviks who took power in Russia in 1917—reveals the growing concerns within ruling circles over the consequences of sharpening social tensions produced by worsening unemployment and deteriorating living standards. Like other sections of the working class, private bus drivers have been forced to suffer from decreased pay and deteriorating conditions. Despite the intense pressure of driving in heavy traffic, and being responsible for the safety of thousands of passengers daily, they are paid base rates of a mere $50,000 (AUD) per year.

By contrast, the Rowe family—owner of the Busways Group—is thought to be one of the wealthiest in Australia. The extent of its profits and the amount of government subsidies it receives is shrouded in secrecy.

Despite the fact that Busways management has agreed to further negotiate on the proposed timetables, and despite Justice Frank Marks' "no-strike" order, drivers said they would strike again unless the company dropped its plans to implement the new timetables. The TWU, on the other hand, has worked to isolate the Blacktown depot drivers from workers at the company's 15 other depots, in addition to other bus drivers and transport workers, all of whom face similar attacks.

"We acted out of frustration after 10 years of fighting oppressive and deficient timetables. The new timetables will be a nightmare. The TWU did not condone the strike, and said we could be fined $50,000 (AUD). It's like a dictatorship," said one driver, who has worked for Busways for 10 years.

"I am very dubious toward the union and I am disillusioned by all governments—like most people. Every time, we vote governments out, rather than vote anyone in. The Liberals screw us one way, and Labor does it another way," he added.

Another driver, who has worked for the company for five years, was bitter about the TWU's role. "The union blamed the workers for going on strike. We decided that we couldn't wait for the union. The union is only worried about the $60 (AUD) a month we pay in dues."

A Busways mechanic voiced support for the drivers' action. "Everyone has the right to express their grievances, or it's not a free country. When I get called out for bus repairs, I see the pressure the drivers are under. It's bad enough to be under pressure from the public, without being under pressure from the company as well," he said.

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 Michael Ashbrook

6th Annual SweatFree Communities Conference

The 6th Annual SweatFree Communities Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. November 6-8.The International Solidarity Committee (ISC) of the IWW and the Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance have collaborated with SweatFree Communities for several years. The ISC has found SweatFree Communities to be one of the most accessible groups within the anti-sweatshop movement, and is hopeful that the SweatFree's board will respond thoughtfully to the specific issues and assertions laid out in the ISC's resolution—passed on July 25—which commends the important work done by SweatFree Communities.

The ISC has allocated a $100 scholarship for an IWW member to attend the 6th Annual SweatFree Communities Conference. The weekend will feature in-depth strategy sessions and trainings suitable for new and seasoned SweatFree campaign activists and designed to take local campaigns to the next level. We hope that each local SweatFree Community campaign will send at least two representatives to the conference.

If you do anti-sweatshop organizing, are interested in the status of a global apparel union organizing drive, have a background or concerns about union label strategies, are an educator who teaches about globalization, or if you are an organizer that talks to Fellow Workers about their interconnectedness with workers in places like Honduras or Bangladesh, the ISC urges you to attend this conference and take advantage of the $100 scholarship.

For more information, or if you would like to attend this conference, please call ISC member Justin Vitiello at 267-949-6864.For more information, please visit www.sweatfree.org.

Serbia Anarchists Arrested

Five members of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI)—including International Workers Association (IWA-AIT) General Secretary Ratibor Trivunac, along with Tadej Kurepa, Ivan Vulović , Sanja Dojkić and Nikola Mitrovic—were arrested on September 3 under the fabricated charges of "causing general public danger" after they were forcefully taken in for interrogation by the police. These comrades were arrested, supposedly in connection with a direct action at the Greek Embassy which was carried out on Aug. 25. According to a report from libcom.org, a circle-A graffiti was drawn and two Molotov cocktails were thrown at the embassy. Neither broke through the windows—one cracked a window and another burned a bit.

The judge ordered the arrestees to 30 days of detention on the basis that they represented a flight risk and a risk to witnesses. The prosecutor wants to charge them with "international terrorism." At the writing of this story, the exact charges against those arrested remain unknown.

A group called Crni Ilija supposedly claimed responsibility for the action. The mainstream press interviewed Ratibor Trivunac, who said that he knows nothing about the group. He also informed comrades from the IWA-AIT that it looked like the police wanted to pin this on him. The media continues to post photos of the comrades arrested, labeling them as "terrorists."

The comrades in the ASI—along with other anarchists from Belgrade—are meeting to discuss a plan. Additionally, the IWA-AIT reports that they are in communication with comrades from various countries who are planning solidarity pickets. They are asking for the international community to send letters to local Serbian embassies. People can also sign an electronic petition to the government at www.asi.zsp.net.pl.

Strikers, Supporters Breach Dockyard Gate in Dublin

By John Kalwaic

Around 600 workers and supporters took their picket to the dockyard gates of Peel Ports in Dublin, Ireland on August 24. Dockworkers have gone on strike against the Marine Terminals Ltd. of the U.K.-based firm Peel Ports, demanding compulsory redundancies–or financial compensation for work lost due to company restructuring—and new pay and conditions at the cargo handling facility. Joe O'Flynn, general secretary of the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), accused the company of steamrolling through with redundancies and layoffs and bringing in strikebreakers from Scotland and Northern Ireland. Peter Bunting, president of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), said that "workers would name and shame scabs that came from their own community."

Strikers and supporters, including the dock workers and supportive members of the community, rallied at the gate, chanting "Workers in, scabs out." The workers breached the gates and entered the terminal. Under the eye of security cameras and guards, the organizers of the march urged the crowd not to do any damage"and to respect the security guards. Messages of support and solidarity for the Irish dockers were brought in from Australia, Belgium, and the Netherlands, where members of the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV) occupied Peel Ports' company headquarters in solidarity with the Irish dockers. The FNV threatened industrial action against ports owned by Marine Terminals in the Netherlands if the Irish dispute was not resolved.

Photo: irishtimes.com

Support international solidarity!

Assessments for $3, $6 are available from your delegate or IWW headquarters PO Box 23085, Cincinnati, OH 45223-3085, USA.

The Recall Of A Critical Unionist From The Works Council

By IWW (IU 460/640) job branch at Eurest Frankurt, Germany

In the section titled "Knock, knock. Who's there? Open up, it's the police!" from the International Solidarity Commission's column on page 12 of the August/September Industrial Worker, *the* IW *reported on illegal overtime at Eurest in Frankfurt, Germany, and how the IWW is trying to stop it. Now, the yellow unions have taken up the struggle—against us Wobblies, not against the bosses. Here is part two of the unfolding Eurest Saga:*

People under contract with the Eurest Catering Service often found themselves working up to 16-hour days, which is illegal in Germany. The yellow union NGG (Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststatten , or the Food and Allied Workers Union - Germany) and the works council turned a blind eye to these unlawful sweatshop conditions. Because the IWW job branch at Eurest is still getting off the ground, we decided to simply call the cops, like good citizens. The three officers who came to inspect the premises of the Deutsche Bank canteen at 9:00 p.m. found several of our colleagues on duty who had begun their shift at 6:30 a.m. Now the boss faces a stiff fine and our colleagues are happy to be free of excessively long hours. The bosses at other Eurest job sites are beginning to worry about more IWW job branches forming because for some of the workers this was the first time they saw resistance paying off. They are beginning to demand the 25 percent overtime bonus that Eurest has simply "forgotten" to pay until now.

According to the Works Council Statute of 1952, the Labor Tribunal must remove a works council member from office if one quarter of the constituents sign a petition to that effect. It seems that yellow unionists are trying to do this to IWW member Harald Stubbe.

Let's take a close look at Fellow Worker Stubbe's record. In the work place that he is responsible for, general staff assemblies are held once a trimester, as the law stipulates. The conditions of the contract are strictly applied. For instance, every colleague got his or her annual leave application signed by the boss in February. The cut in working time is applied in whole days, as the contract stipulates, and not in minutes as it is abusively done elsewhere. All colleagues have been upgraded. There are three breaks per day and there is no overtime, thanks to Stubbe's efforts. He consistently defends the interests of staff in the works council.

Management has already tried to fire Stubbe. Now yellow unionists are taking another shot at him. He has made some enemies in stubbornly defending his staff. As the law requires, he keeps his constituents fully informed of the works council's activity.

If the criteria according to which Stubbe is being impeached were applied to the other works councilors, there would be no one left in office.

Harald Stubbe resigned from the yellow NGG because it signed a contract with Eurest that worsened the working conditions. While the NGG bosses "earned" salaries of which cooks and other kitchen workers can only dream, they were too timid to defend the rank and file against the Eurest bosses. Now the NGG is trying to help the bosses to get rid of a rank-and-file militant who has asked too many critical questions in the works council.

What reason could there be for Eurest employees to pay dues to a "union" like the NGG?

Translated by Michael Ashbrook.

This story originally appeared in Berichte und Standpunkte (News and Viewpoints) *-newsletter of the IWW (IU 460/640) job branch at Eurest Frankfurt, September - November 2009, Issue #3.*

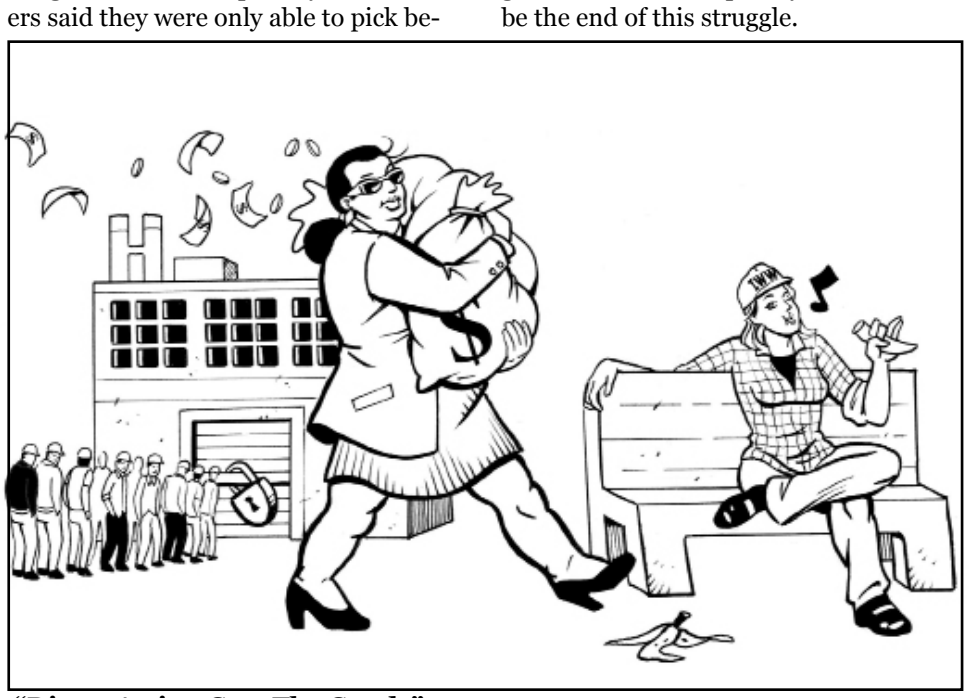
Berry-Picking Vietnamese Guest Workers Go On Strike

By John Kalwaic

On August 14, approximately 120 berry-picking Vietnamese guest workers for the Swedish Rabema Service went on strike to protest wages and conditions in the small rural town of Branäs in Värmland, Sweden. Workers were hired from Vietnam by the Vietnamese TTLC recruiter to pick berries for the Rabema Service, and were expected to pay up to 15,000 kronor ($2,000) to fund their two month stay, and 9,000 kronor for room and board.

Most of the workers paid with loans on their houses and borrowed from family and friends, but then were paid only 14 kronor per kilogram. The workers were striking over what they said were the impossible demands of the employers, who wanted them to pick 60 to 120 kilograms of berries per day. The workers said they were only able to pick between 10 to 30 kilograms per day, which was not sufficient to earn decent money. Around 120 North Vietnamese workers went on strike, but the South Vietnamese workers did not want to join in the strike. The South Vietnamese workers were allegedly attacked by the North Vietnamese strikers, who also held them hostage. Swedish police units, interpreters, and Stockholm embassy staff came into Branäs in Värmland to "control the situation."

Many of the south Vietnamese workers were moved to a secret location to hide them from the strikers. In the end, the company gave the workers an ultimatum: "Work hard, and we will help find enough berries, or go home. " Five of the strikers decided to go back to Vietnam, while the other 115 decided to go back to work. Hopefully, this will not be the end of this struggle.



"Direct Action Gets The Goods" Graphic: Robin Thompson & DJ Alperovitz