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Not In Service: Ontario Transit Workers On Strike

By Alex Balch, *Linchpin*

LONDON, Ont. — After nearly a month on the picket lines, London transit drivers from the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 741 agreed to a raise package that sees a total compensation increase of 13.2 percent—wage and benefits—over a 45-week period. As a consequence, the strike has been called off.

ATU Local 741 officials said the deal was given a 72 percent affirmative nod from its members.

“While many issues remain to be addressed, from violence in the workplace and understaffing, to the city’s chronic underfunding of public transportation in London, sufficient progress has been made to get the buses back on the road,” said officials in an ATU Local 741 statement.

Workers of ATU Local 741 went on strike at midnight on Nov. 16, when the deadline for a new contract passed

unheeded by their employer, the London Transit Commission (LTC). ATU Local 741 represents 450 bus drivers, maintenance workers and support staff, and the strike has effectively paralyzed London’s public transit system.

The workers of the LTC have been without a contract since June. Chief among their demands were regularly scheduled lunch breaks, a 12 percent wage increase over three years and improvements to dental and short-term disability benefits. The union has repeatedly requested arbitration as a means of settling the dispute, but their requests were blocked by LTC general manager Larry Ducharme and the city’s mayor, Anne Marie DeCicco-Best.

DeCicco-Best slammed the workers’ demands as “irresponsible” at a press conference the day before the deadline was set to expire, citing the fact that London has been particularly hard hit by

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Photo: Fred Huska, atu741.ca

ATU Local 741 delay a highway coach chartered to shuttle management to work Union To Roll Through EPZs Of Central America

By Aztatl Garza and Kenneth Miller

Honduran workers at Russell Athletic/Fruit of the Loom won a tremendous victory on Nov. 17, 2009. An agreement with Russell Athletics requires the company to re-hire all 1,200 Honduran workers that were fired for union organizing activities. The agreement also calls for the following: the reopening of the Choloma, the Honduras factory re-named Jerzees Nuevo Dia (New Day Jerzees), which was closed to lock out striking workers; the recognition of the Sitra Jerzees Union; and that Russell Athletic cooperate with the Centro General de Trabajadores (Workers General Central union federation). In addition Russell Athletic will educate their employees about their right to organize a union and their right to freedom of assembly. The agreement will cover all eight Russell Athletic factories in Honduras.

The victory for Honduras workers was affected in the U.S. by a coalition of university students, United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), which has chapters in 96 universities. The

Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance began an online petition drive targeting University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Mark Nordenberg to do the same.

Students were able to leverage their universities’ collegiate licensing with Russell Athletics in the same way that groups like the Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance intend to leverage the apparel licensing of the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club. This kind of an escalation is required for there to be an actual global apparel union organizing drive.

Centro General de Trabajadores is now in a race to organize workers in all of these Russell factories while the North American anti-sweatshop movement remains poised to offer support.

* How will this campaign affect Russell’s production volume in Honduras?

* How will it affect workers producing apparel for other companies in the same industrial areas?

* Will the organizing success spread to the surrounding countries?

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Welsh Wobbly Imprisoned For 28 Days

By Huw Jones

Imprisoned for 28 days in a Liverpool jail for his part in direct action campaigns, activist Osian Jones sent greetings to Wobblies worldwide.

Earlier this year efforts were made to establish an IWW branch in north Wales and Osian enthusiastically signed up as a Wobbly even though all of his time is already taken up with radical activism on behalf of Cymdeithas yr Iaith, the Welsh language rights organization.

It is no surprise to hear that he has a copy of “Wobblies! A Graphic History” in his cell. The legendary history of the original Wobblies still inspires activists and numerous campaigns the world over to this day.

On Nov. 25, Osian was imprisoned



Osian Jones.

for a month for steadfastly refusing to pay more than £1,000 of fines that he picked up in a slogan-painting and sticker campaign

against a number of big businesses who, despite much public pressure, make little or no use of the Welsh language in their signs and advertising. The Welsh regional government has long promised a change in legislation to expand the right to use Welsh but appears to be nervous to take further steps in the face of considerable opposition from the bosses’ organization, the Confederation of British Industries.

Osian attended a hearing two weeks prior to the beginning of his jail sentence, but proceedings were adjourned as magistrates feared uproar in the

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London “Posties” Strike Against Privatization, Part 2

By Tom Levy

The weekend of Oct. 24—just one week after I attended the inaugural meeting of the North West London Postal Workers Support Group for the Communication Workers Union (CWU)—Royal Mail held a press conference. A management spokesperson announced that the post service and the CWU had reached an interim agreement: the union would suspend all strike activity until Christmas and, in return, Royal Mail would keep good faith negotiations open on all issues. Perhaps misleadingly, the talks had been taking place at the headquarters of Britain’s largest union federation, the Trades Unions Congress (TUC). Without knowing the details of the so-called agreement, I was skeptical.

I continued in a state of disappointment and, hoping to secure some more information, the following Wednesday I

took the 260 bus to the Brent Trades hall for the second meeting of our support group. We were greeted by the same two union officials, one a union full-timer and the other a rep who worked full-time as a postie. Attendance was down slightly, but the turnout was inspiring nonetheless. Our officials began by explaining that they were still digesting the details, but that one thing was clear: there was no pledge to abandon industrial action. In fact, there remained a “live” strike ballot. All that had been agreed was that the union would review the progress of negotiations every two weeks and if the CWU determined it to be lacking, workers could be back out on the picket lines. Royal Mail’s attempt to convince the media of a no-strike agreement was nothing more than a crass ploy. By leading the public to believe the union had agreed to

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Mexican Electricians Fight Privatization

By Paul Bocking

Federal police and military troops occupied power plants and electrical substations across central Mexico in a late night attack on Oct. 11, coinciding with a declaration by the national government that the state-run electrical utility Luz y Fuerza had been shut down and all unionized employees terminated. Mexico City daily *La Jornada* reports that the utility normally run by approximately 44,000 electricians is now being run under armed guard by approximately 3,500 military engineers and scab electricians brought in from other parts of Mexico. Major system failures and blackouts have occurred in the central part of the country encompassing the Mexico City metropolitan area—a region with more than 25 million residents—as the skeleton workforce struggles to operate the massive energy grid.

The action has been widely viewed as an attack on the Mexican Union of Electricians (Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, or SME), an independent union that has vigorously opposed attempts in the past by the Mexican government to privatize the electrical utility that employs its members, and has generally served as a rallying force among the social movements and unions that have opposed the neoliberal trade and labor reforms of the Mexican government. The SME has since responded with non-stop meetings, demonstrations and organizing among fired electricians, urging the refusal of a government-issued severance agreement. Electricians have also been actively gaining commitments to engage in solidarity action from other independent unions, as well as allied student and community-based movements.

Abroad, influential publications including the *New York Times* and *The Economist* have approved of the Mexican state's action against what they describe as 'a powerful union.' However the shutdown of Luz y Fuerza is about

more than union-busting. The Mexican government claims the state-run utility was an inefficient money-pit, requiring its absorption within the larger, more profitable Federal Electrical Commission (Comisión Federal de Electricidad, or CFE), which provides electrical services across the rest of Mexico. Like Luz y Fuerza, the CFE is a public utility, but with a docile union loyal to Mexico's ruling national political party. However if Luz y Fuerza is financially unsustainable as the government claims, it is because its administration has failed to collect over \$450 million in electricity bills from its major corporate customers, says the SME. Many commentators believe the real motive behind the merging of Mexico's two electrical utilities is to facilitate their privatization—possible only with the elimination of the SME.

In 1999, the Mexican government authorized Spanish-based WL Comunicaciones to install, operate and profit from fiber optic cables which would be attached to Luz y Fuerza's existing electrical grid, enabling the company to potentially sell television, phone and internet services to the utility's 6.2 million residential and business customers. In return, the Spanish consortium agreed to upgrade the existing system and pay a nominal royalty fee for using Luz y Fuerza's electrical lines. When WL Commu-

nicaciones refused to honor its minimal obligations under this agreement, Luz y Fuerza joined with the SME in presenting a counter-proposal to the government—that the public utility expand and operate the fiber optic cable system itself, creating a very lucrative source of revenue for the state-run corporation and challenging the duopoly of private



Mexican Electrician workers. Photo: peoplesworld.org

phone/TV/internet providers Cablevision and Telmex, whose 400 peso (\$30) monthly rate for basic internet makes the service unaffordable for many in a country where five dollars is the legal minimum wage for an eight-hour day.

The Mexican government ignored the counter-proposal and the electricians retaliated by barring access for technicians of the Spanish company to Luz y Fuerza facilities. "Do you want this to go forward? Then give us our permit. If you don't give it to us, we won't let them in," said SME leader Martin Esparza in an interview with *Proceso*, a widely respected Mexican politics magazine. *Proceso* reports that several cabinet members within President Felipe Calderon's government are major shareholders of WL Comunicaciones. With not only a stated neoliberal policy of privatization at stake, but also the personal wealth of leading politicians, from the perspective of the Mexican government, the stubbornly rebellious electricians were an obstacle that had to be crushed.

The government's brazen attack on the independent electrical workers has galvanized many of Mexico's popular movements into action, reciprocating the solidarity they have received over the years from the SME. Marking one month since the police and military takeover of Luz y Fuerza facilities and the eviction of union electricians, a coordinated day of action was held across Mexico on Nov. 11. Public school teachers in the southern state of Oaxaca—famous for having sparked a popular uprising in May 2006 against their repressive state governor—closed thousands of schools for the day. Public secondary school teachers in Mexico City joined them, along with the students and professors of the national university. Meanwhile, community supporters occupied tollbooths on highways entering Mexico City, permitting free usage of the roadways by commuters. Workers at the major TRW Automotive—an auto parts manufacturer on Mexico's northern border, and members of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (an IWW ally) endorsed the struggle of the fired electricians and turned off their lights at home for two hours in solidarity.

The largest manifestation of the day occurred in Mexico City, with as many as 200,000 people marching into the central Zocalo square to oppose the shutdown of Luz y Fuerza. Esparza addressed the crowd, "We are at the point of the independence bicentennial and the Mexican Revolution centennial. And as before, we will defeat the transnational [corporations], the dictatorship, tyranny and violations of the constitution. It's time for the people to organize."

As commentators including labor activist Dan La Botz have noted, the shutting down of Luz y Fuerza marks a major step towards the privatization of Mexico's energy sector, in line with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the neoliberal Security and Prosperity Partnership between Canadian, U.S. and Mexican governments and corporate leaders. With the breaking of the Mexican Electricians Union, it is also a devastating attack on Mexico's independent labor movement, of which the SME has historically been a bulwark.

It is one major example of the increasingly aggressive campaign by Mexico's government and business leaders to redistribute wealth from workers and the public sector that serves them, to private investors in Mexico and abroad. The broad-based resistance provoked by this act is also symptomatic of a popular sentiment that Mexico's ruling elites serve themselves, at the expense of a population which has suffered from unemployment and precarious jobs in a national economy among the bottom three for growth in Latin America. Social and political tension will continue to increase between these two irreconcilable visions, while next year Mexicans mark 100 years since their nation's first revolution.

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IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially—that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223, USA.

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).

- I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.
- I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.
- I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



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Membership includes a subscription to the **Industrial Worker**.

Talking To Bosses: Stick To The Script!

By Nate Holdren

We have nothing in common with them as a class but sometimes we need to talk to our bosses. When we confront our bosses, for instance, we need to talk to them. A lot of bosses seem to have an instinct for turning the tables on us, and a lot of us workers have a habit of letting them do so. We spend so much time following their orders and they spend so much time giving orders that when we speak up it can be almost as disorienting for us as it is for them. That can make it easy for the boss to take back control in conversation.

For us to keep control in conversation with the boss we need to know what we want to have happen. We can't get our way if we don't know what our way is. If we don't have a plan then things can't go according to plan.

Let's say we're going to confront a boss about making someone stay late. Here are some ways the boss might respond: justify the decision ("we had more work, someone had to do it"), bring up some other issue ("well, you all are out of uniform"), try to guilt you in some way ("you do this after I got you that nice coffee maker for the break room?"), bring up the way you raised the issue ("you shouldn't bring this up in a group"), point you to someone else or somewhere else ("you should bring this up at our team meeting," "you really should go through Human Resources"), or question your right to bring it up at all ("this is a private matter between me

and that person, it's none of the rest of your business"). There are other possible responses. The point is, you should think about the different ways your boss will respond, and know how you will reply in each case.

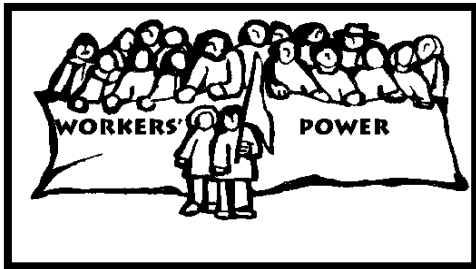
The goal in replying to a boss's response is to come back to your issue and your goal. Don't get side-tracked. Don't argue. At most, acknowledge what they said ("we appreciate the new coffee maker," "we tried to bring this up with HR"), but don't let them turn the conversation to be about that. State your issue again,

and what you want. "You make us work late and it causes problems for us. Will you stop that?" If they keep bringing up other things, and they probably will, say, "This isn't about that, we're here to

talk about you making us work late." Then restate your issue and what you want.

The overall point is that our issue and our demand is not up for discussion. We are not going to be talked out of feeling like a problem at work is a pain in the neck and we are not going to be talked into having our demands disregarded. We are making clear that the issue is a problem and we are presenting our demand to fix it. If you have to, just say, "we're not here to debate with you or to discuss other things. We want to know if you will stop extending people's hours or not. That's all we want to talk about. Will you stop?"

Stick to the script and you can turn the tables on the boss.



Union Talk At Thanksgiving

By Kenneth Miller

Talk around the Thanksgiving dinner table turned to unions this year. A young man with whom I am very good friends and whom I know to be a social progressive and greatly concerned with social issues began to list his experiences with unions.

*After being hired to cook at a hospital and being told by the boss that he was filling an open position, he was bumped, sent home and told to wait until another position became available. He had wanted that job. The whole system of job postings seemed confusing and impenetrable. The "Executive Chef" was the shop steward and he did his explanation by way of pointing at the bulletin board.

* After beginning work as cook in an old person's home ... he finds himself in the midst of an anti-union campaign. Everyone around him is bad mouthing union dues and describing a union organizer as a "stalker" that

should be avoided. It never became clear at this anti-union shop if the talk was in the context of an actual organizing drive. It was just one more alienating brick in the wall at a hard new job.

* His wife works in the human resources department at a notoriously anti-union hotel chain and attends union buster trainings. It does not feel to her like union busting... it feels to her like just another thing she needs to manage. These trainings are usually not scheduled in advance and occur at strange times. Eventually she is fired for what appear to be completely arbitrary reasons.

These three things, a pretty large and diverse body of experience, make him suspicious and untrusting of unions. If I were trying to organize a facility where he worked. I'm not

sure I could bring him into the campaign or break through his skepticism and distrust. This scares the hell out of me and makes the job of organizing seem nearly impossible.



Graphic: Clayton Hall; Concept: DJ Alperovitz

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 30 General Investigator

At its 1885 convention the women delegates to the Knights of Labor convention asked for and got a committee on women's work. Committee members compiled figures on women's wages. At the 1886 convention, all 16 female delegates were named to a permanent Department on Women's Work, to inquire into "the abuses to which our sex is subjected by unscrupulous employers," and to agitate for equal pay for equal work and for abolition of child labor. Leonora Barry, a hosiery worker, was elected general investigator.

An Irish immigrant and the sole support of her two sons, Barry carried on a four-year investigation into the conditions faced by female and child wage-earners, the first ever conducted by a union. Her efforts led to passage of a state factory inspection law in Pennsylvania.



As a leading full-time officer of the Knights of Labor, Barry served as a kind of business agent as well as investigator. She assisted existing Knights locals, and helped establish two cooperative shirt factories. In an 11-month period in 1888, she received 537 requests for her to help women organize, visited nearly 100 cities and towns. On her speaking tours she advocated industrial training for women, state factory inspection laws, and laws prohibiting child labor.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

What It Means To Be A Wobbly

By Kenneth Miller

Since I have been a member of the IWW, I have gotten some of the best advice I have ever gotten from Fellow Workers. Here are a few short sayings and stories that showed me we share a profoundly similar body of experience. If you have an anecdote like this, please submit it to nosweatshopsbucco@yahoo.com.

"My father grew up working in the agricultural labor fields of Texas and Michigan. As children, we did also. Everyone in the family had to pitch in. I worked the factories in Detroit before

going on to the university. It was in community college in Detroit where a social science teacher, an African-American, Mr. Collins, introduced me to labor and community organizing. We read Howard Zinn's classic "People's History." I was 18 years old. In that process, he exposed us also to Wobbly history. I romanticized about being a Wobbly and carried the notion for a long time. Many years and skirmishes later I decided that the IWW was as serious as a heart attack. I joined. So far I enjoy the democracy and freedom it offers. We are "small" in numbers but extra large in heart." – Aztatl Garza

"When I was first credentialed as an IWW delegate, Tom Lewandowski told me, 'It is a red hot coal. Go make your own hell.'" – Kenneth Miller

"I was once asked to go to a college for an event where they were showing the film "The Wobblies." I guess as a real-life Wobbly in their show-and-tell. After the film, a labor professor spoke for about 45 minutes, and he then told me I had five minutes to speak. I got up there and said, 'labor historians are to workers what anthropologists are to Indians. Don't believe a word that they say.'" – Arthur Miller

Teamsters Local 25 Rallies For Better Working Conditions At Starbucks Distributor

By Teamsters Local 25

BOSTON—Hundreds of working men and women from some of the state's largest labor unions joined with Teamsters Local 25 on Nov. 24 to bring attention to Starbucks Coffee's sole distributor, DPI-Mid Atlantic. Based in Canton, Mass., DPI-Mid Atlantic delivers all bakery, sandwiches and pre-packaged food to Starbucks shops across New England.

"Today should be a wake-up call to Starbucks' management and customers," said Sean M. O'Brien, President and Principal Officer of Teamsters Local 25 in front of the Boylston Street Starbucks location. "DPI-Mid Atlantic does not share your values of quality, ethics and responsibility."

"DPI-Mid Atlantic employees work hard every day to make sure that these products get to your local Starbucks so you can enjoy them. Starbucks and their loyal customers need to understand fully where their coffee beans, and all

food products, originate from. Starbucks should demand no less from their vendors than they would from their baristas," O'Brien continued.

Teamsters Local 25 members were joined by leaders and members of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Greater Boston Labor Council, Unite HERE Local 26, the IWW, SEIU 615, New England Carpenters, business owner Steve Grossman whose family business Grossman Marketing Group has been in Somerville for more than 50 years, and Boston City Council President Michael Ross.

"For too long, DPI-Mid Atlantic management has bullied their employees, forcing them to work in an unsafe and unsanitary environment and then reprimanding those who speak up. No one should feel that their jobs are in jeopardy for demanding safe and clean working conditions. Teamsters Local 25 is proud to stand with our brother and sister labor leaders from across the state and pledge to help DPI-Mid Atlantic

employees seek justice," O'Brien continued.

When DPI-Mid Atlantic employees complained to management, and later the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) about the unsanitary working conditions, they were fired or suspended.

After complaining to OSHA about unsafe forklifts, battery acid leaks, unsanitary bathrooms, poor lighting, and an expanding rodent population around the dock area, OSHA issued a series of citations and forced the company to address



Teamsters rally at Boston Starbucks. Photo: teamsterslocal25.com

the outstanding problems. Employees at DPI-Mid Atlantic warehouse in Canton have decided to seek union representation to improve the unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, a substandard healthcare plan and inferior wages.

Flaum Workers Reinstated, Not Allowed Back

By NYC IWW

On the morning of Nov. 25, workers along with members of the New York City IWW marched to Flaum, a kosher food distributor in Brooklyn, after hearing of a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruling which ordered the boss to reinstate the fired workers with back pay. Instead, the boss wrongfully demanded that the workers reauthorize their immigration status and denied them their right to return to work.

The workers were illegally fired in

May 2008 for engaging in a work stoppage over the right



Photo: Benjamin Ferguson

to form a labor union and payment in accordance with the law.

NJ Solidarity With Puerto Rican Workers

By Andrew Spina

On Oct. 15, members and supporters from the Central New Jersey IWW and Hub City Food Not Bombs gathered in downtown New Brunswick to show our solidarity for the striking workers in Puerto Rico. We distributed Spanish and English language leaflets that expressed our solidarity for the Puerto Rican general strike. Free food and bread was provided by our local Food Not Bombs chapter as IWW members handed out information about joining our local

branch. This is just one of the many solidarity actions we intend to organize on behalf of workers both in Puerto Rico and New Brunswick.



Photo: Andrew Spina

Obituary

Goodbye FW Skip Porter Feb. 12, 1946-Nov. 28, 2009



Photo: milwaukee.indymedia.org

By Gerry Gunderson

Skip was a member of the Masters, Mates and Pilots Union, a millwright in the Carpenters Union, and most importantly to him, a member of the IWW (Wobblies). He contributed articles and photos to Indymedia and the *Industrial Worker*.

Although his presence on picket lines and in demonstrations for justice was ubiquitous, he often derided speakers and "piecards" at such events as "therapists." His interests and knowledge were encyclopedic, and he humbly and willingly shared them, along with good food and drink. He especially encouraged young folks in their radical activism. He demanded to know, "Why aren't we out in the streets?"—not just to show disapproval of the cause of the day but to shut the whole thing down and create the world anew.

He lived a principled life. I was privileged to have known him.

Editor's note: FW Gunderson is putting together a more thorough obituary for future use. If you would like to contribute to this, send your thoughts to gergun1@wi.rr.com.

Obituary

Rank-And-File Hero Who Led Mount Isa Miners' Strike: Pat Mackie, 1914-2009

By Malcolm Brown

When in 1964 the Queensland government of Sir Francis Nicklin decided to call on all its powers to crush a strike by Mount Isa's miners, one man stood in their way—the union radical Pat Mackie. He led the strike, inspiring the miners to keep going, in a period when police were given carte blanche to suppress them. The townspeople, in response, painted the town with swastikas by night. The 32-week strike, which extended into 1965, resulted in a victory for the miners but Mackie was targeted by an enraged federal government, which investigated ways to deport him.

Mackie, whose father was Australian, was born in New Zealand on Oct. 30, 1914, and according to the nationality laws in Australia at the time, he was an Australian citizen. His family name, according to the scant information available on his personal life, was Murphy. Mackie went to sea as a teenager because he wanted to see America. In his own account of his life, he said he was a stowaway and that he complained to the captain about the unsatisfactory state of his accommodation. For 15 years, as a seaman, he travelled the world.

Mackie was attracted to the IWW. He worked with communists and nearly joined a branch of the Communist Party in Canada. Labor historian Greg Mallory said Mackie did not become a communist but vigorously opposed forces that tried to drive communists from the union movement. At some stage in his life in Canada, Mallory says, Mackie was married, but there are no records of his ever having any children.

Mackie got object lessons in how the workers could control workplace situations. He became engaged in union activities and was a "captain of picket captains" in a lengthy New York waterfront strike in 1948, in which police used horses specially trained to rear up and kick at picketers, and gangsters acting on behalf of the agent provocateurs who were infiltrating union lines. Mackie learnt a lot about union tactics in North America and the sort of mischief that

could be visited on erring employers.

At some point, perhaps to distance himself from his past troubles, misspellings of his name on pay slips and other confusions, Mackie adopted the name Eugene Markey. That was later changed to Maurice Patrick Markey, Pat Markey and finally Pat Mackie. Mackie got into trouble with the law and served several prison sentences overseas. That included time in several Montreal prisons on charges indirectly related to union activities. In one incident, he was to claim in his 2002 autobiography, "Many Ships to Mount Isa," police loaded him with drugs. Mackie was deported to New Zealand and in 1949 he ended up in Sydney.

Mackie heard there was money to be made mining in Mount Isa. He went north and worked for a few weeks in Brisbane until another brush with the law sent him north to Bundaberg, where again he clashed with the police—this time for having the cheek to complain about their treatment of an Aboriginal man. Mackie arrived in Mount Isa in 1950 and worked for Mount Isa Mines but was quickly branded a troublemaker. He decided to move out of town to mine independently and did so for 10 years, with the aim of buying a small ketch and travelling the world.

Instead, in 1961, he started again at Mount Isa Mines, operated by one of the world's largest mining companies, the American Mining and Smelting Corporation. Mackie was initially a contract "truckie," and later a contract mine timber worker. The strike that began in August 1964 was initially over the issue of adequate showers for the men at the end of their shift. It escalated into a demand for a four-pound a week wage rise and better conditions. The company opposed the claims and had vigorous support from the federal and Queensland governments. Wearing a distinctive red cap, Mackie found himself leading 4,000 mine workers from more than 40 countries.

Publicity over the strike turned Mackie into a household name throughout Australia. During the strike he met

Elizabeth Vassilief and struck up a long-term relationship. Vassilief was to write that Mackie "sees his own needs very simply, voices them fearlessly and became a phenomenally effective workers' spokesman and trade union organizer, a power to be reckoned with in the industrial world. His strength lies in his formidable combination of his magnetic personality with high abilities in three functions of leadership: in clearly analyzing the workers' situations; in democratizing their organization; and in brilliant powers of oratory, enabling him to unite the rank and file and fire them with unshakable loyalty."

The Australian Council of Trade Unions threatened a statewide 24-hour strike in Queensland, which caused the Nicklin government to call off its state of emergency. The strike ended when the Industrial Relations Commission granted most of what the unionists were striking for.

Mackie said it was "a living lesson in the constructive potential of rank-and-file working people ... a triumph of the human spirit." But the Nicklin government had a totally different view. Mackie was referred to as "a vicious gangster." Sir Francis said the strike was part of a "communist strategy" to wreck every major development in the state. The federal government liaised with the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) on whether it was possible to deport Mackie, and they received advice that it was not possible.

Loyalty to Mackie was not universal in the trade union movement. He was expelled from the right-wing Australian Workers Union.

In 2002, Mackie published his autobiography. A reviewer wrote: "When confronted as to his ideological position, he would clearly define himself as a Wobbly, working tirelessly to improve the working and living conditions of the rank and file." Mackie's achievements were later celebrated in 2007 in a Queensland musical, "Red Cap," and his legacy to Mount Isa was good working conditions and community facilities.

Crisis At The Cegielski Factory In Poland:

By The Workers' Initiative

This article describes the historical and present significance of the Cegielski factory in Poznań for the workers' movement in Poland, as well as the history of activity of the Workers' Initiative (Inicjatywa Pracownicza, or IP) in the Cegielski factory since 2002. It also describes the development of the strategy of wildcat strikes called *plyta* during these years, as a result of which a key activist of IP was recently sentenced by the Polish courts. Last but not least, the article shows the recent influence of the global crises in the Polish shipyard industry on the situation of Cegielski workers: 500 of them were fired, which mobilized others to stage a mass demonstration in October 2009.

Since 2002, the IP has been working closely with the workers of the Cegielski plant in Poznań (which is owned by HCP SA), convincing the majority of them of the validity of its tactics. These tactics are based on several simple principles: end of the conciliatory politics towards management that have been conducted at this plant by other trade unions, assurance of full access of the workers to information on the situation of the company as well as on the situation of particular groups of workers employed in Cegielski, assurance of worker participation in the taking of relevant decisions, and, finally, establishment of the groundwork for direct actions and struggles that are controlled from below.

The Significance of the Cegielski Factory to the Polish Labor Movement

The Cegielski plant is one of the most famous in Poland. It was founded in 1846. Cegielski primarily produces various types of engines, among them ship engines—as Poland is one of the leading producers of ships worldwide—as well as wagon and tram engines. For many years, Cegielski was one of the biggest workplaces in the western part of Poland. In the 1970s, during the most productive years of the plant, more than 20,000 people were working there. In the beginning of 2009, Cegielski had 2,800 employees. Its size and importance for the regional economy are some of the main reasons why the class struggle has always been concentrated in Cegielski.

The first Cegielski strike took place in 1872. In the period between the world wars (1918-1939), the workers of



A worker protests at the Cegielski plant in Poznań on Oct. 23.

Cegielski undertook both small and big actions—many times strikes and demonstrations. The first strike actions after the war started in autumn 1945, and in 1956 the workers of Cegielski initiated a militant proletarian insurgence which lasted several days and took over the whole of Poznań. In the militant clashes with forces of the Polish army and police, around 70 protesters were killed. The next wave of protests in the plant took place in the 1980s; however, Cegielski workers did not play a leading role during the revolution of 1980.

In the 1990s, the situation in the plant had become quiet because, on the one hand, the workers let themselves be scared with the threat of dismissal and, on the other hand, salaries in Cegielski exceeded the average salaries in the country. Only with the beginning of the new century did new protest actions start as a reaction to another wave of dismissals and radical decreases in worker salaries. During this period, the IP established itself in the Cegielski plant with the intention of creating a radical struggle in the interest of the workers.

The Beginnings of the Workers' Initiative at Cegielski

One of the first successes of the IP was a demonstration to stop the dismissals of workers in June 2002. Approximately 1,000 workers from Cegielski and other plants in Poznań took to the streets. However, numerous actions did not manage to put an end to the

dismissals or the decreases in worker salaries. But IP had gained wide support, which resulted in the fact that one of its members, a lathe worker, Marcel Szary, was chosen in 2003, 2006 and 2009 by the plant workforce as its delegate for dealing with management. Each time, he won the elections resoundingly against the candidates of the big traditional trade unions present in the factory. At the same time, IP was still undertaking regular protest actions and gaining improvements of work conditions and financial benefits.

In the spring of 2006, IP undertook an attempt to organize a regular strike in Cegielski. The legal way of organizing did not work out because through the use of threats, the management and the other trade unions managed to create a situation in which less than the necessary 50 percent of the workers participated in the strike referendum. Learning from this experience, activists of the IP decided on a radical change of tactics, starting with a series of *plytas*, or short wildcat strikes. These strikes often took the form of rallies during which the workers decided together and directly about further developments.

Plyta – a Type of Wildcat Strike

The strategy of *plytas* (translated as "platform" or "square") started on March 29, 2007. On that day, IP called the management to start negotiations on wages. From the beginning, IP refused to hold the talks in the management's offic-

es (behind closed doors) and called for the negotiations to take place in the workers' club in the factory so that all interested workers could participate directly in the talks. For the first meeting, approximately 200 workers appeared, but management refused to attend. The gathered workers then conducted an assembly and decided that the next day they would conduct a *plyta*, a term which in the jargon of Cegielski workers describes an informal break in work during which the workers conduct an assembly. On March 30, 2007, most of the employees of the morning shift participated in the *plyta*. As the management was still refusing participation in negotiations, the

Photo: ozzip.pl

workers went out on the street and conducted a march to the management offices (about 1 km away from the gate of the factory). The next *plyta* took place on April 3, 2007, when the chairman of the company appeared and promised to begin the talks.

These were the beginnings of the struggle. Management, however, was not giving up so easily. On April 16, 2007, the IP called an "absence strike," and 90 percent of the workers did not go to work, using their right to a so-called "leave on demand." According to Polish Labor Code, every employee is allowed to demand four days' leave at any moment by simply informing the employer on the first day of the leave, so it was sort of a half-legal strike. That morning, hundreds of workers gathered on the square in front of the management offices for hours in order to protest and demand wage increases.

These protests continued frequently until April 3, 2008. Altogether, IP organized ten *plytas* of 20 minutes to three hours during this period, five demonstrations of 100-400 persons and one "absence strike" in which 90 percent of the personnel participated. As a result of this struggle, wages increased by approximately 700 zloty (~\$250) and management gave workers an extra premium of 1,000 zloty (~\$350). At the beginning of 2009, the average gross salary in Cegielski was approximately 2,850 zloty (~\$1,000), so in about one year

Continued on next page

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The Workers' Initiative Fights For Jobs



Thousands of workers demonstrate on Oct. 23.

Photo: ozzip.pl

Continued from previous page

the workers achieved an approximate 25 percent increase.

Reprisals for the *Plytas*

On Nov. 3, 2009, the Polish court found Marcel Szary guilty of organizing and leading three wildcat strikes in Cegielski in 2008 and imposed on him a fine of 3,000 zloty (~\$1,050). The bosses of the Cegielski plant also demanded a verdict banning him from holding office in the management of the factory. The court ultimately decided to limit the verdict to the financial fine.

It is worth noting that Szary, who was born in 1964, has been a member of the trade union Solidarnosc (Solidarity) since 1980. Between 1988 and 1991, he was head of the Cegielski plant-based Solidarnosc in the W-2, the largest and most important department of the factory, which produces ship engines. In 2000, not agreeing with the conciliatory policy of Solidarnosc, he gave up his membership in the union, and in June 2004 he founded a new union: Workers' Initiative (IP). Today he is still one of its key activists.

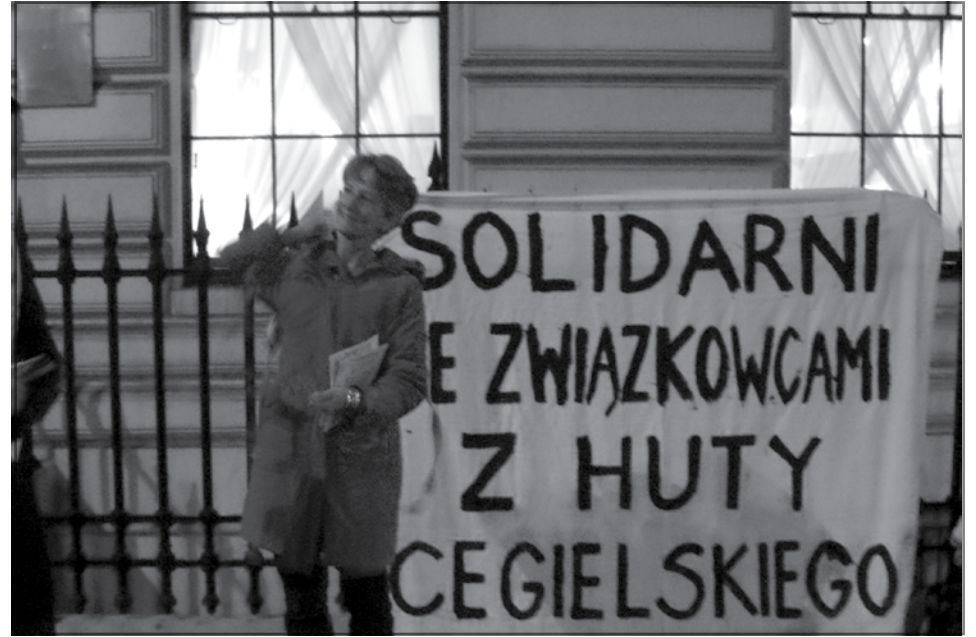
Result of the Crisis: 500 Workers Fired, a Demonstration of 4,000

In 2008, a very deep crisis erupted in the Polish shipyard industry that affected Cegielski, as ship engine production is one of the most important in the factory. Some time after that, the crisis

also influenced shipyards in Germany and China, which were major customers of Cegielski. This could be seen in factory orders in mid-2009. In June 2009, mass layoffs of about 500 workers were announced. While other trade unions were cooperating with management, IP began to organize protests, including several pickets and demonstrations in front of the factory, against the firings. On Oct. 23, 2009, almost 4,000 workers from different trade unions and various plants took part in a demonstration for workers' rights. Members of IP and anarchists participated in that protest.

The demonstrators first gathered on the premises of the factory and then moved towards its provincial office. The common bloc of IP and Sierpień 1980, together with the anarchists, chanted slogans such as "Government out to the pavement, paving stones on the government," "One, two, three, four, stop those damn dismissals," "A worker dismissed, a boss hanged," and "Capitalism isn't working! Factories under the control of workers." Rhythms of Resistance, a samba group from Poznań, supported the demonstration with its rhythms. A banner saying "A worker dismissed, a boss hanged" was dropped from one building on the route of the demonstration.

When the demonstration reached the provincial office of Cegielski, the leaders of Solidarnosc declared a radical fight in defense of the workers, threatened to "burn the offices" and burned car tires. When IP members and anarchists joined



London IWW demonstrates at the Polish Embassy on Nov. 27.

Photo: Nic Lane

the shipyard workers in the back of the office building, clashes with the police broke out, and the shipyard workers retreated as they were told to do by their leaders. Three policemen were hurt and some activists might expect legal proceedings against them for attacking the policemen.

The Present Situation

IP continues to fight to save jobs in the Cegielski factory. We are also trying to organize the fired workers who remain unemployed to carry out protests that put pressure on the local govern-

ment, which at the moment is trying to increase the price of water and public transport in the city of Poznań. Unfortunately, the IP activists from Cegielski have been facing repression. In addition to the sentence of Szary, four workers active in the IP from its very beginning were incarcerated, and were just recently released. Therefore, we are also organizing support and protest against this repression. This struggle is important not only to the workers of Cegielski, but to all members of our union, which basically was created and developed through the activity of the Cegielski workers.

Update: End Of Collective Dispute At Cegielski Factory

By The Workers' Initiative

An agreement was signed on Nov. 25, 2009, between the Workers' Initiative (IP) and HCP SA (the owner of the Cegielski factory), ending the collective dispute and allowing the five IP activists who had been illegally fired to return to work. HCP SA also recognized union protection for the five activists. The Workers' Initiative agreed to suspend protests, while the management promised not to make further redundancies.

The five IP activists were fired in mid-October, just a few days after IP had informed HCP SA that the union had gotten support from enough factory workers to be able to represent them. The IP had chosen these workers as representatives, so they are protect-

ed by the Union Law. All fired workers were also members of the strike committee established by IP during the industrial dispute, which started in August 2009.

As a result of the IP protests, some of the workers' demands are now met; for instance, regular wages are paid to the workers for the work stoppage time in accordance with the Labor Code (before, the employer had signed individual agreements with employees, which is illegal). What is more, the employer could not reduce wages in 2009. IP fought to push through the same agreement for 2010, but the management refused, stating that the shipping industry was in a difficult situation and it was impossible to say what will happen this year.



Not In Service: Ontario Transit Workers On Strike

Continued from 1

the current economic downturn. She also vowed to wage a public-relations war to inform Londoners of the "true costs" to the LTC and taxpayers of meeting the union's demands.

The union responded by pointing to the fact that they are paid significantly less than their counterparts in other municipalities, and their benefit packages trail far behind workers in most other unionized sectors.

The day the strike started, the University of Western Ontario announced the creation of a "community van" program for students living off campus. Union representatives responded by labeling the initiative a form of strike-breaking and threatened to picket the university. Despite receiving the support from the university's faculty union, the resulting outcry from students, who make up a large percentage of the LTC's 75,000 daily fares, eventually drove the ATU 741 rank and file to vote against picketing the school.

Fanshawe College quietly announced a new contingency plan of their own—a shuttle service connecting the main cam-

pus to a secondary downtown campus that houses the college's drama department. Fanshawe's administration has been quick to avoid having the shuttle service labeled as strike-breaking.

"We are not trying to mount a replacement bus system to London Transit, which is a vital service . . . We respect the right to strike," said Fanshawe College spokesperson Jeff Sage upon announcement of the shuttle service.

The days following the announcement of the strike have seen a backlash, perhaps best epitomized by radio announcers on London's CJBK 1290 recently supporting callers to spit on bus drivers when they eventually return to the job. Popular social networking sites Facebook and Twitter have also seen a spike in groups and individuals heaping scorn on the city's transit workers.

Despite this, the union remained steadfast in their demands for better benefits and modest wage increases that would set their salaries in line with their counterparts in Windsor and Kitchener.

This article originally appeared in the December 2009 issue of Linchpin.

Welsh Wobbly Imprisoned For 28 Days

Graphic: ozzip.pl

Continued from 1

packed court. When the officials left the room a sit-in and "peoples' court" were held at which the government was found guilty of ignoring the rights of the people of Wales. The subsequent hearing was moved to a brand new high-security court building where only a few members of the public were admitted to the public gallery.

Osian's selfless determination, tireless enthusiasm and bubbly personality are an inspiration to all of us who have encountered him at meetings, demos and picket lines. We look forward to his release and hope he will be able to spare some of his valuable activism time to help us set up that north Wales IWW



Photo: Huw Jones

In January 2007, Osian Jones joined a sit-in at a supermarket that refused to put up Welsh language signs. The sign reads "Your Language, Your Right."

branch.

Anyone wishing to send him a message of solidarity can write to: Osian Jones. Prison No.DX8265. HM Prison Altcourse, Fazakerley, Liverpool L97 LH. England.

Book & Movie Reviews

The Unpredictable Future: Stories From Worker-Run Factories In Argentina

Klein, Naomi. "Sin Patrón: Stories From Argentina's Worker-Run Factories." Haymarket Books, 2007. 320 pages, paperback, \$16.

By Benjamin Dangl

Following the social upheaval in Argentina from 2001 to 2002, a book was published in Spanish that a lot of activists and independent journalists in the country began trying to get their hands on. It wasn't in all of the bookstores, but news about it traveled like wildfire. Now the legendary book, "Sin Patrón: Stories From Argentina's Worker-Run Factories," is translated and available to the English-speaking world.

The book includes a number of illuminating interviews and chapters by Lavaca, a journalism collective based in Buenos Aires that continues to produce some of the best analysis and stories on social movements in the country. With "Sin Patrón," Lavaca brings together dynamic voices and stories from the hearts of Argentina's inspiring movements.

The timing couldn't be better for the release of this book in English. Readers in the U.S. seeking creative solutions to the current economic crisis may find some helpful suggestions in "Sin Patrón."

Workers in Argentina during that country's crash figured out they needed to go beyond the law to survive. "For workers in Argentina there is no law. It only exists for the powerful," said

Eduardo Murua, President of the National Movement of Reclaimed Companies. "If we were stuck outside [of the factory] asking the judge to keep it

open, we would get nowhere. If we were to ask politicians, we'd get even less. Only through occupation could we recover the jobs."

One story of occupation and worker control told in "Sin Patrón" is that of Sime Quarry, located in the province of Entre Rios. The owners of the quarry ran the business into the ground, but it was taken over by its workers and kept in operation under worker-control. Leading up to the closure, the bosses abused the workers verbally and physically. María del Huerto said that in December 2002 the bosses of the quarry "gave us a 35-day unscheduled vacation." The "vacation" lasted until Jan. 20, 2003, when the workers went back to the quarry to find it abandoned. It was "a pasture with no lights, running water, or telephone service. Nothing. It was desolate," María said. Just a few machines were left.

María met with fellow workers and members of the Movement of Recuperated Companies, and they discussed taking over the quarry themselves. They decided to arm themselves before the takeover in case they ran into any resistance. "We took firearms, and some neighbors lent us shotguns. We announced that we didn't want to shoot anyone, but wanted to defend our workplace and keep the bosses from stealing anything else."

It was a terribly hot time of the year and mosquitoes were everywhere. No one had any money, so they used the guns to hunt. "To eat, the men hunted apereá rabbits—they're brown; they look like big mice. They also fished caruchas from a nearby lagoon, and Don Joaquín would send us tarpon fish from the market. What had happened to us? We thought of ourselves as middle class, and here we were, begging and hunting to make ends meet," María said. At one point, the workers were getting so desperate they had to sell furniture in order to buy meat.

Over time, they formed a cooperative and a judge ordered the plant be given



"Zanon belongs to the people."

Photo: danyelrojo.entodaspartes.net

over to them in April of 2003. Now the quarry is back in business, fully operational under worker-management.

The Zanon ceramics factory was also occupied and put under worker control around the same time. Reinaldo Giménez, a long time worker at Zanon, spoke of when the business was closing down and the boss refused to pay the workers what was owed to them. The boss "put everyone in the same boat, and the workers with the longest tenures said, 'This scumbag should have paid me. I gave him my life, but he has no feelings, no compassion, and he makes no distinctions.'"

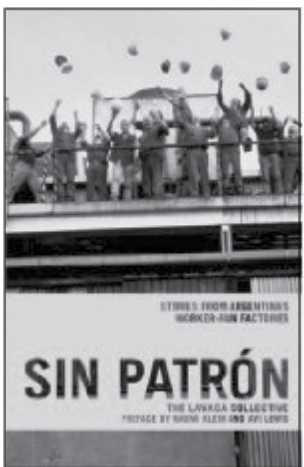
The tension with the boss blew up, and the workers went on strike, setting up tents outside the factory, marching, picketing and organizing a communal kitchen. Local schools, workers and neighbors helped out however they could; even prisoners in jail supported the workers by donating their food. The workers reached out to the community, explaining their plight to passersby. Locals empathized with them because they were hard-working people with families. It was this connection and support from

the community that helped the workers of Zanon eventually transform the factory into a cooperative. Ramírez said, "We always said the factory isn't ours. We are using it, but it belongs to the community."

That's a key message at the heart of this book—that these failed factories and businesses should belong to the people, not the wealthy bosses who mistreated workers and then abandoned ship. Such challenges to classic ideas of private property and workplace hierarchy course through every page in "Sin Patrón." These examples of worker management defy the bankrupt logic of capitalism itself.

Angry workers everywhere should grab a copy of "Sin Patrón" to read of the Argentines who built new worlds when the old ones failed. As the Lavaca editors write in the introduction to their book, "The limit of all prediction is what people are capable of doing. It is not chance, but courage, that makes the future unpredictable."

This story was originally published on Nov. 24, 2009 on <http://www.towardfreedom.com>.



Graphic: amazon.com



Graphic: Benjamin Ferguson

The Little-Known Life Of Frank Little

Director: Travis Wilkerson. "An Injury To One." Icarus Films, 2003. 53 minutes.

By Benjamin Ferguson

Hovering between a dream and a flash presentation, "An Injury To One" is a strange and beautifully photographed film about legendary wobbly organizer Frank Little's attempt to organize the workers of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Anyone searching for cinema remotely similar to what typically comes out of Hollywood will want to flee in the opposite direction; this is a 53-minute deeply expressionistic depiction of the horror and violence a company resorted to when its interests were threatened.

Images of Butte, Montana's past and present are the backdrop for the copper miners' struggles and the lynching of Frank Little. With a haunting soundtrack of guitars and violins from Low, Will Oldham and Jim O'Rourke, viewers learn about a company called Anaconda—ironically named after one of nature's most vicious predators—which controlled the local government and newspapers. Anaconda's battles against organized labor included the first use of the black list in this country, and the worker mortality rate was higher than those dying in World War I. Little was giving speeches to thousands at a time and organizing the miners who pro-

duced 10 percent of the world's copper, a crucial element in the war effort. The prediction of violence by the local papers finally came true at 4:00 a.m. on Aug. 1, 1917.

The connection of the progressive mystery writer Dashiell Hammet to the events is also explored. Lefty playwright Lillian Hellman, who was his girlfriend for 30 years, claimed that Hammet, a Pinkerton agent at the time, was offered \$500 to kill Little. The plot of Hammet's book "Poisonville" mirrors what was transpiring in Butte when Little arrived. It was a prophetic choice for the book's title in that Lake Berkley is considered the most polluted lake in the country as a result of Anaconda's reckless environmental policies.

Unions need more cinematic material to convey their struggles and ideas with an originality that can appeal to a wide audience, and director/narrator Travis Wilkerson's 2003 film has an aesthetic which can't be compared to any movie on labor or anything else. There are no talking heads here, just an emotionally-charged graphic construction which captures a tragic event in our union's history.

"An Injury to One" serves as an excellent outreach tool for teaching potential members about the IWW principles that inspired Frank Little's courageous organizing.

Anti-Privatization Protests In Serbia

By the Global Balkans Network

Earlier this year the International Monetary Fund (IMF) concluded a one-week mission to Serbia, during which it extended the second-tranche of a 4.3 billion euro loan package to Serbia. At the time it gave the government until late October to reign in public sector spending as a condition for disbursing the third-tranche of the agreement (worth 1.4-billion euros) by the end of 2009.

The tough negotiations came at a time when the incumbent government of Serbia was facing a 4 percent contraction in its economy and a determined workers movement that refuses to bear the burden of economic restructuring after years of corruption which bound together key Serbian business and political interests in the squandering of public funds. The end of 2009 was also the self-imposed deadline set by the government for completing the sell-off of all 'socially owned' (i.e. formerly self-managed) companies in Serbia.

In September, there were more than 30 strike actions throughout the country, many of which have taken on radical forms in recent months, including factory occupations, railway blockades, city-hall and police station takeovers, sleep-ins, "boss-nappings," hunger strikes and even a case of self-mutilation. In these actions workers are often seeking to prevent shady privatization deals from occurring or trying to save their jobs and enterprises from bankruptcy following such privatizations. The main concern of most workers in these actions is to ensure the continued payment of salaries, compensation, etc., upon which their survival and the survival of their communities depends. Many of these strikes have been organized at the factory level, with little input from the mainstream unions in Serbia.

Following these actions, a number of strike committees have come together to form a Coordinating Committee for Workers Protests in Serbia (CCWPS). Five strike committees joined the CCWPS, representing workers from three cities and five branches of industry (electrical components, pharmaceuticals, rail-products, food-processing, and confectionary products).

Global Balkans Interviews Milenko Srećković

The following is an interview with Milenko Srećković, spokesperson for the Freedom Fight anarchist network:

Global Balkans: *The IMF was just recently in Serbia to negotiate regarding the disbursement of a 4.3 billion euro loan to the country. What is the current situation in Serbia with respect to the economic crisis? What makes 2009 an important year in Serbia's privatization attempts?*

Milenko Srećković: The current economic collapse in Serbia would have occurred even without the "economic crisis." It's the direct result of a range of neoliberal economic measures. The privatization process in Serbia, which is a central component of the neoliberal project, brought about the ruin of many factories and the near total de-industrialization of the country. This process began in 2001, in its most extreme form, when the new "democratic" government of Serbia introduced a new Privatization Law. At that time all socially owned property was confiscated and its privatization became mandatory. A deadline was imposed by state authorities for the completion of the privatization process.

However, following eight years of privatization, the general opinion is that privatization only served to ravage an economy that somehow managed to survive the sanctions of the 1990s and a [three month] NATO bombing campaign in 1999. Of course, it wasn't the most prosperous economy in Europe at the time, but it had the potential to develop

and employ a large number of people given the right approach.

By 2002, a number of domestic development banks [Beobanka, Investbanka, Beogradska banka, Jugobanka], which could have extended credits to industry at low-interest, were deliberately driven into bankruptcy by the government. With this move the space was created to open branches of foreign banks (none of which had a developmental function). This [financial reform] was supported by the IMF and the World Bank and implemented by the IMF's domestic cadres. These cadres have been permanent fixtures in every Serbian government [since October 2000]. Domestic industry, already shaken up by 10 years of crisis, suddenly found itself without a source of favorable credit.

The state has shown little interest in maintaining production in those enterprises that employ a large number of workers. Receipts from the sale of factories were used to fill the state-budget and purchase social peace, while enabling a favorable infrastructure for foreign investors to be created so that they could engage in green-field investments in the newly opened "free zones." These "free zones" are characterized by working conditions that offer minimal pay, thereby allowing foreign investors to use cheap labor, which is cynically called our "comparative advantage" by local neoliberal economists.

Currently there is a marked increase in labor protests largely due to the non-payment of wages and benefits or because of layoffs. Workers are increasingly demanding the Privatization Agency put an end to a spate of bad privatization deals. In fact, this Agency is the best evidence that the new 'democratic' authorities totally retained the model of a centralized state from the Communist period, because they now need this apparatus to introduce neoliberal reforms. That is to say, this type of agency is an integral part of the state wherever such massive privatizations occur. Such a powerful state agency has never existed in Serbia (regardless of which empire ruled in the region!).

Of course, it was precisely such a strong Privatization Agency that was needed to secure the ultimate goal: to allow new private owners to purge these newly acquired assets of their workers, while retaining ownership over all the plant, capital and land of these factories. They could then either sell or rent this newly 'freed' space to other businesses. In this way they were able to create a high-rate of unemployment, an important precondition for "green-field" investments. Workers have taken to pointing out the persistent involvement of the Privatization Agency's functionaries in criminal activities that have driven many factories to ruin [often in direct violation of the stipulations regulating their privatization]. However, the legal system is set up in such a way that the agency is always right, and even when it has clearly failed to uphold the law, [it will face no repercussions]. This is because a good portion of the proceeds from privatization have gone into the financing of political parties (both among those in the current government and for those in the opposition's ranks).

GB: *How has the workers' movement responded?*

MS: The independent, grassroots workers' movement in which we're participating draws on the experience of the workers' struggle in the city of Zrenjanin from recent years. This is a model that we're trying to spread to other cities in Serbia. Zrenjanin, which was one of the industrial centers of both Serbia and the former Yugoslavia, suffered a total collapse of local industry. The current unemployment rate there now stands at 35 percent.

However, in Zrenjanin there were

also factories where workers offered strong resistance, like in the Jugoremedija pharmaceutical factory where they succeeded in removing the new owner who was leading the company into bankruptcy. These workers recently succeeded in installing their own management, restarted production, and saved their jobs. Having solved their own existential problems, they continued to struggle in solidarity with their local community, establishing a working-class political party known as *Ravnopravnost* (Equality) and extending their solidarity to workers from other factories in Zrenjanin that were caught-up in similar struggles. The movement has received the support of the local community, as well as many organizers and public figures from outside Zrenjanin, including some engaged intellectuals like Nebojsa Popov (the editor of *Republika*) and Ivan Zlatić, an activist from the Freedom Fight movement.

The movement we're building is based on the right to work, or more precisely, the right of workers to decide on the fate of the factories in which they're employed and from which they themselves, along with their families and their local communities, live.

Another important stronghold of this movement is in the city of Raca, near Kragujevac. Raca has become the site of one of the most determined and most radical workers' struggles for the preservation of their workplaces. We managed to link together the representatives of strike committees from several enterprises and suggested that, in moments where there's a real possibility and need, they could coordinate their efforts and struggle for their rights together. On this basis we founded the Coordinating Committee for Workers Protests in Serbia (CCWPS).

GB: *Tell us about the new Coordinating Committee?*

MS: During the Aug. 11 Zastava-Elektro workers protest in front of the Privatization Agency in Belgrade [during which the workers spent the night in front of Agency], we invited workers from similarly affected enterprises that we've been working with to join us. The intention was to extend the solidarity that existed between workers in a given city to workers from other cities that might be at quite a distance from each other. It was in this way that we created the basis for a Coordinating Committee that was established by the representatives of workers from the Zastava-Elektro [electrical components] factory in Raca, the Srbolek [pharmaceutical] factory in Belgrade, as well as workers from Sinvoz [rail-car production] and BEK [food processing] plants in Zrenjanin. We put a callout for other strike committees in Serbia to join us.

A few days later, workers from the Ravanica [confectionary] factory in Cuprija joined the Coordinating Committee. We're expecting more strike committees to join us in the coming days. The plan was to be prepared for the fall when an escalation in worker discontent and rebellion is expected throughout Serbia. The main aim is to struggle in solidarity with one another against the collapse of our factories and the protection of our jobs. The government has already put together its team for the suppression of workers protests, with the aim of silencing our concerns. Now we must demonstrate that we're strong, united, and organized, because otherwise the entire democratic potential of the workers movement will disappear into case-specific negotiations with the government working group.

GB: *What concrete successes has this Committee already had?*

MS: We are struggling to ensure that the government's "working group" accepts the [democratically elected] rep-



Graphic: globalbalkans.org

representatives of the strike committees as their interlocutors in any future negotiations. The government has already chosen its own partners in carrying out the so-called "social dialogue," which were obviously chosen from the leadership of the mainstream unions. The workers in Serbia are deeply disillusioned with the behavior of the big unions, especially in the course of the past year (and especially since the onset of the economic crisis), because they've shown themselves to be allies of the government in attempting to slow down the current strike-wave. In some cases they were even directly involved in sabotaging some actions by workers. It is for this reason that we're asking that the governments main interlocutors on the side of the workers be a coordinating body that represents the interests and demands of the actual workers' strike committees [at the factory level]. We've put some real pressure on the government, and we'll continue to do so. We're hoping for positive results.

However, if this question is hinting at the success achieved in light of the recent offer by the owner of Zastava-Elektro, Ranko Dejanovic, to return the factory to the ownership of the workers (following six months of radical strike action)... I have to let you know that we've rejected the owner's offer. The negotiations with the government are always tied up in avoiding a number of traps that they're trying to set for us. This offer [from Dejanovic] is one of these traps, even though the media presented it as a big victory for the workers. In fact, all they're giving us is a factory that the current owner has overburdened with serious debts and mortgage issues. It would be only a matter of days before such a factory faced bankruptcy. It would be hard to resume production so long as the state refuses to cancel all the debts accumulated by Dejanovic.

The struggle for the future of Zastava-Elektro continues to this very moment. Today, workers will again hold a protest in front of the Privatization Agency (unless, of course, the police again try to prevent bus companies from driving the workers from Raca to Belgrade). If this happens, we'll again have to blockade either the communal police station, the city council, or the main railway-line near Raca.

GB: *What can folks from the outside do to support local resistance to neoliberalism?*

MS: The most important thing is that information about our struggle be disseminated in an accurate way. Even though the problem of workers and oppressed groups in society are similar throughout the world as a result of globalization, every context also has its own specificities which we must come to know in detail before making any conclusions. These specificities can often be the source of misunderstandings, since everywhere one can find opportunists and grandstanding individuals among leftist activists who do things only to impress their friends on the international scene. Such activities may not be related to the local context in which they operate in any way, but they'll still take such actions. Such opportunists in fact can bring real harm to actual struggles occurring in their local context. For this reason it is important that the situation in Serbia is understood and transmitted in a precise way, so that there is no room for manipulation.

This story was edited for length. It originally appeared on Sept. 9, 2009, on <http://www.globalbalkans.org>.

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



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by Lincoln Coaling & Timothy W. Dwyer

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—from *Agitate! Educate! Organize!*

In *Agitate! Educate! Organize!*, Lincoln Coaling and Timothy W. Dwyer share their vast knowledge about the rich graphic tradition of labor posters. Linen 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. Coaling and Dwyer 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; Death and Reproductive Democracy; Voting and Political; 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.

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London “Posties” Strike Against Privatization, Part 2

Continued from 1

such an arrangement, if workers walked out management could just blame the union for preventing a resolution to the long-running dispute. This was hardly a show of good faith.



London CWU members strike in October.

Photo: libcom.org

The second item that was discussed—and another thing that was abundantly clear to both officials—was that the workers were not at all happy. The union full-timer told us he'd had calls on Monday morning with workers who wanted to quit the union and that workers felt “sold out” and abandoned by the leadership. According to him, workers in North West London sorting offices were ready to walk out on their own accord. All it would take would be one word from local officials or any provocative move from plant management, and mail service would cease in North West London. His advice to his members was that while he shared their indignation, they should at least try to let the agreement work. If it failed, the other options could be considered. (It's worth noting that allowing unofficial strike action has been a tactic of the CWU in the past. While this no doubt speaks to the militancy of the posties, it also speaks to how the CWU presents itself to the Royal Mail: a vehicle of containment as much as a vehicle of militancy).

Our lay official, while agreeing on the level of anger felt by the rank and file, offered a differing analysis. He felt that—at least in his depot—the formal cessation of strike activity had led to a loss of momentum on the ground. Even with the live strike ballot, it'd be tough to regain the energy and potential there'd been a week prior.

A postie then spoke up from the audience. Surely Royal Mail was dishonest and manipulative, but the TUC and the CWU's national leadership played a role as well: “If the strikes continued, the union could lose control. And they don't want that.” Voicing the anger that must have been felt by posties across the city and, indeed, across all of Britain, he told us that since going back to work that Monday the bullying that had been such a factor in the dispute hadn't changed.

In some instances workers were being taunted by their supervisors, some of whom even went so far as to declare, “We've won.” Despite sections of the interim agreement that obligated management to address the culture of bullying immediately, nothing had changed. On a more cautiously optimistic note, he offered his view on the timing of mail strikes. The conventional wisdom is that Royal Mail is most vulnerable during the Christmas season. He felt that while there's truth in this, if orchestrated properly, strikes at other times of the year could also severely disrupt the mail cycle. Even if the workers were indeed sold out this time around, all hope is not lost.

As I prepare to send this in for publication, I'm planning on going to the fourth meeting of the North West London Postal Workers Support Group in two days' time. According to the email invitation I've received, “The London Division [of the CWU] has unanimously agreed to demand that the national union announce national strike action. This is a national agreement they're breaking; it's a national union, therefore it requires national action.”

I'm not in any position to judge where this dispute will go next. The issue of the “seasonal workers” mentioned in the December 2009 *Industrial Worker*, and the crater-sized pension hole, remain unresolved. However, this article will be going to print in the January issue. By the time of publication, what's done will be done. I can't stress enough the importance of this dispute. The posties have been called the “vanguard of the British working class.” In a time when the private sector is shedding jobs and slashing wages and both major parties are calling for a minimum of ten percent cuts in public spending, a success for the postal workers is a success for us all. I can only hope for the best.

Interview With A Longtime Member Of The CWU

By Tom Levy

The following interview was conducted during the first round of strikes the Industrial Worker covered in the December 2009 issue. It should help provide further background to the causes and importance of the dispute.

Tom Levy: How have the strikes been organized, i.e., is there a strike committee, and how are the committees elected/selected? How privy is the membership to what goes on during negotiations? How does the union disseminate that information?

Postal Worker: In terms of how the strikes are organized, I don't know of any strike committees as such, but there are workplace reps and every branch has a branch committee made up of the reps and branch officers. All these are elected by the workforce. It's also their job to [try and] keep the workers informed about [such things as] negotiations, strike days and support. As far as the negotiations are concerned, we are really not kept informed at all at any level. Other information is disseminated by the national union via the website and email. There is also the monthly union newspaper sent to all members.

TL: What's your view on the tactics of the rolling strikes?

PW: I, like many others, am in two minds about the rolling strikes. On the one hand—as in the latest ones—they cause two days' disruption while only losing us one day's pay. On the other hand, it can be confusing, not to say demoralizing, when some sections are out and others are working.

TL: Have there been unofficial/wildcat strikes within Royal Mail? Related, what are your thoughts on the balloting process? Do you feel it inhibits the ability of workers to take action?

PW: There have been a lot of unofficial [“wildcat”] strikes in Royal Mail, usually spontaneous local walkouts over some management action, such as harassment or a sacking. There has been some unofficial action during the course of the current disputes, particularly over the crossing (or, rather, not crossing) of picket lines. These usually only last [for] a day or two. The legal balloting procedure for official strikes prevents immediate reaction to management actions. It means it takes several weeks to respond to anything.

TL: Have there been attempts by the CWU, or by workers working outside the union, to spread the struggle? By this I mean in terms of industrial action, beyond resolutions or donations to the hardship fund.

PW: To date, no.

TL: What is your view on the ACAS [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service]? Do you feel they're truly a neutral agency? What are your thoughts on the use of negotiating agencies in general when it comes to labor disputes?

PW: [I'm] not keen on ACAS or any other mediating organizations. At their best, they only propose to find some kind of compromise/middle way. I don't see why workers should settle for that. That's bad enough, but more usually they tend to come down on the side of the employer. [I'm] not sure what “neutral” means in the context of the class struggle.

TL: Can you describe the relationship between CWU members and the unionized managers and, if a different dynamic exists, between the CWU itself and the managers' union? Presumably the managers have been crossing the picket line?

PW: Our managers don't just cross our picket line. They [try and] do our work on strike days, volunteer to travel around the country doing the same, and organize and encourage workers to scab. We're not sure what proportion of them are members of the Communication Managers' Association [CMA, a section within Unite], but that doesn't make much difference. In the past the CMA has boasted about their strikebreaking activities. Relations are dreadful. Postal workers have a good record of not crossing other workers' picket lines [when delivering the post], but, like it or not, would not hesitate to cross CMA picket lines. At national level the CWU has attempted to get the CMA to be more cooperative, but to little effect.

Union To Roll Through EPZs Of Central America

Continued from 1

The power of a global justice movement, including the student movements, is a powerful display of international unity for the struggle of working people. It shows that the power of capitalist colonialism and occupation in Latin America and Mexico, which has enslaved workers at low wages, can be broken. The experience



USAS at SUNY Binghamton in Nov. 2008.

Photo: Paul Poulos

a repressive military coup, could have worldwide repercussions and will be an inspiration for other liberation struggles.

The International Solidarity Commission (ISC) of the IWW is making inquiries to determine whether or not an actual union label was ever a subject of bargaining between Centro General de Trabajadores and Russell Athletics.

To read the agreements between the union and the company, visit the Workers Rights Consortium website at <http://www.workersrights.org>

Community Collective Bargaining With The Home Team

By Kenneth Miller

The National Basketball Association (NBA), much like the National Football League (NFL), conducts all of the licensing for all of the teams and distributes the revenue from apparel licensing to each of the teams through a “Revenue Sharing Agreement.”

Sweat-Free Baseball is committed to turning these agreements on their head by demanding that the Pittsburgh Pirates assert themselves to protect the rights of workers sewing our team's logo.

This ongoing campaign targeting the NBA would be exponentially more powerful when a local group brings its concerns to the local team. The Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance and the IWW International Solidarity Commission (ISC) are asking our colleagues in the anti-sweatshop movement to support our efforts by redirecting any discussion about workers' rights in the apparel supply chain to local groups and their respective teams. This was made explicit in an IWW ISC Resolution delivered to the AFL-CIO Union Label Committee and the 6th Annual Sweat-Free Communities Conference.



Graphic: Tom Keough

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.

Dispatches From Palestine: Our First Day In Ramallah

The following is an excerpt from the recent IWW delegation to Palestine's blog.

Nov. 22, 2009 - Today we took the bus in to Ramallah, passing the Qalandia checkpoint with no problem, though we did see one or two cars full of people being inspected by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). We also got our first glimpse of the infamous Apartheid Wall. Rob said it best: It's kind of like a checkpoint on I-95, except staffed by children with M16s. They are not exactly children, but the IDF soldiers all look very, very young.

We were welcomed into the Federation of Independent Unions of Palestine office by Mohammed Aruri and his colleague Ghareeb. At this small meeting, delegation members learned a bit about the Federation of Independent Palestinian Unions, which, as it turns out, is incredibly similar in mission and structure to the IWW.

The Federation organizes within a wide spectrum of unions, from finance to agricultural to medical manufacturing to university employees to certain parts of the public sector, like village councils. Unemployment is rampant, with up to 50 percent of workers who are unemployed, and the Federation organizes and provides services to workers without jobs. The Federation provides food, medicine, money and free insurance service to approximately 2,000 unemployed workers. Most of the money donated by the Palestinian Authority goes to paying government employees and to security measures demanded by the Israeli government, and there is little left for unemployment compensation, so it is left to unions to fill the gap. Notably, 50 percent of Palestinians also live below the poverty line. Mohammed said that the occupation is the main cause for their suffering.

The Federation organizes all over the West Bank, and does some work within Gaza. They do not have members in Jerusalem, where workers tend to organize by local shops and not into federations. Aruri suspects that this has something to do with the difficulty in getting across checkpoints, but there may be other political reasons as well. The Federation is the Palestinian version of "One Big Union," as they work tirelessly to build solidarity in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, and all over the world. If there were a theme to our discussions today it would be "unity in struggle."

The union was started in reaction to the larger business unions representing most Palestinian workers. It has a structure that reflects a commitment to democratic unionism. The executive committee is comprised of workers who are elected by the members directly. The local leaders must be workers in the industries they represent.

Our conversation turned to the Boycott Israel movement of which the

Federation plays an active role. The boycott movement, created by Palestinian workers and civil society groups, seeks to put non-violent pressure on the Israeli government to abide by standards of human rights and international law. Mohammed said that most Palestinians are in favor of the boycott, as it will increase job opportunities, as it will increase opportunities in Palestinian factories, and will decrease reliance on Israeli goods. Aruri asked that more pressure be placed on Obama, and noted this era as one of much opportunity. The delegation spoke of our efforts to publicize this meeting and build support for the boycott movement in the U.S. labor movement.

The U.S. gives \$3 billion in aid to the Israeli government largely to the military. Aruri said that this money could be given to workers in the U.S. to help resolve the economic crisis workers are facing. Aruri said our job is to advocate for U.S. workers as much as it is for others internationally.

Aruri came to the U.S. in 2004 and met with many rank-and-file union members, as well as peace groups. He also met with leaders of the AFL-CIO who basically accused him of being left-wing and wrote him off. Aruri said the AFL "looks with one eye instead of two." It should be noted that the AFL, as well as the Democratic Party, signed agreements with Histadrut, the main Israeli union closely aligned with the Israeli state. One interesting anecdote that illustrates the nature of Histadrut: the former president of the union went on to serve as the defense minister for the Israeli government and led the country into the war in Lebanon.

It has become clear throughout our discussions that the occupation of Palestine directly impairs worker organizing. It has caused factories to close and has stopped producers from shipping goods to Arab countries. Aruri noted that the union's position on the wall is not against the Jewish people, and not even against the wall entirely. He said that Palestinians don't need aid, that they have the resources to develop themselves. They could have a thriving tourism industry and grow plenty of fruits and vegetables. What they need is freedom.

The union mentioned three specific things solidarity workers could do: they need help fundraising for a staff position to address women's issues, help organize a visit of members of the Federation to the United States, and connect members to other organizations, unions, women's organizations, and others.

We returned to our hotel for a brief rest, and were then treated to a delicious supper at the home of Ghareeb, one of the members of the Federation. There, over Arab-style macaroni and cheese, we talked politics, movies, and played with the kids. A pretty great end to the day.

For more, visit <http://www.iwwinpalestine.blogspot.com>. A full report will appear in the February/March IW.

Steelworkers Endorse Cooperative Economic Model

By Viola Wilkins

On Oct. 27, the United Steelworkers (USW) and MONDRAGON Internacional, S.A. signed an agreement on collaboration in the U.S. and Canada aiming at adapting USW collective bargaining principles to the Mondragon cooperative model and worker ownership principles.

The agreement stipulates that, "the goals of this collaboration are to develop and grow manufacturing jobs in the United States and Canada, to improve the quality of life of workers and to create sustainable jobs in a sustainable economy that supports stronger communities and sustainable environmental practices."

The company advocates management model principles based on people working in cooperatives on joint projects and using participative organization for their implementation. In its turn each

cooperative is based on the principles of understanding the instrumental and subordinated nature of capital, democratic organization, open admission, participation in management and wage solidarity.

Commenting on the nature of the agreement, USW International President Leo W. Gerard said, "We see Mondragon's cooperative model with 'one worker, one vote' ownership as a means to re-empower workers and make business accountable to Main Street instead of Wall Street."

Mondragon employs approximately 100,000 cooperative members in more than 260 cooperative enterprises producing white line domestic appliances, office and home furniture, and sport equipment in more than 40 countries.

To view the full text of the agreement, visit <http://www.usw.org>.

Workers Across Turkey Go On General Strike

By International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

Organized by the Confederation of Public Employees Trade Union (KESK)—of which the ITF-affiliated United Transportation Employees Union (BTS) is a member—and the Turkish Public Workers' Labour Union (KAMU-SEN), the strike action took place on Nov. 25, 2009. The aviation branch of the BTS also participated by organizing a work stoppage. They were calling for an end to labor rights violations and for their fundamental rights to belong to a union to be upheld.

Public sector workers, who fall under the Public Employees' Trade Union Act, face serious restrictions on freedom of association. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security considers collective bargaining and the right to strike a violation of the act. Instead, it allows for

"collective consultative talks," which are not enforceable. The act also contains detailed provisions regarding the way in which unions are allowed to operate; these breach the principles of the right to organize.

The ITF's European arm, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), sent the BTS a message of solidarity backing the strike and its struggle for union rights.

"Airports and related air services composed of public employees—such as air traffic, fire, technical, electronics and electricity, airport management and flight information services—also face restrictions. BTS, the trade union of aviation public employees, always objects, protests and fights against this. We want our right to collective bargaining and to strike," said BTS General Secretary Yavuz Demirkol.

Support For Belgrade University Students' Protests

By Freedom Fight and the Coordinating Committee of Workers Protests

The following is a letter of support for the protests by Belgrade University students, written on Nov. 24, 2009.

Dear students and future colleagues,

For decades already we've been confronted with the irresponsible attitude of the government towards the economy in this country, resulting in increasing economic inequality and a drop in the standard of living for a large number of people. Economic decay, deindustrialization, and political corruption are conditioned by the specific circumstances of our history and political life but are also reflective of global currents expressed by the increasing subordination of all aspects of society to the exclusive needs of those individuals and corporations that have secured a monopoly not only over the market but also over political decision-making. The educational system is also experiencing its own commercialization and the decline of teaching standards stemming from systemic reforms, known as the Bologna process, as well as the introduction of increasingly higher tuition fees.

The Bologna process is facing resistance across the world primarily because it annuls the autonomy of the University and subordinates it to the demands of the market. Educational programs are adapted to meet the market's need for specialized cadre, transforming the university into a factory for the production of corporate and party apparatchiks.

The survival of educational programs that aren't competitive in the market, particularly humanistic sciences, is increasingly being put into question in University's across the world. Furthermore, the implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Serbia has been carried out without the adequate reform of study programs, meaning that students face increasingly difficult circumstances for fulfilling degree requirements. The first generation of "Bologna students" are seen as "guinea-pigs" on whom the success of educational reforms should be tested.

Instead of state leaders creating the conditions necessary for a society in which knowledge will be accessible to all—so that a larger number of our citizens can be empowered for life in today's complex information age—state policy, following global trends, presents knowledge as a commodity that can be bought and sold and that isn't for just anyone.

Conscious of the difficult position in which you find yourselves given increasing tuition fees, the implementation of the Bologna process, and the irresponsible attitude of the government of the Republic of Serbia towards the future of our society, we wish to suggest to you that it is important that you persevere in your protests until your demands are met. Important not only for yourselves personally, but for the future of higher education and with that the future of our society.

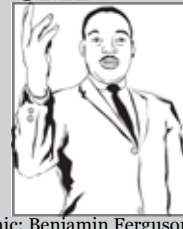
This story originally appeared on Nov. 25, 2009 on <http://www.pokret.net>.

MLK Day Greetings from the NYC GMB

Starbucks believes that Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is not as important as other federal holidays. We are calling on Starbucks to pay the holiday premium on MLK day.

Keep up the fight!

Join us: January 18 at 11:30 a.m. at the Union Square East Starbucks in New York City.



Graphic: Benjamin Ferguson

Support international solidarity!



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

