

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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## Philadelphia Transit Workers Strike: An IWW Report

By **Walt Weber**

Beginning at 3:00 a.m. on Nov. 3, more than 5,000 transit workers from Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 234 for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) walked off the job to the picket lines. The City Division of SEPTA had been working without a contract since March 2009, and negotiations had been stalled over wage increases, pension contributions, work rules and health care contributions.

After reaching an impasse in late October, the union held a mass meeting to gain a strike authorization vote. More than 1,200 union members attended the meeting, and the vote was unanimous in favor of a strike. With the members' authorization, the bargaining committee returned to the table with a PR nightmare for the City of Philadelphia looming over the horizon: The

World Series.

The vote—held one weekend before the Fall Classic landed in Philadelphia for Games 3 to 5—cast a shadow of doubt over the entire transit system, and the ability of fans to attend the baseball game. The subway and bus system are a very important method of transportation to the stadium complex, and without public transit moving all of those fans to that area would have been almost impossible.

The TWU and management kept up the negotiations through the whole weekend, choosing not to strike until after the World Series was over. Within hours of the end of Game 5, the union announced that the strike would begin at 3:00 a.m. The next morning, commuters and citizens all over the city awoke to no buses, trolleys, subway or elevated trains to move across the city.

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SEPTA workers picket in Philadelphia.

Photo: flickr.com/photos/transportworkersunion

## Bangladeshi Garment Workers Clash With Police, Bosses

By **"Ret," libcom.org**

TONGI, Bangladesh — Early in the morning on Oct. 31, several hundred workers turned up at the gates of the Nippon Garment Factory at Ershad Nagar, expecting to work and to receive wage arrears owed them. Instead they found police blocking the entrance—and posted on the gates was a note informing them that the factory would be shut from Oct. 31 to Nov. 29 because of "global recession and some unwanted incidents." The notice also asked workers to collect their overdue wages from the factory office on Nov. 10—though the arrears were three months late and workers had been promised payment would be made that day.

Expecting trouble, the factory bosses had requested police be stationed inside the premises on Friday night. Infuriated, the mainly female workers then tried to force their way into the factory—leading to scuffles and, eventually, baton charges by police.

As more workers and locals from the surrounding slum areas joined the pro-

test, the crowd grew to several thousand and moved to block the main Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway. The road remained blocked for the next five hours as the area became a battleground. A bus was set on fire, several other vehicles were burned and, as the fighting intensified, hundreds of police and paramilitary law enforcement personnel poured into the area. Police began firing gunshots and tear gas shells while workers responded with bricks and barricades.

"The law-enforcers had to fire rubber bullets from shotguns to disperse the workers who hurled stones and bricks at our officers," said Inspector Shafiqul Alam. Three people were shot dead by cops, with 100 others injured. Included in the casualties were 16 policemen—one in critical condition. News footage shows police shooting indiscriminately into buildings. Workers and locals reported that police ransacked homes and small shops in the area. By 11:30 a.m., an increased security presence reduced the disturbances, but periodic clashes continued into the afternoon as news

of the deaths spread—alongside claims by workers of seeing police hiding and removing corpses.

"The situation was totally unexpected. If the owner of the garment factory had a discussion with the workers before closing it, this incident might have been avoided," said a police chief on Nov. 3. However, the next day he oddly claimed that many protesters wore *lungi* (a skirt-like garment more suitable than trousers in warmer climates) so they must be outside agitators, even though the *lungi* is a commonly worn garment for Bangladeshi men. "I've never heard of garment workers using [Molotov] cocktails and firearms in clashes. It seems to me that outsiders instigated it," he added.

If Molotov cocktails and firearms really were used by workers it might indeed be a sign of a sharp escalation of their struggles; but the police chief is the only source to claim this and no cops were shot, so this dubious claim is probably an attempt to justify the police shootings. The claim that the situation was "totally unexpected" is also false—

cops were deployed in and around the factory on the previous evening.

Similarly, the claims that unrest was organized by "outsiders" are routine statements always wheeled out on such occasions—both to try and downplay the self-organizing capabilities of workers and to justify greater resources and repressive powers for the cops to hunt down the supposed conspirators. Despite being referenced and blamed for decades, none of these outside agitators have ever been caught or proved to exist. Such claims are also often thinly veiled nationalistic references playing on fears of big brother neighbor India, or refer to native Islamic fundamentalists desiring to destabilize a state too secular for their liking, or to the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Some political rivals of the ruling party may indeed be happy to see the disturbances embarrass their opponents, but they certainly don't control them.

The fact that the police knew trouble was brewing is further illustrated by

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## London "Posties" Strike Against Privatization

By **Tom Levy**

On Oct. 18, I attended the first meeting of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) North West London postal workers strike support group. Convened by the Brent Trades Council and held at the Willesden Workingmen's Club, the meeting had 35 attendees, all of whom were posties themselves, other public sector unionists, and left-wing activists. Given that the meeting had been advertised primarily by word of mouth, the turnout spoke to the importance of the ongoing dispute. As attendees were told by the local CWU official who began the meeting, the struggle is about "more than just postmen on strike," and the union—one of the most militant in the UK and one with a long history of strike action—had "never seen so much support."

The meeting, held on a Wednesday

night, was scheduled to coincide with a second round of national strikes that were to begin the following day and run through the weekend. The strikes were called in order to defend Britain's national postal service, the Royal Mail, against so-called "modernization" and privatization, as well as to combat a deep-rooted culture of management bullying. When balloted for industrial action, postal workers voted three to one in favor. In the North West London group—which had been in dispute for 18 weeks before the start of national strikes—the numbers were even higher, with a full 97 percent of workers voting in support.

Talks between the CWU—which represents more than 120,000 postal workers—and Royal Mail have been in a near-continual breakdown, a situation

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## Corrections

The title of "IWW Rallies Against The Policies And Priorities Of The G-20," which appeared on page 1 of the November *Industrial Worker*, was wrongfully shortened. The Sept. 25 march in Pittsburgh was both against the policies and priorities of the G-20 and against the ongoing war and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Get the Word Out!

IWW members, branches, job shops and other affiliated bodies can get the word out about their project, event, campaign or protest each month in the *Industrial Worker*. Send announcements to [iw@iww.org](mailto: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  
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## Bosses Should Not Be Published In The IW

Fellow Workers,

Leaving aside the fact that Change to Win has not yet folded, Randy Shaw's review of "Embedded With Organized Labor" was disappointing. I have not yet read the book, but given Steve Early's body of work, I'm sure Shaw's right that the book is worth reading. But Shaw's claim that Change to Win was "far more progressive and activist" than the AFL-CIO misses the critical importance of Early's point—unions need to be controlled by their members.

The unions that formed Change to Win did not believe in member-run unions. Rather, they sought to leverage their way out of the crisis facing American unions, drastically expanding the millions of union dollars forked over to the politricksters and cutting backroom deals with employers in which they traded sweetheart contracts for permission to "organize." The SEIU in particular is thoroughly undemocratic at the national level, has repeatedly undercut workers' struggles in order to shore up its officials' power, and organized an assault on the last Labor Notes convention. I'm no fan of the AFL-CIO, but Change to Win never had anything in common with the Wobbly ideal of democratic, direct action unionism.

Jon Bekken

Dear *Industrial Worker*,

I was surprised to see a long article by Randy Shaw, titled "A Provocative Assessment of the U.S. Labor Movement," which appeared on page 8 of the October *Industrial Worker*.

In the first place, as the Executive Director of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic (THC), Shaw has the power to hire and fire workers—he's a boss. Since when do bosses get space in the IWW paper? In any case, here's how Shaw has used that power:

A former employee of his, Nate Holmes, was a steward at the THC. A new supervisor started making unilateral work rule changes and harassing Holmes, so he filed some grievances against her. This led to further harassment of Holmes, who was placed on administrative leave pending investigation in December 2007. In January 2008, Holmes was transferred to another department.

In October 2008, Randy Shaw was to present his book at a meeting of the SEIU Local 87 in San Francisco. A petition protesting Shaw's actions, signed by over 60 of Holmes' coworkers, was sent to Local 87. That same month, Randy Shaw sent a letter to Holmes ordering him to have no contact with the employ-



ees of THC. Incredibly, Shaw actually had the nerve to also send a letter to all THC employees ordering them to have no contact with Holmes!

The following month Holmes was fired from THC. His case is under appeal, although it is not clear how aggressively SEIU officials are willing to pursue it.

The San Francisco Bay Area General Membership Branch has sent a letter to Randy Shaw asking about this case. Shaw replied with the claim that he cannot comment since any comments would violate Nate Holmes's right to privacy. Nate Holmes has since sent Randy Shaw a letter waiving his right in this case. Shaw has refused to reply.

I hope this letter is prominently published in the *Industrial Worker* so that Randy Shaw is exposed for the union-busting acts that he is responsible for.

Sincerely,  
John Reimann, SF Bay Area GMB  
**Readers' Soapbox continues on 4**

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# Ninety Years After Wesley Everest's Lynching, The IWW Is Back In Centralia

By **Brendan Maslauskas Dunn**

Ninety years after the lynching of IWW timber worker and WWI veteran Nathan Wesley Everest, as well as the imprisonment of several other Wobblies and the roundup of radical and militant activists in the area, the IWW is back and fighting in Centralia, Wash.

In April 2009, IWW member Brooke Stepp was fired from her job from the Aerie Ballroom in Centralia for putting in the simple request to get paid for her mandatory training. Instead of paying Stepp, her boss Neil White went to the extreme of firing her.

The IWW was quick to act. Borrowing tactics from the Seattle Solidarity Network (SeaSol), on May 17, Wobblies and supporters from Olympia, Centralia

and visiting IWW author Andrej Grubic delivered a letter to the Aerie Ballroom stating demands that Stepp receive payment for the training she had already completed. Neil White wasn't there, so a picture was taken of the group holding the letter in front of the ballroom. The letter was mailed to White with the picture attached.

That same week the Olympia IWW received a letter from White's lawyer making the false claim that the training Stepp completed was not mandatory. White and his lawyer also filed a police report for the "incident" on May 17. However, enclosed in the letter was a paycheck for Stepp's training. It only took the one time presence of over a dozen Wobblies and a letter stating demands to push Neil White into a position to pay Brooke Stepp.

The Olympia IWW decided to continue what was dubbed the "Centralia Fight" through a series of call-ins to Neil White, a letter writing campaign and a

weekly informational picket outside of the Hub City Grill in Centralia, another business Neil White has a part in running which is conveniently located across the street from the Aerie Ballroom.

People were supportive and Wobblies were able to make contact with some of the Hub City workers, as well as some local Centralians, including a former employee of yet another business owned by Neil White (a martial arts

studio) who was also forced out of his job recently and is "fighting his own war against Neil" to local Centralians. Supporters from the IWW, SeaSol and Common Action came from as far away as Bremerton and Seattle for the pickets. There was also much support expressed from

the committee organizing the Centralia Tragedy commemoration, with many old time union and community members and labor organizers making remarks that Neil White was from "old money."

The Centralia fight enabled the IWW, if only slightly, to make some inroads into a small town that still has difficulty grasping its troubled past, and is looking uneasily into a dismal economic future. Perhaps the IWW can help the workers of Centralia find alternatives to a system that allows the Neil Whites of the world rake in millions and travel to far and distant lands on vacation, while those under his control make little money, have no benefits and are thrown on the street when they dare to stand up.

Although our numbers are much smaller than they were 90 years ago, Brooke Stepp is one of those Wobblies in the tradition of Everest who made a stand, although in a different way, and fought for what all workers deserve: dignity, economic security and power.

## Commemoration of Centralia Tragedy

In 1919, the small lumber and mining town of Centralia erupted in violence, leaving four American Legionaries dead, eight IWW members in prison for the next ten years or more and IWW organizer Nathan Wesley Everest lynched from a bridge by a mob.

To commemorate what was known as a massacre to some and a tragedy or conspiracy to others, community members of Centralia, members of various labor unions, labor councils, the Labor Center at Evergreen College, Olympia Wobblies and others came together to organize a series of events that would remember the dead and fight like hell for the living. On Nov. 13-14, 2009, a series of lectures, discussions, workshops and film screenings took place at Centralia College. Nearly 300 people showed up from across Washington, Oregon and British Columbia for the commemoration.

Folk musician Mark Ross—hailed as "America's greatest unknown folk legend" and IWW member for 38 years—kicked off the weekend with a number of songs to inspire the crowd, strumming on his guitar that has some of Joe Hill's ashes in it. He was followed by the screening of the film "Lewis County: Hope and Struggle" and a trailer for Michael Duffy's film in the making "The Forgotten: Armistice Day 1919." Duffy told the crowd that it was his wish that one day there will be a museum in Centralia dedicated to the Tragedy and the IWW.

Saturday started with a performance by Brendan Phillips, son of the late Utah Phillips, and Mark Ross. Following the performance was a panel discussion featuring three professors, one of them IWW member Aaron Goings who spoke about the history of the IWW in Aberdeen, Wash., women workers, and Finnish immigrants within the union. It was followed by a number of work-

shops on music and social justice, union organizing in retail and in the woods, Iraq Veterans Against the War organizing at Fort Lewis, and shots from footage that is used in yet another film that will be in the works on Centralia by Ursula Richards Coppola.

IWW members from Olympia, Portland and Seattle also gave a workshop on the IWW, which perhaps drew the largest crowd of all the workshops. It covered a plethora of issues and generated a discussion around the IWW today, local struggles, immigrant workers and women and diversity within the union. After lunch, Aaron Goings led a historical walking tour through downtown which covered a number of locations, including the ground where the old union hall was and Washington Park where the mural of Wesley Everest, clenched fists in the air, overlooks the monument dedicated to the killed Legionaries.

The events came to a close at the grave site of Wesley Everest, buried amongst unmarked graves of timber workers killed on the job and in the forests of Lewis County. Poems were read, soft words spoken and a number of songs were played by Centralia local Jim Smith whose relatives witnessed the mob dragging Everest through the streets. After people gathered around the gravesite sang "Solidarity Forever," those remaining shared stories of local IWW history, and Wobblies present discussed ways to make the union more cohesive in the region.

That night a fundraiser was held in Olympia to benefit the Olympia IWW's new office that just opened downtown on 4th Ave., the main drag that cuts through the center of the city. Mark Ross, Brendan Phillips and the local group Citizens Band had a stellar performance that brought the whole crowd to join in song.

What was so significant about the commemoration was that it brought more locals out than similar past events. An elderly woman, Joanne Baker, who attended the events said that it was the first time in her life that she was able to approach the subject. Three of her relatives were of the eight Wobblies convicted and sent to prison after the union hall was raided. For years, her family refused to talk about the affair, fearing that they would face a similar fate as Everest. The events brought Centralians out in the open to speak truthfully about a tragedy that most want to forget, brought members of different unions closer together and was cause not just for mourning, but organizing for a brighter tomorrow.

Wesley Everest and so many others like him gave their lives for a world where workers have power and democracy in the truest sense of the word. His spirit was felt by people at the conference who, like Everest, want to see that world take shape—and it lives on through those of us are fighting for that world.



IWW picket for FW Stepp. Photo: J. Rogue

## 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.

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Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

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# IWW Defeats Starbucks In Labor Board Appeal

By the Starbucks Workers Union

NEW YORK — The Starbucks Coffee Company is guilty of illegal union busting, according to a decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington, D.C. The Starbucks Workers Union (SWU) prevailed against Starbucks on a majority of the issues that the company appealed from a December Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) decision. The ALJ decision found Starbucks guilty of 13 violations, of which Starbucks appealed four to the NLRB. Starbucks is now ordered to return illegally fired New York City baristas Joseph Agins, Jr. and Daniel Gross to work with back pay, and to allow workers to wear pro-union pins to work.

“The Board’s decision affirms yet again that Starbucks is willing to violate the legal rights of workers who are organizing for secure work hours and a voice on the job,” said union member Aaron Kocher. “This victory is a big boost to baristas around the country who are choosing to stand together for fair treatment at work.”

Starbucks will now have to comply with the ruling, or appeal its loss yet again. The NLRB reversed the decision of the ALJ on the firing of another worker, Isis Saenz. The SWU is exploring its options for appealing that decision.

The NLRB’s decision is just the latest in a string of legal troubles for Starbucks. They have opted to settle numerous other unfair labor practice



Graphic: Christopher Hutchinson

charges brought by the SWU in Grand Rapids, Minneapolis, and New York. The decision also comes at a bad time for the company, as its stock price is finally gaining lost ground after laying off thousands of baristas and slashing benefits. This decision could negatively affect the company’s carefully created “socially-conscious” image in the eyes of consumers, as well as its value in the eyes of investors.

For the SWU, the decision represents a huge victory, and gives new momentum to shop-floor organizing efforts. “We always try to protect each other from management retaliation through direct on-the-job action,” explained Kocher, “but it’s good to know as well that the law is on our side when facing such a vicious union-buster as Starbucks.”

# 100 Years Of Free Speech In Missoula

By Dave Jones

In late September 1909, IWW organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (the “Rebel Girl”) joined her husband Jack Jones and others in Missoula, Montana, to set up an office and begin organizing timber workers and other laborers around the issue of “job sharks”—unscrupulous employment agents who ripped off their workers.

The most effective tactic was setting up a soapbox just outside one of these “agents” place of business on the corner of Front and Higgins Streets, and speaking out in no uncertain terms

against the system. Soon large crowds were gathering which upset businessmen and the city establishment who were often linked to the agents. The police were told to enforce an old public nuisance ordinance and one of the first to be arrested was IWW organizer Frank Little, who was murdered eight years later in Butte by capitalists. Determined to fight the ordinance by filling the jails, the call went out to “all footloose rebels and Wobblies” who soon streamed into town to take their turn on the soapbox and be arrested. After nearly two weeks, the city backed down, the prisoners were set free, and street corner organiz-



The old Bottling House.

Photo: Dave Jones

ers were no longer harassed. The “Free Speech Fights” continued on from there in Spokane, Everett, Fresno and other cities, bloodier and at times deadly.

On Friday, Oct. 2, the Two Rivers IWW, located in Missoula, Montana, celebrated the 100-year anniversary of this pivotal Wobbly-led Free Speech Fight with a historical reenactment of

the free speech fight. Students and teachers from the local university, city council members, the mayor and IWW members participated in the reenactment. This important slice of Montana history

was presented to more than 200 citizens gathered on the site of the original fight, which the mayor officially designated as the Free Speech Corner. He also announced the city’s support for a permanent, bronze soapbox monument on the site.

The Two Rivers IWW has used this busy downtown corner since its inception for open soapbox free speech. Everyone is invited and all viewpoints welcome. We find this venue productive for recruiting new members and building public speaking skills and confidence in our membership. We also hope the commemoration reminded others of how direct action gets the goods.

# Workers Call On Developers To Ensure Human Rights Standards

By United Workers

Inner Harbor workers in Baltimore, Md., announced on Nov. 4 a major ramp-up in the Human Rights Zone Campaign by calling on Inner Harbor developers—The Cordish Companies and General Growth Properties (GGP)—to ensure basic human rights standards at the Inner Harbor.

Following the announcement, workers and allies made Cordish’s poverty zone model visible through a theatrical illustration of the Inner Harbor profit chain. In the performance, actors representing developers sat on ladders holding silver platters of public money, while a crab, a sports player and a cheesecake—representing the three main Harbor employers—exploited their workers.

At the end of the performance, workers united in solidarity across restaurants to demand the right to work with dignity, the right to healthcare and the right to education. By encircling the developers and enveloping them in songs

and chants, workers and community allies forced them to come down off their pedestals and work side by side with workers to create a human rights zone at the Inner Harbor.

Having rebuffed United Workers’ call for a six month dialogue to resolve human rights abuses, Phillips Seafood has instead held closed-door meetings to intimidate employees. As a result, workers decided to bypass the restaurant-by-restaurant strategy and instead target the top of the profit chain: the developers.

Because control of the harbor rests in Cordish and GGP’s hands, they are responsible for the human rights violations that take place at their establishments. Low-wage workers demand that Cordish and GGP enter into a 15-year Economic Human Rights Agreement. This agreement would require restaurants and retailers to pay the state living wage and ensure human rights standards in order to keep their leases at the harbor. In addition, developers would contribute

directly to a fund that would provide healthcare and education opportunities for all low-wage workers and their families in the Inner Harbor.

For too long, Cordish and the GGP have controlled the Inner Harbor with little regard for the impact a development dependent on low-wage, seasonal work has on the lives of workers and the city of Baltimore. Cordish, a privately owned multibillion-dollar company, has used the Inner Harbor as its model tourist development to attract more tax breaks and subsidies from struggling cities across the United States, hoping to replicate the Inner Harbor and its promise of revitalization. This “model” fails to reveal the poverty zone that has been created by our harbor.

Addressing the crowd of allies and pedestrians before the theatrical performance, Dominic Washington, an Inner Harbor worker, called on Cordish and GGP to “be on the side of justice and ensure that every low-wage worker at the Inner Harbor has their rights respected.”

# Catholic Teachers Strike In NJ

By John Kalwaic

On Oct. 19, teachers from the Catholic Teachers Union (CTU) went on strike for several days after failing to reach a contract with the local Catholic Dioceses at three high schools in southern New Jersey: Paul VI High School, Holy Spirit High School and Camden Catholic High School.

The Dioceses and the principals of these schools told students to come to classes even though their teachers would not be teaching. Only a few teachers crossed the picket line and some substitute teachers were used at Holy Spirit High School. Students were warned that if they did not come to class they would not be eligible to participate in after-school activities. Many students joined the striking teachers with their parents’ support and permission. The teachers chanted “we want to teach” and the students responded “we want to learn.” The CTU and the Diocese reached a tentative agreement on Oct. 22 and the strike ended.

# Goodbye, Fellow Worker Toivo “Toby” Halonen!

By x353983

On Sept. 15, 2009, FW Toivo “Toby” Halonen, membership number X232186, passed away at the age of 91. Born in Copper Cliff, Ontario, in 1917, Halonen settled in Cleveland in 1923. Halonen, whose parents were members of the IWW, first joined the union as a “Junior Wobbly” around the time of the 1927 Colorado Coal Strike, and lined up as an IWW proper in 1936.

1930s Cleveland was a place of vibrant growth for the IWW. FW Halonen contributed to this by submitting articles to IWW publications including the *One Big Union Monthly*, and through his active involvement in the Metal and Machinery Workers Industrial Union. In a 2006 interview, he recalled Big Jim Thompson speaking with a few hundred workers at Cleveland’s Draper Steel Barrel.

The IWW hall on 25th Street hosted a “maids’ night out” every Thursday night. Many women in the city worked as maids and cooks and had Thursday night off. The Cleveland IWW used this time to encourage and facilitate organi-

zation amongst these workers.

FW Halonen also recalled efforts to organize the American Stove facility in Lorrain, Ohio. The IWW was met by opposition from the USWA, and the CIO-affiliated union employed a priest who told workers to vote against the IWW. On the IWW side, organizing efforts were aided by old-time Hungarian members of the Bermunkas Group, which published an IWW Hungarian language newspaper into the 1950s. FW Halonen felt if the IWW had won at National Screw, it would have been a strategic victory allowing us to push back the more conservative organizing efforts of the UAW.

FW Halonen attended the IWW-run school, Work Peoples’ College, in Duluth, Minnesota and counted former General Secretary-Treasurer Carl Keller among his teachers. Recalling the presence of kids at the College, he remembered the practical jokes that were played there, including suspending Frank Little’s death mask from a rope to scare.

Halonen also spent time in Ashtabu-

la, Ohio. He recalled that a group of Finnish Wobblies, and their friends from the Torppa Hall labor group, had a community in Ashtabula along the lake shore they named “Haywood Beach,” in honor of Big Bill Haywood. They later changed the name to “Hay-Wood” to avoid potential persecution. Haywood Beach was ultimately taken over by Finnish Lutherans.

FW Halonen recalled the numerous debates in the IWW over the existence of time contracts in Cleveland, and remembered members writing in to the “General Organization Bulletin” about how they had been in Goldfield, Nevada around 1906, when the IWW organized a large segment of the town, arguing that the union simply needed to post its demands, rather than engage in the tedious process of collective bargaining with agreements set in stone.

Throughout his life, Halonen met many other notable Wobblies. In one remarkable encounter around 1940, he met I.U. 510 organizer Ben Fletcher at an IWW meeting in New York City. Warren Billings was also there and talked

about the support he had received from the union when he was in prison because of his labor activities. Also present was Justus Ebert, who had written many IWW publications.

FW Halonen worked on a radial drill press at a UAW-affiliated machine tool shop called Reynolds Metals. Reynolds closed shop in 1976 when Halonen was 59 years old. He had been regularly involved in the IWW for many years and his wife, Dagmar, had also contributed to the *Industrial Worker*. FW Halonen considered himself to be an anarcho-syndicalist, and contributed extensively to that movement as well.

He often recalled a quote which he felt summed-up his sentiments quite well, and helped him keep an upbeat attitude over the years: “When all else fails, man will use reason.”

I am sure FW Halonen would endorse the sentiment that it is not too late to use reason and join the IWW!

FW Halonen is survived by thousands of like-minded people, including his son Michael and daughter Rebecca.

Rest in peace, Fellow Worker!

# Worker Occupations And The Future Of Radical Labor:

By Diane Krauthamer

This interview was conducted on Oct. 9, 2009, at Professor Noam Chomsky's office at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass.

**Diane Krauthamer:** I would like to start this interview with a discussion of the economic crisis and how workers can deal with the issues which we face. In your recent piece titled "Crisis and Hope: Theirs and Ours," which was published in the Boston Review, you state that the "the financial crisis will presumably be patched up somehow, while leaving the institutions that created it pretty much in place." Following on that, there has been a recent upsurge of militant industrial action in workplaces, primarily throughout Europe, and also in North America. As you know, the Republic Windows and Doors Factory in Chicago was the first factory occupation in the U.S. since the 1930s.

**Noam Chomsky:** No, not quite, because the 1979 strike against U.S. Steel in Youngstown, Ohio, was an occupation—and actually, that's a model that really should be pursued now. They went on from striking to trying to have the workforce and the communities take over the abandoned factories that U.S. Steel was dismantling. The legal effort that followed was led by the radical labor lawyer Staughton Lynd. They didn't win in the courts, but they could have won, and they would have had enough support. It could have meant a lot.

**DK:** I would also like to discuss how workers are responding to mass layoffs. I feel what they are aiming for are parochial gains without thinking more long-term of how they can move towards workers' self-management.

**NC:** That's what the IWW should be doing: providing that spark. You're right, it's reactive. But the same was true of the sit-down strikes in the 1930s. I mean the reason the sit-down strikes struck such fear in the hearts of management was that they knew that a sit-down strike was just one step short of taking over the factory.

**DK:** I feel at the moment we're gaining numbers and we're gaining a lot of strength and power, but the rest of the American labor movement does not perceive that we are very serious. It is a very difficult feat to go from what we're doing



IWW Editor Diane Krauthamer speaks with Noam Chomsky on Oct. 9.

Photo: Charngechi Way

now to really being a part of the broader labor movement in the U.S., which is important if we are to provide that spark.

**NC:** The U.S. is different from Europe and other industrial countries in this respect. The U.S. is, to a very unusual extent, a business-run society. There are all kinds of reasons for that—it has no feudal background, so institutions that remained in place in Europe did not remain in place here. There are a lot of reasons. But the fact of the matter is that the U.S. is run by an unusually class-conscious, dedicated business class that has a very violent labor history, much worse than in Europe. The attack on unions has been far more extreme here, and it has been much more successful. Also, the business propaganda has been far more successful. Anti-union propaganda has been considerably more successful here than in Europe, even among working people who would benefit [from] unions. In fact, a rather striking aspect of business propaganda in the United States is the demonization of government, starting after the Second World War.

The Second World War ended with a radicalization of the population in the United States and everywhere else, and called for all kinds of things like popular takeovers, government intervention, and worker takeovers of factories. Business propagated a tremendous propaganda offensive. The scale surprised me when I read the scholarship—it's enormous, and it's been very effective. There were two major targets: one is unions, the other is

democracy. Well, [to them] democracy means getting people to regard government as an alien force that's robbing them and oppressing them, not as their government. In a democracy it would be your government. For example, in a democracy the day when you pay your taxes, April 15, would be a day of celebration, because you're getting together to provide resources for the programs you decided on. In the United States, it's a day of mourning because this alien force—the government—is coming to rob you of your hard-earned money. That's the general attitude, and it's a tremendous victory for the opponents of democracy, and, of course, any privileged sector is going to hate democracy. You can see it in the healthcare debate.

The majority of the population thinks that if the government runs healthcare, they're going to take away your freedom. At the same time, the public favors a national healthcare program. The contradiction is somehow unresolved. In the case of the business propaganda, it's particularly ironic because while business wants the population to hate the government, they want the population to love the government. Namely, they're in favor of a very powerful state which works in their interest. So you have to love that government, but hate the government that might work in your interest and that you could control. That's an interesting propaganda task, but it's been carried out very well. You can see it in the worship of Reagan, which portrays him as somebody who saved us from government. Actually he

was an apostle of big government. Government grew under Reagan. He was the strongest opponent of free markets in the post-war history among presidents. But it doesn't matter what the reality is; they concocted an image that you worship. It's hard to achieve that, especially in a free society, but it's been done, and that's the kind of thing that activists in the IWW have to work against, right on the shop floor. It's not so simple, but it's been done before.

**DK:** You mentioned that business is very class conscious. Can you elaborate on that statement?

**NC:** Well, all you have to do is read the business literature. In the 1930s they were very frightened and they were concerned about how the rising power of the masses was hazardous to industrialists. They used straight Marxist rhetoric—just the values were changed. The literature is like

that—they are constantly talking about the masses, the danger they pose, and how to control them. They understand what they're doing, and they're very class conscious. They press policies which work for their interests. For example, the insurance industries and the big banks are absolutely euphoric now—on the business pages they don't even conceal it—because they've succeeded in coming out of the crisis even stronger than they were before, and in a better position to lay the basis for the next crisis. But they don't care, because they'll get bailed out again. That's class consciousness with a vengeance.

**DK:** On the topic of how businesses use propaganda, I would say now they use propaganda more so for union-busting than they use the violent tactics. Would you agree?

**NC:** For a while, after the Second World War, when there was strong support for labor, this was done subtly. But since Reagan, it has been done openly. I mean Reagan bitterly hated unions and wanted them destroyed. This began with the air controllers' strike and went on from there. The Reagan administration told the business world that they were not going to enforce the labor laws. The number of illegal firings tripled during the Reagan years. It was at that time that you started getting these companies that specialized in how to destroy unions. They don't make it a secret, and they have all sorts of techniques for manage-

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# An Exclusive Interview With Noam Chomsky

ment to destroy unions. Well, when Clinton came along, it sort of moderated a little bit, but Clinton had a different device for breaking unions called NAFTA [North America Free Trade Agreement]. Because the government was entirely lawless, employers could exploit NAFTA to threaten union organizers with transfer. It's illegal, but when you've got a lawless government, it doesn't matter if it's illegal. I think the number of union drives blocked increased by about 50 percent. Part of the NAFTA legislation required studies of labor practices, and there was quite a good study that came out by a labor historian on the use of NAFTA to undermine and destroy unions. Well, that was going on in the Clinton years, then, of course Bush... who we don't need to even talk about. But starting with Regan it became quite open, the attack on unions. It wasn't the Pinkertons anymore, but it was just not applying the laws.

**DK:** We're seeing that very much in the IWW, especially in the Starbucks Workers Union, whereby Starbucks will put out all kinds of anti-union propaganda both internally, within the company, and externally. A lot of what they do is tell workers that they don't need a union.

**NC:** They're better off without it, that's the Whole Foods line.

**DK:** Right, they use the line of Corporate Social Responsibility, and a lot of it is very effective.

**NC:** It is.

**DK:** So how could we, as a small, independent labor union, work to fight against that kind of propaganda?

**NC:** You've just got to get people organized and tell them the truth. There aren't any magic tricks to it. You know, sometimes it's pretty amazing. Actually, I mentioned a pretty striking case of this in "Crisis and Hope," which was the Caterpillar case in the early 1990s. Caterpillar was quite important because that was the first manufacturing industry that used Reaganite strike-breaking techniques. They illegally called in scabs to break a major strike. It was reported pretty well in the Chicago Tribune, who pointed out something very interesting. They said that the workers got very little support in Peoria when scabs illegally broke the strike, and that was particularly striking because that whole community had been built up by the union—it was a union-based community. But when it came to the crunch, the community itself didn't support the union. Now that's kind of interesting about Obama, because Obama was supposedly a community organizer in Chicago at that time. Now I'm sure he read the *Chicago Tribune*, so he knew about it, but when he went to show his solidarity with the

workforce, the first place he went was Caterpillar. I don't think he's forgotten, and the labor movement didn't react. Even radical labor historians didn't remember. It was only 15 years ago, after all, but that's a real triumph of propaganda in many ways.

It's a lot of work to reconstruct a strong labor offensive, but it's happened before. I mean in the 1920s the labor movement was almost completely destroyed. Well, in the 1930s it really revived and became pretty radical. Things can happen, but not by themselves. I mean, then you had the Communist Party, which was right at the heart of civil rights activism and labor activism and so on, but something else has to provide it. You don't want to have their Russia-worship, but domestically they had a pretty good record. I can remember it pretty well from childhood, because my family was mostly union people.

**DK:** Your father was in the IWW, right?

**NC:** He was in the IWW... but do you want to know the truth? [laughs]

**DK:** Yes, I do.

**NC:** He came over as an immigrant and didn't know any English. He went to work at a sweat shop in Baltimore. He told me later that this guy was coming around, and the guy seemed to be for the workers, so he signed up. It turned out that guy was an IWW organizer [laughs]. My father didn't regret signing up; he just really didn't know what was going on.

**DK:** What industry was he in?

**NC:** I don't even know if I ever knew [laughing]—some sweatshop in Baltimore. I knew with my other relatives—some of the women were in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and men were shop boys and things like that. I happened to be in Philadelphia, but the family was in New York. I could see what the union was doing for them. It really saved their lives. I had two spinster aunts who were seamstresses, and of course unemployed in the 1930s, but the union gave them a life. They had a couple of weeks in the country for a union installation and they had educational programs and all sorts of things. There was a life, you know, a real community. And they were members of the Communist Party—they didn't care one way or another about Russia, they just cared about the United States.

**DK:** On that note, I'm also looking to think ahead with what's in the future for the labor movement and the IWW. More generally, if you had one piece of advice to offer future generations of Wobblies—especially in light of the tough financial times that we are facing and will probably continue to face for a long time in the

Western world—what would it be?

**NC:** Well, I get a lot of letters from people. When I go home tonight I'll have 15 letters today from mostly young kids who don't like what's going on and want to do something about it, and [they ask me] if I can give them some advice as to what they should do, or can I tell them what to read or something. It doesn't work like that. I mean, everything depends very much on who you

are, what your values are, what your commitments are, what circumstances you live in and what options you're willing to undertake, and that determines what you ought to be doing. There are some very general ideas that people can keep in mind; they're kind of truisms. It's only worth mentioning them because they're always denied.

First of all, don't believe anything you hear from power systems. So if Obama or the boss or the newspapers or anyone else tells you they're doing this, that, or the other thing, dismiss it or assume the opposite is true, which it often is. You have to rely on yourself and your associates—gifts don't come from above; you're going to win them, or you won't have them, and you win by struggle, and that requires understanding and serious analysis of the options and the circumstances, and then you can do a lot. So take right now, for example, there is a right-wing populist uprising. It's very common, even on the left, to just ridicule them, but that's not the right reaction. If you look at those people and listen to them on talk radio, these are people with real grievances. I listen to talk radio a lot and it's kind of interesting. If you can sort of suspend your knowledge of the world and just enter into the world of the people who are calling in, you can understand them. I've never seen a study, but my sense is that these are people who feel really aggrieved. These people think, "I've done everything right all my life, I'm a god-fearing Christian, I'm white, I'm male, I've worked hard, and I carry a gun. I do everything I'm supposed to do. And I'm getting shafted." And in fact they are getting shafted. For 30 years their wages have stagnated or declined, the social conditions have worsened, the children are going crazy, there are no schools, there's nothing, so somebody must be doing something to them, and they want to know who it is. Well Rush



Noam Chomsky at his M.I.T. office.

Photo: Charnghi Way

Limbaugh has answered—it's the rich liberals who own the banks and run the government, and of course run the media, and they don't care about you—they just want to give everything away to illegal immigrants and gays and communists and so on.

Well, you know, the reaction we should be having to them is not ridicule, but rather self-criticism. Why aren't we organizing them? I mean, we are the ones that ought to be organizing them, not Rush Limbaugh. There are historical analogs, which are not exact, of course, but are close enough to be worrisome. This is a whiff of early Nazi Germany. Hitler was appealing to groups with similar grievances, and giving them crazy answers, but at least they were answers; these groups weren't getting them anywhere else. It was the Jews and the Bolsheviks [that were the problem].

I mean, the liberal democrats aren't going to tell the average American, "Yeah, you're being shafted because of the policies that we've established over the years that we're maintaining now." That's not going to be an answer. And they're not getting answers from the left. So, there's an internal coherence and logic to what they get from Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and the rest of these guys. And they sound very convincing, they're very self-confident, and they have an answer to everything—a crazy answer, but it's an answer. And it's our fault if that goes on. So one thing to be done is don't ridicule these people, join them, and talk about their real grievances and give them a sensible answer, like, "take over your factories."

*This interview was edited for length and clarity. To listen to the full interview, please visit <http://www.authoritysmashers.wordpress.com>. Thanks to Charnghi Way and the "Authority Smashing Hour" radio show.*

## Contribute to the new Little Red Songbook!

"The revolution ain't over as long as I haven't stopped singing." This could have been Joe Hill's last statement. But instead of saying it, he did it.

Many unions are moribund because they've lost their fighting culture. By culture, we mean the irrepressible spirit of opposition which is kept alive by barbed humor in cartoon, written and lyrical forms. Now's your chance to show our fellow workers all over the globe that we can still kick it.

Send in your poems, songs (with written melodies or MP3s) to the Songbook Committee which is preparing to put a new edition of the Little Red Songbook into your jeans pockets by next May Day. So get that scurrilous art in now! Contact [jgrimfeinberg@riseup.net](mailto:jgrimfeinberg@riseup.net).



## Limericks on Chomsky

By Doug Tarnopol

The father of modern linguistics  
Marshaled with facts and statistics  
A crushing critique  
Of his country's mystique  
That commissars met with ballistics.

The commissars hated his bent  
But failed to dispel his dissent  
Which spread like the flu  
Cause everyone knew:  
Elites manufacture consent.

Disciples anew gain in traction  
Which drives the elites to distraction.  
As Chomsky insists,  
His value consists  
In organizational action.

Disciples of old kill the father.  
You wonder why any would bother.  
To do such a murder  
Could not be absurder  
Since all that is shown is their pother.

This classic reaction formation,  
A typically strong indication  
Of blessings denied  
By mentors who eyed  
Their progeny once with elation,

Accounts for the whole situation.  
Like Hitchens's most recent creation:  
A bargain-rack Blair  
With none of the flair --  
A bar mitzvah boy in deflation.

Yes, Chomsky's a man and thus flawed.  
His acolytes are overawed.  
But as Orwell said  
Of Gandhi's life's thread,  
"There's far less to blame than to laud."

So, let me now end with a mention  
Of Chomsky's most precious extension,  
Of wisdom long noted  
Which ought to be quoted  
Until you are sure of retention.

It's not about Language or Reason  
Or theories that go out of season  
But, rather, advice  
Astute and precise  
Applicable always, but treason.

Book & Movie Reviews

# Toward A Working Class Analysis Of The Tourism Industry

Ross Laguna, Nelson. "Sun, Fun & Slavery: How the South Became the North's Playground." *Exile Press 2009, 81 pages, paperback, \$8.*

By x348328

This booklet on the impact of tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean is long on rhetoric and short on analysis. But it does provoke questions about international tourism that need working class answers, question such as: How does tourism work as an engine for colonization and exploitation in the global South? And, how does the working class in North America and Europe, whose money fuel this industry, get back on the right side of the class struggle?

Nelson Ross Laguna is an Ottawa activist, a staff representative of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and a dual card IWW member. The booklet itself is easy to read and his passion for the subject is evident. At times, I can imagine Ross Laguna grabbing the shoulder of a sunburned, slightly drunk American tourist and yelling: "The brown people serving you are human beings! Treat them with respect! And guess what? Her boss is your boss back home so wake up!"

The booklet's specific target is package tours and an increasingly closed supply chain. He argues that tourism industrialists have taken advantage of liberalized trade and property ownership rules to create a money loop that recruits tourists from the north, places them in foreign-owned, prefabricated playgrounds such as Cancún, Mexico,

and then whisks the profits back to the resort's American, Canadian or European owners. These closed tourism systems devour local land and resources and offer only low-paying jobs to local residents. They destroy local businesses and other sources of income and ignore and diminish local culture. Ross Laguna cites an International Ecotourism Society study that says more than 50 percent of tourism income leaves the host country. He mentions Acapulco, Mexico, as an example of such destructive practices. Acapulco has seen 80 local businesses close, in part due to these foreign-owned resorts. With this negative impact, he argues that package tourism and resorts are, in fact, colonial outposts of an imperialist capitalist world order.

On a tangent, Ross Laguna also argues that liberalized trade does create jobs outside of tourism, but these jobs are in maquiladoras (sweatshop factories), based in duty-free export zones, which also funnel money out of the country and pay workers poorly in a union-busting environment. In effect, tourism and maquiladoras are like a forest fire, racing across Latin America and the Caribbean, killing wildlife and sucking all the oxygen and hope out of the region.

Thus, this economic model is terrorism, segregation, slavery and genocide in one, he claims. While the rhetoric is over-the-top, the reader is forced to think it through. Are package tours to Puerto Vallarta, Cuba or Jamaica innocent, fun, or are they reinforcing a

bosses' paradise on a global scale? Are North American and European working class people on holiday really complicit soldiers of capitalism deployed for occupation and exploitation?

While the booklet is, at times, a rant, it does provide a skeleton analysis of a much-needed larger critique of the international tourism industry. However, the lack of basic facts in the booklet hampers the reader's ability to understand the scale of this industry not only in the Americas, but also globally. The Caribbean and Latin America, which are the focus of the booklet, together account for \$216.8 billion in tourism dollars and 14.6 million tourism jobs, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council. The Caribbean's dependency on tourism is most notable, with the industry providing one of every 7.2 jobs. But this is only a small part of a global industry which generates \$5.47 trillion and employs 219.8 million people. Although the global recession has hit it hard in the short-term, these numbers are likely to keep growing. The Council's figures also highlight how the tourist destinations of North America and the European Union combined account for nearly 60 percent of the global tourism trade. It would be a stretch to apply Ross Laguna's logic that tourism is colonialist terrorism to the tourism industry within the U.S. or the E.U.

The best parts of the booklet are Ross Laguna's anecdotes from his own travels. One such moment—when the American abroad asks the room full of

Chileans and Arubans whether he was a foreigner—helps illustrate the depth of class unconsciousness held by travelers from the North. The worst parts of the booklet are the appropriation of the Zapatistas under the anarchist banner and the unthinking defense of the Cuban tourism industry's wage garnishing schemes through state-ownership in the name of anti-imperialism and national independence.

Ross Laguna does not claim to have the answers and describes his book as a "primer guide." While Ross Laguna steps back from urging a boycott of package tours or ending international leisure travel altogether, he leaves the question of what should be done hanging. Yet by providing no pat answer, he continues to provoke. Hopefully, Ross Laguna, some of this booklet's readers, and Fellow Workers in the industry itself will build a genuine working class analysis of the tourism industry and find answers to that age-old question: What is to be done?



Graphic: akpress.org

# Margaret Killjoy Popularizes Anarchism Through Radical Fiction

Killjoy, Margaret (ed). "Mythmakers and Lawbreakers: Anarchist Writers on Fiction." *AK Press, 2009. 140 pages, paperback, \$12.*

By David Feldmann

Finally there's a book which celebrates the impact that radical fiction has had on the anarchist and left-libertarian community. For too long, socially conscious speculative fiction has been dismissed as light reading for daydreamers and fools too undisciplined to study dense, academic tomes sure to bring enlightenment. With all respect to authors of theoretical works, the importance of social commentary in the realm of fiction should not be understated. The interviews conducted by Margaret Killjoy in "Mythmakers and Lawbreakers" show how incredibly important and effective imaginative literature can be in popularizing the anarchist ideal of decentralized and horizontal organization of everyday life.

As many of the interviewees in this book will attest, radical fiction is often a hard sell to publishers and the general public alike. While some of the authors featured are solidly established in the

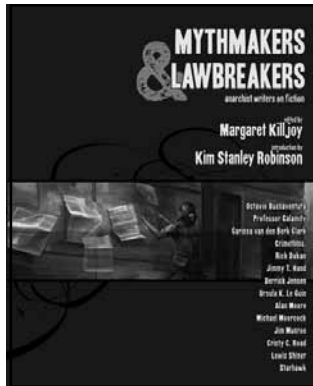
mainstream publishing world, others are writing on the margins, choosing to self-publish or taking up non-literary day jobs to supplement the income received from their art. The one thing all these individuals have in common, to a greater or lesser degree, is their commitment to philosophical anarchism and the willingness to disseminate radical ideas through popular fiction. More than one of the writers included here

acknowledges works like "The Dispossessed" by Ursula K. LeGuin in shaping their beliefs and values. Lewis Shiner, a speculative fiction writer who has made his writings available as free downloads online, mentions that the 2005 graphic novel, "Wobblies!," inspired him to sign up with the IWW. Two standout artists, the aforementioned Ursula K. LeGuin and Alan Moore (undoubtedly the most financially successful of the writers featured), admit that they've had relatively

few problems in getting radical work published due primarily to their publishers faith in the profitable potential of their creations. Ironically, capitalism sometimes allows for conventional outlets to distribute subversive material provided that it is making a profit for its financier. Interestingly, all the writers interviewed in "Mythmakers and Lawbreakers" seem to exude a humble satisfaction at being embraced and respected by the larger anarchist community. Fans of speculative fiction should feel grateful that we've got literary minds like those featured in this book working to smash the stereotypes generally applied to the genre.

Thankfully, the AK Press collective has had the good sense to publish a book nerds like myself have been anxiously waiting for—a concise yet rich collection of anarchist and anarchist-leaning writers speaking frankly about their political philosophies and the influence this has had on their work. Its only flaw is that

it left me wanting more. Not just longer interviews but perhaps more interviews and a greater attempt at contextualizing the project as a whole. I would have loved to see interviews with Scottish anarchist and occultist Grant Morrison or New York graphic artist Eric Drooker. Also, a substantial essay exploring the history of speculative fiction and the tendency of its writers to address issues of social significance would have been very apt. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the introduction by Kim Stanley Robinson and the editors notes, conclusion and appendices are very well written and relevant. However, it is abundantly clear that Margaret Killjoy had both the skill and the passion toward the subject matter to present the reader with a far more in depth analysis of anarchist fiction. Hopefully we can look forward to a second edition someday to satisfy the demands of readers looking for more of what "Mythmakers and Lawbreakers" has to offer. In the meantime, I encourage Wobblies to check out this new book. It has the potential to be a gateway for those not already immersed in left-libertarian fiction.



Graphic: akpress.org

# Soapboxing Lessons From Michael Moore

Director: Michael Moore. "Capitalism: A Love Story." *Overture Films, 2009. 127 minutes.*

By Kenneth Miller

Michael Moore demonstrates how to effectively "soapbox" for members of the IWW in his recent film, "Capitalism: A Love Story." He shows how a roll of yellow police tape or a pillow case with a dollar sign drawn onto it can be used as props to create simple, yet effective street theater which people can connect with. Michael Moore made this film as a lesson for members of our union: every Wobbly needs to feel comfortable with the art of soapboxing.

When I went to see "Capitalism: A Love Story" at a neighborhood movie theater, I saw half a dozen people I knew, two of whom were Fellow Workers. They left the film feeling validated and invigorated. "Wow, a mainstream film with a theme that capitalism cannot

be reformed," one of them commented. The film's effectiveness could be seen outside of the theater as well, as the folks from the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Single-Payer Healthcare campaign were leafleting outside and successfully recruiting people to support single payer healthcare. The film made it easy for people to envision cutting the insurance companies out of the equation because they are useless capitalist parasites.

The last time I felt so good about a movie—validated, empowered, connected to something in mainstream culture—was when I saw Bill Maher's movie "Religulous."

When more Wobblies get up the guts to soapbox around PNC Park in Pittsburgh, we will have built a Civil Rights Bridge to the floor of the global sweatshop. When more Wobblies soapbox outside of Starbucks, it will lead to more baristas joining the IWW.



Graphic: Tom Keough



# Philadelphia Transit Workers Strike: An IWW Report

Continued from 1

Politicians and the media lined up to criticize the union immediately. Fox News interviewed Mayor Michael Nutter to discuss the strike, and he called the union's decision to strike "despicable." The Pennsylvania governor, capitalist newspaper editors, the corporate media all denounced the union, finding every angle of the story they could to criticize the union. Even the local National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate only covered the strike from the customers and politician's perspective, leaving workers totally out until Day 4 of the strike.

Public opinion was not with the strike. The only union to show any support was the United Taxi Workers Alliance (UTWA), who held a meeting to discuss a solidarity action. With taxis becoming the only motorized alternative to mass transit, they were in a unique position to add to the pressure of the strike. No other trade union in the city offered any support for the transit workers, not officially, and often citizens interviewed on TV would go out of their way to state that they were pro-union, but that they did not support this strike or the TWU.

The major criticism heaped on the workers from all sides is that they are greedy, unwilling to make a sacrifice in this economy and should be thankful for their jobs in the first place. The striking workers didn't buy into it—picket lines were filled with informed and cheerful workers who understood the reasons for their fight, and knew that the bosses would concede nothing without a fight.

The union did not do a good job, however, of representing itself to the community or the media. It did not hold a press conference until Day 3 of the strike, and did not make the issues behind the strike clear to the general public. The members may have understood it, but most other workers certainly did not understand why the strike was necessary.

Finally, one of the major issues that emerged from the negotiations as a sticking point was the management of the workers' pension fund. The workers' pension fund is only currently funded at 53 percent, with big losses from risky investments in the stock market taking

away from the fund. The SEPTA management pension, however, is currently funded somewhere between 63 and 72 percent, depending on different sources.

With all of the collapse in pension funds and banks in the past several years, TWU Local 234 wanted assurance that the company would put more money into the system; SEPTA management, however, wanted the workers to pay for their poor investments by increasing their contributions to the pension fund. This offensive notion was one of the main reasons for the strike.

As the strike wended into its 4th day, politicians, especially the governor, took to holding press conferences almost daily announcing that an agreement was reached, that the strike would be over at any moment, and that the union was "insane" not to end the strike now. This tactic wound through the weekend as morale stayed high, and intense negotiations continued.

By the evening of Nov. 8, the two sides had reached a tentative agreement, and the system was started back up again in time for the Monday morning commute. The end result looked a lot like the initial offer to the union: 11.5 percent wage increases over five years, a signing bonus, a small pension contribution increase from the workers, and no independent audit of the pension fund, which was an important union demand.

On the positive side, major take-aways were held off, including: No increase of health care contributions from the workers, improved dental coverage and retaining union-friendly work rules. Concessions were made, but no rights or givebacks were handed over to the company, and in the end it appears that the bargaining committee got what they wanted.

At the time this story was written, a lot of this information had still not been made public, so it is hard to say if the strike was a success or not. The union members also get to vote on the tentative contract, which will happen in the next several weeks, so this fight may not be over. But for now, the trains, trolleys, and buses are running again in Philadelphia.

## SEPTA Strike Commentary

The 2009 SEPTA strike appears to be over for now here in Philadelphia, and there are a lot of lessons to be learned from it. In a struggle between a public agency, a trade union, and politicians there are a lot of ups and downs. Transit strikes in particular are never that well received, but this one was mismanaged with a total lack of community support from the start.

To make the strike more effective, the union should have taken the resources that it dedicated to the 2008 Presidential Election and gone door to door across the city to educate the community about their issues and try to gain the community support. This should have been followed with community meetings, joint meetings with other unions, resolutions at churches, community groups, and the central labor council, just as a start.

What we saw instead, was a union preparing to go it alone, into a strike that is probably only one notch less popular than a garbage strike. Without a proper inoculation campaign in the community, the union was successfully demonized as a bunch of greedy thugs who would defend their fiefdom with force, despite all logic and reason.

They were called every name in the book by every newspaper, TV and radio station, and politician they could stick a microphone in front of. Not one person on TV said that they supported the strike. In fact, there was an anti-union protest scheduled at SEPTA's headquarters, and only two protesters with poorly-made signs showed up. Two TV stations covered it and interviewed the protesters.

As far as unions in this area go, TWU Local 234 didn't actually do a half-bad job, however. Most of this is exactly how I expected it to be, and the fact that their strike resulted in any positive gains speaks more to the fact that their workers are irreplaceable and not to their strike management abilities.

The true problem, however, is that this strike was organized by a trade union, and not along industrial lines. Under SEPTA, there are currently several different divisions, all working under different contracts and with different unions. While the SEPTA strike was on in the City Division, all of the other divisions continue to work, under different unions, with different contracts and a similar no-strike clause.

It doesn't just stop at SEPTA either. The Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) and NJ Transit rail service—both from New Jersey—continued to bring commuters into the city. Amtrak continued to move passengers from all over the country through Philadelphia. Unionized truckers made their deliveries, taxi drivers continued to pick up fares, couriers delivered their packages, and ships and rail lines full of cargo continued to move. These are all layers of solidarity that were forgotten by the TWU Local 234 because they are a trade union. An industrial union, like the IWW, would have done it differently.

To start with, an industrial union would never let workers at the same company be divided. One Big Union means just that: all SEPTA workers, no matter what division, in the city, suburbs, or running regional rail trains hundreds of miles away, all united. When there is a problem in one division, everything stops.

Then, we would build outward, getting PATCO and NJ Transit and taxi workers in our solidarity union. Anytime that one of the companies fired a union organizer, we would stop the whole region. After success on that level, we could move out from ground passengers into airlines, ships, and freight of all kinds, and build a true One Big Union in transportation!

This lofty goal, however, will never be reached by Local 234, or even the TWU International. They have no vision of society after capitalism; they are not opposed to the wage system. All they want is a good deal for their members, no matter how divided from other fellow workers they may be.

I sympathize with and commend the fighting spirit that led this strike in hard times to stop the givebacks management demanded. However, in the end their lack of a vision for the future, beyond the fight for the next contract, is what dooms them and the rest of the trade unions to make the same mistakes over and over again.

This is why now more than ever we must build the IWW, and organize along industrial lines with a vision for the future, building the new society in the shell of the old one, and prepare for a time when capitalism is defeated and humanity triumphs. Let's learn from our mistakes, and organize, the time is at hand!

# Bangladeshi Garment Workers Clash With Police, Bosses

Continued from 1

a leaked intelligence report; an intelligence agency alerted the government one week prior to the clashes.

## Futures

This is only the latest in a series of violent clashes in the garment sector. It was a decline in orders that prompted the Nippon Garment bosses to refuse payment to workers. As the recession and intensified market competition has hit employers they have been even more reluctant than usual to pay workers on time. This leaves workers and their dependents in dire straits, unable to pay rent or pay off debts at local grocery shops that advance credit to workers. For garment workers—many of whom are permanently malnourished—a missed wage packet is often a short step away from real hunger.

Garment industries thrive in poorer countries due largely to low labor costs and low start-up costs. But now those larger firms who are weathering the financial crisis better and with sufficient capital reserves have begun switching to more automated production systems, using computer technology to increase efficiency in cutting, knitting, dyeing and finishing. These innovations are necessary to maintain competition with Asian Ready Made Garment (RMG) competitors such as Vietnam, Cambodia, China and India, but in the present climate this trend may be another factor increasing unemployment levels.

A recent report optimistically sees

the growth of a domestic Asian consumer market as a way out of recession for Asian garment producers, based largely on the increasing consumption of the new middle classes that have emerged as a result of industrial development in Asia. But this market is, for the foreseeable future, not even close to being able to compensate for or replace the global export markets.

## Enter the unions?

The RMG sector employs approximately three million workers directly, and two million in its subsidiary industries, such as transport and supplies. Some seven million people are dependent on the earnings of these workers. More than 75 percent of the country's foreign currency comes from RMG exports. This narrow economic dependency on one industry makes Bangladesh particularly vulnerable to disruption of supply—especially as many contracts are dependent on tight turnaround/delivery times. Labor conflict in the RMG sector therefore has far-reaching socioeconomic consequences, particularly at a time when regional competition for a share of shrinking international markets is fierce.

There has long been a conflict of interest within the Bangladeshi ruling class on RMG labor relations. A substantial number of Members of Parliament (MPs) in both main parties—the ruling Awami League and opposition BNP—have business interests in the RMG

sector, as investors or as factory owners. Despite recurring labor unrest, they have seen the profits roll in as markets have expanded since the emergence of the industry in the early 1980s. They have seen little need to grant any major concessions in the form of wage raises, improved working conditions or union representation. But the more far-sighted elements of the ruling class, aware of the potential vulnerability of the industry, have long called for widespread trade union representation to be introduced as a stabilizing institutional influence. If workers are paid less than the cost of their own self-reproduction something eventually has to give. The explosive anger of RMG workers is clearly expressed in recent news footage as they describe the hardships they endure and how they are cheated out of what are already some of the lowest wages in the world.

The unions themselves have admitted that their influence among RMG workers is marginal and that they have little to no influence over the regular disturbances—they have often functioned more like NGOs, providing charitable and legal services and participating in international lobbying efforts, rather than the actual mediation of workplace conflicts between workers and bosses. But all this may be about to change. In the aftermath of the Tongi clashes and similar recent unrest, the government has announced it will introduce trade unions in the garment sector.

The class struggle and the forms

it takes have developed largely autonomously in the industry, with little institutional mediation. This has contributed to the intensity and explosive character of garment workers' struggles. As the economic recession forces further attacks on working-class living conditions and leaves workers with little left to lose, the ruling class seeks to contain their fury with the introduction of trade unions. If the union reform is implemented, will it work? Certainly the institutionalizing of certain health and safety measures, as well as legal powers to enforce a living wage that is actually regularly paid, would be popular among workers. But this depends on the garment bosses and the state showing a willingness to both grant reforms and then actually enforce them—which has never been the case. Promises have repeatedly been broken on these issues—and if there are no concessions, or an offer to win through union negotiation on behalf of workers, then unions will remain as largely irrelevant as they are today.

The unions have to try to establish credibility and take representative control of a workforce that has, over the past 25 years, shown itself consistently capable of a high level of self-organization and solidarity. The well-established current forms of mass struggle—regular wildcat strikes that then spread out to neighboring factories, roadblocks, riots and attacks on bosses' property—may prove hard to overcome.

# OFFERINGS FROM THE I.W.W. *Literature* DEPARTMENT



## Solidarity Forever: Worker Resistance in Hard Economic Times 2010 Labor History Calendar of the IWW

The IWW's revolutionary labor calendar with compelling photographs of workers' struggles from around the world and hundreds of notes marking important dates in the fight for industrial freedom. This year's edition celebrates actions working people have taken during rough economic times: from beating back concessions and demanding shorter work hours, to taking over shut-down enterprises.

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## AGITATE! EDUCATE! ORGANIZE!: American Labor Posters

by Lincoln Coaking & Timothy W. Droeber

"We seek to inform as well as to exhilarate. The best posters about American workers and the jobs at which they labor make up a steadily fascinating body of work that awakens 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 surely an exhilarating word as it might seem because the labor force itself is not monolithic. Nor are the posters about just paid or wage labor. They represent demonstrations 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 Coaking and Timothy W. Droeber share their vast knowledge about the rich graphic tradition of labor posters. Lively 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. Coaking and Droeber combed several thousand such images in the course of their research, guaranteeing a truly representative selection. The presentation of the posters is thematic, with a brief history of artistic/graphic motifs followed by chapters on Dignity and Exploitation; Health and Safety; Women; Race and Civil Rights; Men, Boys and Internationalism; Solidarity and Organizing; Unions and Repression; 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, artistic and impact of this genre of artistic art and the importance of the labor movement to the transformation of American society over the course of the twentieth century.

226 IMAGES, OVERSIZED PAPERBACK, 288 COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS, \$24.95



## The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years

by Fred W. Thompson & Jon Eckles  
forward by Utah Phillips

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# London “Posties” Strike Against Privatization

Continued from 1

made worse by the by management’s antagonistic actions toward its workers. Prior to the start of the strikes, a leaked document surfaced that outlined Royal Mail’s intention to manipulate the upcoming dispute to break the union and to cease recognizing the CWU. Such inflammatory words were followed with inflammatory action when management announced their plan to hire an extra 30,000 “seasonal” workers for the Christmas holiday. The union, rightfully recognizing this as nothing more than an attempt to bring in a scab workforce, is mounting a legal challenge to management’s provocations. Finally, Royal Mail bosses, supported by the right-wing tabloid press, are framing the dispute in such a way as to blame “greedy,” stubborn workers for the disruption. Royal Mail has produced statistics on the many times the CWU has balloted workers, both locally and nationally, for industrial action in the past couple of years as proof of the union’s supposed malfeasance. Of course, Royal Mail spokespersons conveniently leave out the fact that declining working conditions and management’s refusal to adhere to existing agreements has been the spark for such activity.

The CWU has another explanation for what’s causing the unrest. “Privatization is the fundamental cause of all these ills,” one postie remarked. During former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s regime, and following through to former Prime Minister Tony Blair’s “New Labour,” there have been constant attempts to privatize mail service. In part, “liberalizers” have been successful. Yet, as was predicted by critics, the privateers are not interested in running a public service, but solely in turning a quick profit. In one telling example, when parts of the Royal Mail were put up for sale in the last decade, private companies were quick to buy up the profitable business mail division. Prior to the privatization, business mail subsidized residential service and kept down costs for the public.

As one postie who was at the meeting explained, the strike is about preventing the efforts to manage the decline of the business in such a way as to make Royal Mail attractive to private investors. A surefire way to do that is to cut jobs, break the union, and leave the “workforce battered.” The managing director of Royal Mail already makes £3-4 million per year, and the wholesale sell-off of the national mail service would surely provide an even greater windfall.

## Modernization?

Integral to management’s justifications for its hard-line attitudes has been the mantra of “modernization.” In public statements, management has accused

the CWU of being stuck in the past. Royal Mail—whose profits doubled to more than £320 million last year—claims the union refuses to acknowledge the strain put on the mail business by the public’s increased use of electronic

means of communication. Royal Mail has further claimed that the union is stubbornly resisting the introduction of machinery into the industry. However, such statements do not match up with reality. As one local CWU official explained, “we’re not Luddites.” The problem rests in the fact that management is eliminating jobs before machinery is even introduced and then using mechanization as a post-facto justification for the cuts. In areas where this has been allowed to happen, workers “can’t cope with the workload,” said the union official. Ten years ago postmen

had to deliver two bags of letters per day. Today, they’re required to deliver six to eight bags of letters per day. As a result, both public service and workers’ health have suffered.

Adding to this is the negative experience postal workers have already with previous “modernization” agreements. Sixty-three thousand jobs have been lost in the past five years. In return for these deep cuts, workers were promised the remaining jobs would be on “family-friendly” terms and that management would abide by the conditions set forth in agreements—ratified on both local and national levels—between the Royal Mail and the CWU. Instead, management has implemented unworkable revisions and is attempting to turn Royal Mail into a part-time workforce. As one postal worker put it, the strikes are “not about pay.” They’re about securing full-time work and a reasonable workload, maintaining terms and conditions, and ensuring the union continues to be recognized, not marginalized and ignored.

Postal workers are quick to point out that the ongoing dispute is “about defending a public service” and that the public, too, has lost out from the modernization. Scores of mail centers have been closed down around the country, and where once there was twice-daily mail delivery and a pick-up on Sundays, delivery workers now only make the rounds once a day from Monday through Saturday.

## Pensions

Another long-running grievance that the current dispute has brought to a head is management’s failure to adequately fund the postal workers’ pension plan. During the Thatcher years and continuing into Blair’s years of New Labour, a “reform” was introduced that allowed Royal Mail to take a “pension holiday.” As a result, Royal Mail did not pay into the pension plan for 13 years, from 1990 to 2003. During this time, postal workers continued their contribution, but management’s failure to do the same left a £5 billion hole in the pension fund. As a result of this, Royal Mail has gutted the pension scheme for new hires, and current postal workers lack assurances that they’ll receive the pensions they’re due. The union, recognizing that government’s mismanagement is responsible for the deficit, is calling on the government to make up the difference and live up to its obligations.

Reflecting the realities of a New Labour government hell-bent on smashing the public sector, the government will only discuss filling the pension gap if the CWU acquiesces to privatization. As one attendee of the support meeting explained, “this is nothing but socialism for the rich.” By agreeing to adequately

fund the pension plan only if Royal Mail is sold off into private hands, the government is helping to give those same companies increased assurance they’ll be inheriting a profitable, financially sound business. For some unexplained reason, the government does not feel the same level of responsibility to either its workforce or the public.

## “Never mind the political stuff...”

The breaking point for many postal workers was not the big issues of privatization or pensions, but the increasing abuse they’re subjected to on a daily basis. As one postal worker described: “In [my] 20 years at the Royal Mail, I’ve never experienced anything like it.”

“Managers scream at us like American drill sergeants,” added another postie. Local representatives told stories of coworkers who took sick leave or even

accepted redundancy to escape the constant mistreatment.

The bullying is exacerbated by the policies introduced from the top. For example, when workers can’t complete their excessive workloads, management demands workers stay beyond their scheduled eight-hour shift. If workers refuse, they are threatened with criminal prosecution. Another worker told a similar story: after upping the workload year after year, management then turned around and required delivery men and women to spend extra time in the sorting

office. If a worker cannot complete his or her rounds, management then tries to coerce the employee to work for free.

Bullying has become so entrenched that management is even willing to break disability law and ignore the special requirements of workers who may be facing sickness, injury, or long-term illness. As one attendee recognized, “employment law is not there for the worker,” and Royal Mail is “always keen” to break the limited regulations that exist.

It’s abundantly clear from cases such as these that management, despite all their public proclamations about wishing to secure peaceful industrial relations, is constantly fanning the flames of anger and abuse. As the postal workers are making abundantly clear, bullying by management is unacceptable, and they’re willing to do whatever it takes to combat it.

## Management’s Mismanagement

As was expressed throughout the meeting, workers are legitimately concerned about the way the national postal service, as an entity, is being managed. The postal service is not suffering because of the strikes, but because “management doesn’t know what they’re doing.” Policies that “come from the top” are destroying public mail service and the livelihoods of postal workers, said one postie.

The CWU is not shy about calling out those who they believe are responsible. In particular, they have called out Royal Mail chief executive Adam Crozier for his anti-union sentiments and his zeal for privatization, both of which have been rewarded with large bonuses. The union’s criticisms extend all the way to the highest halls of government. Lord Mandelson, the Business Secretary under the current Labour government, has been accused of colluding with top Royal Mail executives to disrupt peace talks between the CWU and Royal Mail.

Some branches of the CWU are turning this anger into concrete action. In London, the branch voted 96 percent to disaffiliate from the Labour Party on grounds the union should not be funding the same politicians who are attacking the living standards and the working conditions of its membership.

## Solidarity

Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of the support meeting was the support and solidarity expressed by the other unionists. A bus driver who was present probably put it best: “We’re all here not just to support postal workers, but to support ourselves.” Another attendee remarked how important it is to set up

support groups because, unfortunately, “we’ll need them later” to protect public services and fight for jobs.

Our group had the welcome surprise of having two workers from the University College Union (UCU) at Tower Hamlets College in attendance. The teaching staff at Tower Hamlets had recently concluded a one-month strike against

compulsory redundancies that saw management back down on their most egregious attacks and won increased voluntary redundancy payments for those who take them. However, as the Tower Hamlets strikers are well aware, their dispute was

the first in what will undoubtedly be a long season of struggle against the severe cuts facing the public sector. The two Tower Hamlets workers offered advice to posties, emphasizing the necessity of framing the debate in terms of defending public services, the need to have community involvement, and the imperative to build strong links with other local unions. In fact, the UCU branch that led the Tower Hamlets strike is now “twinned” with a London branch of the CWU. Finally, the meeting was reminded that “members are the union” and of the importance of having an engaged, activated, and organized workforce.

A seasoned teachers’ activist who spoke next stressed the need for rank-and-filers to keep a healthy, critical eye on union officials and to make sure that the Trades Union Congress (TUC) leadership is not even tempted to “sell out” its membership. While certainly not ignoring the importance of community support, he also warned against believing that mass public support alone wins strikes. Citing the miners’ strike of 1984, he reminded the meeting that “the dispute is on the ground.” If push comes to shove, the posties will prove victorious if they are able to spread the struggle across the public sector and to other industries.

In terms of practical solidarity, our first and foremost concern was to put the case to the public. To that end, it was agreed we’d set up a stall outside the local supermarket, where we’d collect donations to the CWU hardship fund and give out leaflets to shoppers as they come and go. A postie then got up to speak to the importance of having members of the public come out to the pickets. Not only does this show the bosses that public support is on the side of the strikers, but it’s an important morale booster as well. Numerous CWU members then volunteered to come to any of our local union meetings and speak on the dispute. We discussed options for handing out leaflets and collecting donations in our own workplaces. On an institutional level, it was announced that the GMB had set up a national hotline to which individuals can report the names and addresses of any agency offering placements to the aforementioned 30,000 Christmas-time scabs.

Finally, a postie spoke to the group on the necessity of having all unions and all unionists present a clear and consistent message to combat boss misinformation and press distortion. The message he had for the public was simple: “Postal workers live in the real world and are prepared to take action to protect jobs and public services.”



North West London CWU picket. Photo: socialistworker.co.uk



Graphic: cwulondon.org.uk

# 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](mailto:solidarity@iww.org).

## CNT Solidarity Campaign With The Moroccan Miners Of OCP!

By Jérémie Berthuin

850 miners working for Office Chérifien de Phosphate (OCP—a state-owned phosphate extraction company) have been on strike since the beginning of September in the Khouribga region of Morocco. Their action comes after they were fired en masse for refusing to accept new working conditions in the company.

OCP intends to renege on its social benefit agreements of permanent employment contracts, wages and a social security system. These are the same benefits that the miners fought tooth and nail for in the past, often with great hardship. OCP plans to impose such stipulations as the generalization of temporary work, fixed term contracts and cutting salaries in half.

The industrial action that the workers are taking is supported in Morocco by numerous organizations including AMDH (Association Marocaine des Droits Humains—the Moroccan Human Rights Association) and the UMT (Marocaine du Travail) trade union. However, the police forces systematically attack every support gathering. Trade union leaders from the OCP have been imprisoned and tortured, and four of them will be put on trial in November, accused of attacks on “public order.”



Photo: cnt-f.org  
Solidarity action in Lyon.

The CNT (Confédération Nationale du Travail), as an organization that promotes class struggle and internationalism, provides its full support to the OCP miners on strike. The CNT is also part of the International Miners' Support Committee.

The CNT demands: the reinstatement of the 850 workers who have been made redundant by force; the respect of trade union rights in the OCP and its subsidiaries; and the immediate release of the trade-unionists on trial.

In order to contribute to the success of the miners' legitimate struggle against the arrogance of the rich, the CNT has been increasing the number of its solidarity activities in Nîmes, Lyon, Nantes, Marseille, Dijon, Nanterre, Orléans, Limoges, Brest and Grenoble.

Our OCP comrades do not stand alone! The CNT is the proof!

If your organization wants to participate in the solidarity campaign, your Moroccan comrades will truly appreciate it. You can join the international support committee. You can also organize gatherings in front of Moroccan embassies or consulates. If you do so, tell us what you have decided, and we will pass on any support communiqués and pictures of your actions to Ali Fkir, the secretary of the support committee. Email us at [secretary@cnt-f.org](mailto:secretary@cnt-f.org). An injury to one is an injury to all!

## Edinburgh Council Worker Dispute Continues

By “Muckracker”

Edinburgh Street cleaners have hit out at Council leaders' claims that they are “set to give up their protest” in the long-running dispute over wages and conditions.

“It's absolute nonsense. There's no truth in it at all,” a Council street cleaner said. “Everybody I spoke to today at work was of the same opinion.”

“The vast majority of manual workers will not be going back until the wages are re-paid to the bin men whose wages have been docked.” The Council claimed that a “formal agreement” has been put to the street cleaners. But a street cleaner stated: “The only letter we have had through the door from the Council is one stating that our wages are being cut to between £12,000 and £14,000.”

Hundreds of Council manual workers agreed at a mass meeting on Oct. 9 to continue their work-to-rule and overtime ban to oppose wage cuts and changes in conditions. “Nothing's changed,” a street cleaner told us, “This is Council PR. They can't give separate deals to different sections of workers.”

And a street cleaner slammed the Council's “partial performance” policy of docking the wages of bin men who are working to rule. “The bin men are the only people in the City of Edinburgh Council being hit by so-called “partial performance.” It's victimization!” he insisted.

And a bin worker stated: “The management is using bullyboy tactics and harassment. Our depot's like a police state.” He explained that several bin men signed off sick by their doctor are being refused sick pay by the Council. “This is illegal,” he declared.

The Council workers solidarity group, who have been blockading the private bin lorries, stated: “The Council manual workers are fighting the first battle against the Council's plans for massive cuts and privatization of many services. We urge Edinburgh citizens to support the Council workers—this affects us all.”

Meanwhile a Council source revealed that Council bosses recently held a summit meeting to discuss how much longer they can continue paying “astronomical sums” to the private companies who are operating bin lorries during the dispute. Council leaders are still refusing to comply with Freedom of Information requests to reveal the sums being paid to Assist, Shank Waste Management and other companies.

The Council's claims that the street cleaners were about to end their industrial action were reported as if they were fact in the Edinburgh Evening News on Oct. 19. It is believed that some supporters of the council workers are investigating a submission to the Press Complaints Commission.

For more information and to get involved, contact the Council workers solidarity group at [edinburghmuckracker@riseup.net](mailto:edinburghmuckracker@riseup.net).

## Unilever, IUF Settle Conflict At Lipton Pakistan

By the IUF

A negotiated settlement between Unilever and the International Union of Food workers (IUF) has resolved the long, difficult conflict over the rights of precarious workers at the company's directly owned Lipton/Brooke Bond tea factory in Khanewal, Pakistan. The negotiations took place under the auspices of the U.K.'s National Contact Point responsible for the application of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The IUF made a submission to the OECD in March 2009 as part of a campaign which generated strong international support for the Khanewal workers and their struggle.

The Khanewal factory—with only 22 workers directly employed by Unilever and many hundreds of disposable jobs for casual workers supplied by labor contractors on a “no work, no pay” system—became a powerful symbol of the denial of fundamental trade union rights through massive casualization. Precarious workers at Khanewal were legally excluded from joining a union of Unilever workers and participating in a collective bargaining relationship with Unilever as their real employer.

Under the terms of the settlement, Unilever has agreed to create 200 additional direct, permanent jobs, retroactive to Oct. 15, 2009, with job selection to be based on seniority and priority given to the members of the Khanewal workers' Action Committee, which led the struggle locally with the support of the IUF-affiliated National Federation of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Workers. The selection and employment process will be jointly monitored and implemented by the IUF and Unilever at the national level.

Because the labor hire agencies in many cases systematically failed to fulfill their mandatory financial obligations to the workers they employed, as well as their statutory obligations to the state social security and retirement funds, the settlement involves both direct lump sum payments by Unilever to the contract agency workers (both those who do receive permanent positions and those who do not) and guarantees from Unilever that the arrears in contractors' mandatory obligations to the state will be fully met.

Action Committee members, for

their part, agreed to withdraw all court petitions as part of the global agreement on permanent jobs and the wider compensation package. The settlement also contains language on non-discrimination against Action Committee members and full representational rights for the IUF and its affiliates.

As part of the agreement, Unilever has committed to investment and continued operations at the Khanewal factory.

The Khanewal workers' Action Committee has warmly thanked the many trade unionists and human rights defenders around the world who supported their struggle with demonstrations, messages to the company, meetings, pickets, political action and other expressions of solidarity. Their support was crucial.

Action Committee Chairman Siddiq Aassi said “I have been working at Unilever Khanewal for more than 20 years, but never imagined I would one day enter the factory as a permanent worker.” “It was a dream for us to get permanent jobs at the Unilever Khanewal tea factory,” says Mukhtar Ahmed, Action Committee Secretary. “I don't have the words to express my feelings.” According to Shahzad Saleem, Action Committee Joint Secretary, “Nobody in the factory and even in Khanewal can believe it—[when we started the struggle] people told us we would just hit a rock and be crushed.”

IUF General Secretary Ron Oswald commented that, “The Khanewal agreement, added to the recent settlement at Rahim Yar Khan, is a great moment for hundreds of our members in Pakistan who will now take up permanent employment with Unilever. It brings better livelihoods for their families and some dignity and security at work. The IUF has been proud to work with these courageous members who fought for so long for these rights in the most difficult of circumstances. Unilever's willingness to work with us constructively through the OECD process suggests we may be able to look forward to an ongoing and structured dialogue with Unilever to address future challenges with this global employer. The IUF is committed to finding ways to begin resolving those challenges ‘across the table’ -- a global table-- rather than through a public fight or the use of what proved to be the critically valuable OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises process in the U.K.”

## Iraqi Armed Troops Fire at Peaceful Demonstration

By the ICEM

The Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions (FWCUI) reported that the armed forces fired on a workers' demonstration in Baghdad. The demonstration and use of armed force occurred on Oct. 6 near the Green Zone in central Baghdad.

The report the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) received from the FWCUI said many of the 2,000 protestors were hit with rubber bullets. The ICEM condemns such military action against workers, and calls it one further example why Iraq must enact legitimate labor law and recognize free and independent trade unions.

Industrial workers had requested and received a permit from the Baghdad military to hold the demonstration—which was a protest over pay remunerations since 2008, safety benefits, and to settle cases of workers dismissed from

jobs for political reasons under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The march on Oct. 6 started at Al Tahreer Square, and crossed Al Jumhuria Bridge towards the Green Zone, where armed forces indiscriminately fired upon and beat demonstrators. Four workers were severely beaten and arrested: Thamer Hameed and Muhammad Khangar from a battery manufacturing industry; Muhammad Khamees from an electrical facility; and Munadhil Attia from the leather manufacturing industry.

The FWCUI declared the attack “an unprecedented act of terror that will not be forgiven,” and called upon authorities to fire the soldiers responsible and to try them on criminal charges. A representative of the Ministries' Council admitted that there was an unprovoked armed confrontation and said the council stood ready to issue a formal statement of apology.

## Support international solidarity!



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