

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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## West Virginia Mine Tragedy Was No Accident

By Phil Smith, *Labor Notes*

Four years ago, the American people watched their TVs in horror as 12 bodies were removed from West Virginia's Sago Mine after a methane gas explosion. That, combined with a fire days later caused by criminal safety lapses at Massey Energy's Aracoma Mine, helped spur Congress to pass the first major mine safety legislation in 40 years.

It seems as if the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The explosion at Massey's Upper Big Branch Mine on April 5 was the worst mine disaster in the United States in almost 40 years. Our hearts and prayers are with the families of the 29 miners lost, and with the courageous mine rescue team members who put their lives on the line by entering a highly dangerous mine to bring any survivors to safety.

We don't have all the details yet regarding the explosion, but one thing requires no further investigation. Massey Energy, like so many American employers, consistently sacrifices the welfare of its employees in order to boost the bottom line. The latest disaster represents the fourth fatal accident in 12 years at the mine. The Upper Big Branch mine has racked up 1,342 safety violations

since 2005, drawing \$1.89 million in fines.

The company's CEO, Don Blankenship, is something of a legend in the Mountain State. He has challenged hundreds of citations and refused to pay fines. Although he professes that safety is his top priority, a 2005 internal memo of his was more candid: "If you have been asked by your group presidents, supervisors, engineers, to do anything else other than to run coal (i.e. build overcasts, do construction jobs, or whatever) you need to ignore them and run coal. This memo is necessary only because we seem not to understand that the coal pays the bills."

Many outside of West Virginia first heard of him last year when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that his spending \$3 million on a successful campaign to oust a state Supreme Court justice who frequently opposed him "had a significant and disproportionate influence" on the election's outcome. West Virginia subsequently passed a law putting in place public financing for judicial elections.

He has consistently used his vast resources and power to thwart efforts by his workers to gain a collective voice at work, because he knows they would then

**Continued on 9**



Graphic: Tom Keough

## Union Maintains Standoff With Federal Forces At Mexican Mine

By Kristyne Peter, *International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)*

The international labor movement takes action as tensions remain high at Mexico's Cananea mine, where 1,300 miners have occupied a Grupo Mexico copper mine defending their right to strike for health and safety standards on the job.

Striking members of the National Miners' and Metalworkers' Union of Mexico (SNTMMSRM) at the Cananea copper mine in Sonora, Mexico, blocked the federal highway between Cananea and Agua Prieta on March 16 and 17, demanding that the government step in to help broker a peaceful resolution.

The miners have been on strike since July 2007 over massive health and

safety violations in the notoriously dangerous Grupo Mexico-owned mine.

Following a Feb. 11 federal court decision giving Grupo Mexico permission to fire the striking workers and terminate the labor agreement, effectively eliminating the right to strike in Mexico, some 1,200 workers occupied the mine. The Mexican government has threatened to use armed force to gain control of Cananea, one of Grupo Mexico's largest mines. Reports from Mexico indicate wives and children of the miners are also participating in the occupation.

News of the court decision and subsequent standoff has sparked international action on the part of the global labor movement. The International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) and

members of the United Steelworkers (USW) joined SNTMMSRM members at the mine in the days following the initial occupation and escalating tensions.

The IMF put out a call to action, and affiliates from Indonesia to Brazil, and from all over Europe and Africa contacted their respective embassies urging the Mexican government to remove armed troops from the mine and seek a peaceful resolution to the struggle. Meanwhile, affiliates also sent urgent appeals to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, based in Washington, D.C., requesting the Commission to immediately grant precautionary measures to block the removal of union members from the mine and prohibit the occupation of the mine by Mexican armed forces. Unfortu-

nately, these requests were not granted.

The SNTMMSRM has filed a complaint with the Commission documenting human rights violations and political persecution that union members face at the hands of the Mexican government and Grupo Mexico. In January 2009, representatives from the IMF, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), United Auto Workers (UAW), USW, AFL-CIO, and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA-ITUC), met with members of the Commission, urging immediate action on the complaint submitted by the SNTMMSRM.

Recently, the TUCA-ITUC released a

**Continued on 9**

## Workers Shut Down Brooklyn Coffee Shop

NEW YORK - On April 10, seven baristas walked out on the job at Gorilla Coffee, a popular coffee shop in Park Slope, shutting down the cafe for the entire weekend and the foreseeable future.

According to an e-mail message sent by the former staff, the baristas quit because of what they call a "perpetually malicious, hostile, and demeaning work environment" under Carol McLaughlin, one of the two owners, and demanded that she withdraw from daily operations at the coffee bar.

When both owners refused, seven baristas quit. Here's the staff e-mail from April 10:

"We the workers would have preferred to keep this between the people involved, thus our silence towards the press. However, we do feel it is important to clarify the situation for the friends and patrons of Gorilla Coffee.

The issues brought up with the owners of Gorilla Coffee yesterday are issues that they have been aware of for some time. These issues which have repeatedly been brushed aside and ignored have created a perpetually malicious, hostile, and demeaning work environment that was not only unhealthy, but also, as our actions have clearly shown, unworkable.

"Several staff left not only recently, but also in the past few years due to these issues. The staff was recently told that the business partner to whom these issues have been repeatedly attributed was no longer affiliated with the business, and the environment was going to change. For six weeks nothing was seen nor heard of this business partner. This separation changed the dynamic of the business so drastically one of the departed staff quit their other job to return

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IWW members, branches, job shops and other affiliated bodies can get the word out about their project, event, campaign or protest each month in the *Industrial Worker*. Send announcements to [iw@iww.org](mailto:iw@iww.org). Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to IWW GHQ, PO Box 23085, Cincinnati, OH 45223, United States.

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

**Correction:** The first comic which appeared on page 11 of the April *IW* was by an unknown artists, not DJ Alperovitz.

# The Industrial Worker Wishes You A Happy May Day!

First of all, I want to wish everyone a spirited May Day—the real labor holiday. I hope that all of you enjoy your pickets, rallies, picnics, protests, parties and however else you choose to celebrate the international workers' holiday this year. Don't forget, this is YOUR holiday!

I have greatly enjoyed my second year as *Industrial Worker* editor so far, and it is my pleasure to work with all of you who participate in the production of our newspaper—the voice of revolutionary industrial unionism. I don't know what I would do without the team of diligent and meticulous proofreaders in the *IW*'s Final Edit Committee. Maria Rodriguez Gil, Tom Levy, Nick Jusino, Slava Osowska, FW D. Keenan, Mathieu Dube, Joey Pigg and Ryan Boyd are a real asset to the paper, and they deserve much more credit than a few lines in the masthead.

Also, since January I have had the distinct pleasure of working with our new General Headquarters in Chicago. General Secretary-Treasurer Joe Tessone is proving to be the strong and organized voice we need for our union, and I'm sure he couldn't do it without our dedicated team of Fellow Workers at the office in Chicago. The *Industrial Worker* and the GHQ have been working to keep the paper's quality dynamic while increasing its distribution.

When FW Tessone first came into office, he immediately began cleaning up loose ends and revamping our somewhat archaic database. During this process, he noticed that the *IW* was losing money—he found out that, in the old system, there was no way to track the end date for an *IW* bundle subscription. That meant that when someone (or a branch) placed an order for a one-time bundle of five papers, they would receive the papers forever. It was a never-ending, free subscription. Now that the GHQ is fixing the problem with a new and improved database system, I advise all of the *IW* bundle subscribers to contact [ghq@iww.org](mailto:ghq@iww.org) to find out when your subscriptions runs out and pay up to receive more bundles in the future, if you haven't already. On that note, it is important that individual member subscribers make sure they are paid up on dues and in good standing in order to continue to receive issues.

This is a tough financial time for everyone, and the *IW* is no exception. Mailing and production costs are skyrocketing, and it is difficult to maintain our expenses down while keeping our subscription rates affordable without cutting the overall quality of the paper. Therefore, we would like for everyone to donate just a few dollars to help keep the voice of revolutionary industrial unionism alive! You can donate by visiting <http://www.pledge.com/campaigns/9096> and filling in your information. Alternately, you can mail a check or money order, with a note specifying that this is a donation for the *Industrial Worker*, to: Industrial Workers of the World, P.O. Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618 USA

In other news, we have recently set up a Facebook page, where you can keep up-to-the-minute with the latest *IW* news! Find and friend us at: <http://www.facebook.com/industrialworker>. And, as usual, feel free to write to the *IW* anytime with your submissions, suggestions, questions and comments at [iw@iww.org](mailto:iw@iww.org). Have a wonderful May Day!

For a world without bosses,  
 Diane Krauthamer  
 Editor, *Industrial Worker*



Graphic: niu.edu

## Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary  
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# IWW Members Visit Baltimore For Wobfest 2010

By Mike Pesa

“The future of the world rests on a Wobbly foundation,” declared Jasaga, a spoken-word artist and IWW member, as he performed for a crowd of cheering IWW members and supporters at the Zodiac in Baltimore, Md. Several other IWW musicians would follow his set in an energy-packed show that was headlined by IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Joe Tessone and his talented band, the Rust Belt Ramblers. This concert was just one part of a weekend of workshops, discussions, networking and fun called Wobfest 2010.

Wobfest was organized by the Baltimore General Membership Branch of the IWW as a way of bringing together IWW members and supporters from across the East Coast and beyond. The event took place from March 26-28 and drew attendees from as far away as Chicago and Ottawa, Canada. Altogether, about 50 people from at least seven cities showed up to share their knowledge, ideas, talents and camaraderie.

The weekend began on Friday with an IWW film marathon at the Baltimore Free School, a project of the IWW-affiliated Red Emma’s Bookstore and Coffeehouse collective. After watching documentaries about IWW history, the Starbucks campaign and the ISC’s 2008 trip to Haiti, many wobblies headed down to Baltimore’s Washington Monument to take part in a Critical Mass bike ride. The bike ride ended at the Black Cherry Puppet Theater where a group called Heels on Wheels performed a queer-femme cabaret/drag show.

The next morning everyone gathered at 2640, a church building that has been partially converted to an organizing and performance space. After enjoying a light breakfast, participants split up to attend a series of workshops. While the IWW’s International Solidarity Commission (ISC) reported back from their recent delegation to Palestine and announced

the formation of a new IWW “Friends of Palestine” committee, the Red Emma’s collective led a discussion on effective meeting facilitation and group decision-making, an issue that many branches and committees are struggling with. After breaking for lunch (aided and abetted by a massive quantity of rice and bottled water provided by the Central New Jersey branch), the second session of workshops began. In one room a Baltimore-based group of low wage workers called the United Workers Association explained their innovative model of leadership development and discussed their efforts to establish a “human rights zone” for exploited workers in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. Meanwhile, in the next room, IWW Starbucks Workers Union founder and published author Daniel Gross spoke about labor law as it pertains to rank and file workers and

organizers.

Following these workshops, the Gender Justice collective led a unique anti-oppression training specially tailored to help the IWW better support the rights and equality of women, transgendered people, people of color and other oppressed and marginalized groups, both on the shop floor and within the union itself. The presenters (including a local IWW member) challenged members to step outside their own identity and think about how the working class is being divided by prejudice, discrimination and inequality.

After the training, Baltimore IWW member John Duda spoke about his new book, “Wanted: Men to fill the Jails of Spokane,” a fascinating collection of first-hand accounts of the important but little-understood IWW Spokane Free Speech fight. Fellow Worker Duda used

a slide show of newspaper clippings, photos and cartoons to show how the IWW used humor, courage and ingenuity to win a hard-fought battle against censorship and the dishonest recruitment strategies of the “job sharks” of the American West. Later, at dinner time, participants engaged in a serious round-table discussion of the IWW’s strengths and weaknesses and how we can build the One Big Union in 2010.

After a day packed with workshops, lectures and discussions, everyone was ready to let loose. A crowd of people gathered at the Zodiac music venue to dance, drink and listen to an impressive lineup of bands and artists, many of them members of the IWW. From traditional labor folk songs straight from the Little Red Songbook to bizarre dance mixes about spooning, there was something for everyone. The music continued late into the night and many wobblies continued to celebrate at the homes of their hosts.

Sunday was much more relaxed. Folks gradually flocked to the Red Clover collective house for a day of barbecuing, games and hanging out. Meanwhile, some members carpoled to an old warehouse across town to help the United Workers Association make puppets and other props for a massive workers’ rights/human rights rally called Our Harbor Day, which will be held on May 1 at the Inner Harbor. The UWA organizers were very appreciative and the Baltimore IWW plans to continue working with them on this important event.

As the sun began to set, it was at last time for everyone to go their separate ways and for us in Baltimore to say goodbye to our guests. We hope that everyone found Wobfest 2010 as fun and meaningful as we did. If folks left with a little more knowledge, a few new comrades and a renewed passion for building the One Big Union, then we have done our job.



Photo: Benjamin Ferguson

GST Joe Tessone’s band The Rustbelt Ramblers played at the Zodiac in Baltimore during Wobfest on March 27.

## 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 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, 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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## The Battle Of The Sandwiches: What Does The Bosses' Offensive Look Like?

By Erik Forman

If you read about the labor movement of the 1970s and 1980s, there is a lot of talk about the “bosses’ offensive,” an aggressive attack on workers movements by capital.

A friend of mine from Italy told me that in 1977, the bosses and pro-boss workers (we call these people “scissorsbills,” because their words cut you) staged a march of several thousand people in opposition to the continued wildcat strikes, sabotage, and occasional kneecapping, kidnapping, or assassination of bosses in the plants of northern Italy. This action was sufficient to change the climate and turn the cultural tide against the workers’ insurgency.

In my own workplace, we have seen an ebb and flow of class struggle on a micro-level. Initially, when the union went public, the boss was so afraid of us that he would sneak in and out the back door of the store without us knowing. We actually had a hard time planning actions because we could never find the boss to make demands.

The company replaced our boss with a new, more authoritarian manager. She set about breaking the union. Many of our fellow workers quit of their own volition before the union-busting really started, so we were already weak when the boss went on the offensive against us.

How did our new boss attack us? The same way we attacked our boss. She picked a winnable issue—something that we cared about but that we would be unable to defend. An issue that would isolate us from our coworkers, where we would not have “common sense” or the moral high ground behind us. In this case, it was the day-old sandwiches. We used to keep the sandwiches we didn’t sell at the end of the night for the workers who would come in the next day to have for lunch. Since we’re all so damn poor, this small gesture of solidarity meant a lot—it saved us money, and sometimes meant we got to eat when we would otherwise miss a meal.

The boss took away our sandwiches

and put a note in the back room instructing us that we were no longer allowed to keep the sandwiches.

We were outraged. She was taking food out of our mouths. Immediately, two workers confronted the boss and demanded we be able to keep the sandwiches, explaining how important it was to us, how we didn’t make enough money to buy lunch every day, and how upset all the other workers would be.

The boss had prepared an answer in advance. She said it was against health code to keep the sandwiches, and that her boss would not allow it. We went

back and forth a bunch of times to no avail.

The next day, I packaged up the sandwiches and put them in a stapled-shut bag, labeling it for a coworker who worked the next morning. He got the sandwiches and shared them with others on his shift. This was a direct action, directly contradicting the boss’ wishes.

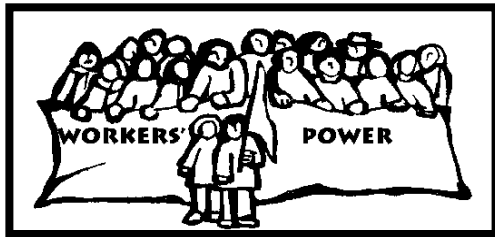
I got called in the back room the next day. I was informed that if I did this again, I would be written up. Two write-ups and I would be fired.

What could we do? We could do another march on the boss. A strike? A picket? A phone-in? We couldn’t figure out how to escalate. Our coworkers were not comfortable openly disobeying the boss, especially with the supposed legitimacy of “health code” behind her.

Our boss won. We lost the sandwiches. We did not have the organization we needed to defend ourselves.

This was the first defensive battle of a long retreat. Once you lose once, the effect can be devastating. People lose confidence in their ability to win and your organization crumbles. The bosses get increasingly brazen in their attacks.

But their brazenness generates agitation. You might have to bide your time, but eventually, the time will be ripe for a counterattack. It’s important to understand this dynamic in order to be able to beat back the bosses’ offensive, but also to be able to take the occasional loss in stride, pick our battles, and stay on the offensive more effectively.



## Are We Hiding Our Revolutionary Nature?

By Jim Del Duca

“It seems like the union is afraid that people will find out the truth about what we are trying to accomplish.” This was FW Kristin’s comment to me the other day and it got me to thinking. Are we hiding our revolutionary program, and if we are hiding, then why?

I looked at our website’s front page. I looked up and down and did not find revolution mentioned even once, nor the terms collectivism, anti-capitalist, industrial democracy, worker-controlled, anti-globalization, radical, direct action, etc ... To find them I had to dig deeper in other sections. Our home page doesn’t look much different than a yellow union page. This causes me to conclude that we are indeed hiding the truth about who we are.

So why? Here I have to resort to speculation because I don’t want to invest a huge amount of time tracing the shift from widely recognized radical economic revolutionaries to little known organized labor something-or-others. I’ll just say that I think it is fear that keeps us wearing camouflage. This fear began with endless capitalist-government persecution and has been held over into the present day when the bosses don’t even know we still exist.

There were good reasons to lay low. The proletariat was getting enough crumbs and scraps to keep them quiet.

Proponents of change were investing all of their energy into futile attempts to fix problems through top-down government action. No one was ready to listen. So we learned to look and act very much like AFL-CIO unions in order to blend in and “pass.” Some FWs never lost their revolutionary understanding, but lots of others are out of touch with our greater revolutionary mission. They are stuck in AFL-CIO thinking.

Times have changed. Today millions of workers are unemployed or living hand to mouth and are wondering why. Both liberal and conservative activists are realizing that the government is the neutered lap dog of the corporations. Everyone who is not rich is upset, but completely lacking in constructive direction, and ignorant of the facts pertaining to the world’s crises. The working class is becoming angrier by the day but has no clue what to do. The only outlets available as yet are reactionary groups like the “Tea Party.” Conditions have finally arrived at a state of affairs that we have been predicting for eighty-plus years.

Millions of workers are ready TODAY to hear our revolutionary message. Their minds are open and their pockets are empty. They are actively searching for solutions to the capitalist problem. We have the message, program, and experience to take up where we left off in 1925. But we have to reveal our uncom-

# WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

## Chapter 33 Illinois Women's Alliance

“City Slave Girls,” an 1888 series of investigative reports in the *Chicago Times* on women and children in Chicago sweatshops, prompted Elizabeth Morgan and other leaders of the Ladies Federal Labor Union No. 2703 (see the last issue) to take action. With backing from the Chicago Trades & Labor Assembly, they launched the Illinois Women’s Alliance -- a coalition of virtually every women’s organization in Chicago.

The Women’s Alliance campaigned against sweatshops and for protection of children through tough enforcement of child labor and compulsory education laws. The Alliance exposed the abusive treatment of women in police courts and public asylums -- and ran into direct conflict with the corporations and corrupt Democratic Party machine that controlled Chicago even then.



The Women’s Alliance won enactment of a state compulsory education law -- and goaded the graft-ridden Chicago school board into building new schools. And the Alliance secured a ban on child labor under the age of 14 as part of a state law in 1893 aimed at sweatshops. (See the next issue for more on the Illinois Women’s Alliance and the fight against sweatshops).

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

promising revolutionary message to the workers so that the millions who are ripe for radicalization can be organized and empowered by the One Big Union.

Nature will not tolerate a vacuum. The millions of angry, unorganized workers will find their way into something that they feel will help them out of the mess they are in. If we don’t provide a positive, constructive outlet for their frustration that results in real improvement, then they will keep searching for salvation. I feel we are at the tipping point between democracy and fascism. No doubt many others can see the resemblance between today and the times leading to Hitler’s rise to power. History

repeats itself, just not exactly.

The old-time Wobblies knew the saying “You have to make hay while the sun shines.” Friends, the sun is shining today. The millions are searching for us right now. Let’s show them that we are here and ready to welcome them to the economic revolution—today!

**“Word Out”**  
By Lucas Alan Dietsche  
Composed in two prisons, “Word Out” is a uniquely radical collection for a braver, newer, Earth. It can be primarily found at [MidnightExpressBooks.com](http://MidnightExpressBooks.com).

## ...And Back To The Grind: SWU Southern Midwest Tour A Success

By the Twin Cities Starbucks Workers Union

On March 19, a delegation of IWW Starbucks baristas from the Twin Cities crammed themselves into one worker's three-cylinder Geo Metro and set off on a journey to bring the good word of solidarity unionism to baristas and workers across the lower Midwest. Four days later, we returned to the Twin Cities after covering over 1,700 miles talking union with dozens of Starbucks workers and speaking to enthusiastic audiences in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Iowa City about our efforts to win decent wages, consistent scheduling, and other basic demands at the world's largest coffee chain.

Our first stop was KKFI, a community radio station in Kansas City, where the "Heartland Labor Forum" radio show was kind enough to interview us about our organizing experiences. We then made our way to the Westport Coffee House, where we held a discussion with interested community members about some of the issues we workers face at Starbucks, and the possibility of building a new labor movement from the ground up. We discovered that, just as in every other American city, the Kansas City working class is under attack. The Kansas City School Board recently decided to close an enormous number of schools and lay off many teachers, unionized in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). We extend our solidarity to them and hope that workers and students can unite in defense of quality public education.

The next day, we hit the road for

St. Louis, site of a giant arch, as well as the first general strike in U.S. history in 1877 and the worker-owned and democratically-operated Black Bear Bakery. The Autonomy Alliance and local IWW members sponsored a public event at the bakery, providing us with an opportunity to share the story of our union campaign with local labor activists and workers.

After a brief night's sleep, we were off across the cornfields of Iowa, heading to Iowa City to speak at an event organized by IWW members and the Wild Rose Collective. We met many workers at the event, some with decades of experience in the struggle, others just starting out, and we discussed the possibility of stronger regional support for workplace organizing across the Midwest.

Thanks to the generosity of our hosts and audience members in the cities we visited, we were able to cover almost all of our gas costs and had a place to stay in every town we visited. Working-class solidarity is alive and well in the Midwest. Because of this, even a grassroots organization of low-wage retail workers like the IWW Starbucks Workers Union can pose a threat to one of the largest corporations in the world. We find inspiration in this fact, especially after seeing first hand the devastation that the capitalist class has wrought on cities across our region in the last 30 years of deindustrialization, plus the last two years of recession.

We plan to continue visiting workers in other cities across the Midwest in the coming months, hopefully helping to lay the foundation of a new working class movement across the region for control over our lives and communities.

## Grocery Warehouse Workers On Strike

From workers.org

On March 18, nearly 200 members and supporters of striking United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 791 picketed and held the line outside Shaw's Supermarket in Dorchester, Mass., in solidarity with 310 women and men workers from the warehouse distribution center in Methuen, Mass. The warehouse distributes most of the perishable foods such as meat, fruits, dairy and vegetables to 194 Shaw's and Star Market supermarkets across New England.

Workers voted on March 7 to strike to fight what they termed "substandard" wage increases and skyrocketing costs of health care insurance. UFCW Local 791 represents approximately 5,500 members in 36 Shaw's Supermarkets in Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well as distribution centers in Methuen and



Photo: "We support the Shaws Methuen Distribution Center" Facebook page.

Wells, Maine.

Shaw's belongs to a supermarket chain that is part of Supervalu, the company that also owns Jewel-Osco Brands and Albertsons. Supervalu's CEO, Jeffrey Noddle, receives an annual total compensation of \$3.55 million, according to Forbes.com.

## Protest At The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory



Photo: Bud Korotzer

**Demonstrators left carnations, symbolic of martyrdom, in memory of the Triangle Shirtwaist tragedy victims and victims of similar incidents today.**

By Fran Korotzer, *Next Left Notes*

On the clear, sunny Saturday afternoon of March 27, about 150 women and men of every age, race, and ethnicity gathered at Union Square in New York City. Organized by the International Action Center as a demonstration and march against violence directed at women and an acknowledgement of International Women's Day, speaker after speaker discussed issues that women are facing: their education and their children's education, what they are coping with in Haiti, and the fact that the U.S. State Department is refusing to grant visas for two of the wives of the Cuban 5, Olga Salanueva and Adriana Perez, so that they could visit their husbands for the first time in 12 years.

After the rally there was a short walk down Broadway to the site of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory near Washington Square. In 1911, 146 people, mostly Jewish and Italian immigrant women, some as young as 14, perished in a fire there. They were trapped in the blaze for several reasons: doors had been locked, supposedly to stop the workers from stealing a bit of cloth, the ladders of the fire trucks were too short to reach their floors, and the fire escapes—melted and twisted from the heat—couldn't hold the workers. Rather than burn, groups of women jumped to their deaths holding each other's hands. Louis Waldman, an eyewitness, and later a New York State assemblyman, wrote in his 1944 memoir:

"Occasionally a girl who had hesitated too long was licked by pursuing flames and, screaming with clothing and hair ablaze, plunged like a living torch to

the street."

When the procession reached the site, they found flowers that had been left two days before as part of an official recognition by the city and by labor of what happened there 99 years ago.

Women read the names of those who died there. Some told their own stories of being immigrant workers. One speaker reminded the group that owners are still locking their doors to prevent theft—she pointed out that the best way to prevent theft was to pay a living wage.

Just a few years ago Wal-Mart was found to be locking its workers in. More than a decade ago many workers were burned to death at a chicken processing plant in North Carolina because they were locked in, and last month workers in a garment factory in Bangladesh (where many of our clothes are made) perished in a fire because the exit doors were locked.

The owners of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, Harris and Blanck, were put on trial in 1911, but were acquitted by the jury because the prosecution didn't prove, despite eyewitness accounts by workers that survived, that the owners knew that the doors were locked. In 1913, Blanck was arrested again for locking the doors during working hours in his new factory. He was fined \$20.

The story of the Triangle fire is part of the history of immigration in New York City.

Today New York is still a city of immigrants, many of whom are still working in firetrap sweatshops. Perhaps that is why the Triangle Shirtwaist factory event still touches so many hearts.



Photo: Mark Rauterkus

Anti-sweatshop organizers at the University of Pittsburgh march through the Athletic Department at the Peterson Events Center on April 9. They delivered an assessment of PITT apparel done by comparing information at the university bookstore to the Workers Rights Consortium's factory database. On April 13, they leafleted the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO convention with information about the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity visit on April 27 and met with the City of Pittsburgh Controller to discuss their anti-sweatshop ordinance.



Photo: Ben Ferguson

On March 6, the New York City IWW visited the boss of Flaum Appetizing Corp—workers were fired after organizing into the IWW in May 2008—to alert his neighbors and anyone else walking by that he runs a sweatshop. In November 2009, the NLRB ordered the boss to reinstate 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.



# Hotel Workers Keep Westin Boycott Going

By Paul Abowd, *Labor Notes*

After six months of rocky contract talks, hotel workers have launched a boycott of the Westin hotel in downtown Providence to protest the company's deep unilateral wage and benefit cuts, as well as work speedups. The rain-or-shine pickets got going right as the hotel hosted an influx of guests for the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) basketball tournament in late March—a big tourist boon for the city.

While hotel workers have teamed up with Rhode Island Jobs with Justice and area unions, the boycott call is reaching out-of-towners too. Dozens of members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), and the Teamsters—from the cast and crew filming a pilot for ABC—moved out of the Westin in the last week of March.

The boycott is the latest attempt to fight off a wave of attacks from the Westin's managing Procaccianti Group: threats to replace workers with subcontracted labor (à la the "Hyatt 100" in Boston) and retaliatory firings of worker activists. The last straw came in March when the Westin broke off talks, slashed wages by 20 percent, tripled (and in some plans quadrupled) health care premiums, while cutting sick days and vacation.

The trouble started as soon as the contract talks opened in October. Westin's subcontracting threats came right on the heels of the fall firings of 100 Hyatt workers at three non-union hotels in Boston. As the "Hyatt 100" launched a boycott in Beantown and joined a citywide "March for Jobs" that brought 1,000 people through the streets of downtown Boston, Providence activists resolved to keep the subcontracting scourge from spreading.

They rallied City Council support for a "worker retention ordinance." The law requires hotels connected to the publicly-subsidized downtown Convention Center—including the Westin—to retain current employees and pay them prevailing wages and benefits for six months if the company subcontracts work or changes hands completely.

Despite the workers' victory, the Westin went on the offensive, firing three workers in November for joining informational pickets outside the hotel on their work breaks. The union brought a successful complaint to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on behalf of the workers, and four months later celebrated their reinstatement—marching behind the three on their first day back to work.

The community is still behind the workers after they voted, 138-to-2, to call a boycott and consider a strike. A



Photo: Camilo Viveiros

Members of Rhode Island JwJ, IWW and UNITE HERE rally on March 29.

large crowd gathered outside the Westin to launch the latest phase of the contract campaign. The news of the company's deep cuts brought out city councilmen, Central Labor Council officials, and leaders from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the Building Trades unions—who all vowed to keep their members out of the Westin until management rescinds the cuts and bargained

in good faith.

After a series of rousing speeches from hotel workers and supporters, City Councilman John Lombardi threw his support behind the boycott—even if it meant foregoing his regular trips to the hotel gym, where he's a member.

Francis Engler, organizer with UNITE HERE Local 217, responded, to cheers: "You can get some exercise walking with us, councilman!"



Providence community rallies for Westin workers on April 8.

Photo: Lucie Guillemette Burdick

## IWW Supports Westin Workers!

Members of the Providence IWW have been active in supporting the Westin workers as well, showing their support at rallies, pickets and events. FW Gray Sutherland added a Wobbly's opinion of the situation:

*"The Westin Providence situation is simply a matter of justice. The Procaccianti Group [owners] got the go-ahead to do business in our community, with the help of taxpayer money, promising that they would really create stable, honest jobs. A few years down the line they cut the workers' pay by 20 percent and, one might say spitefully, force a tripling of the workers' weekly health care payments from \$25 to \$100. Not to mention refusing to negotiate for a year. They are trying to break the union. In my opinion this gives the workers every right to fight back economically via use of a boycott. It is class war."*

## 'Body Of Evidence' Cast And Crew Honors Westin Providence Boycott

By Rhode Island Jobs with Justice and UNITE HERE!

Over 30 cast and crew members working on the new "Body of Evidence" ABC TV pilot had moved out of Westin Providence Hotel in solidarity with the Westin workers' boycott. The stars of the pilot, Dana Delany (Katherine Mayfair on "Desperate Housewives") and Jeri Ryan (Borg Seven of Nine on "Star Trek: Voyager"), were among those who switched their accommodations to the Providence Biltmore Hotel. The cast and crew, members of International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Locals 600, 52, 798, 161, 481, and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) said that they will not be staying at the Westin Providence Hotel as long as the boycott remains in place. Additionally members of Teamsters from Locals 251 and 817 working on the production respected the Westin Providence workers' picket line.

Westin Providence workers, UNITE HERE, and Rhode Island Jobs with Justice commended the cast and crew for their actions. "We're pleased that the cast and crew of 'Body of Evidence' took a stand to support workplace justice and moved to the Biltmore hotel. In our current economic situation, it is more im-

portant than ever to patronize employers who respect workers and provide good jobs for our communities," said Camilo Viveiros, Executive Director of Rhode Island Jobs with Justice.

Workers and community members have held pickets mornings and afternoons in the sun and in the rain, since the Westin Providence Hotel workers authorized a boycott of the hotel by a 138-to-2 vote on March 18. The vote was taken in response to a series of unfair labor practices at the hotel, culminating in the abrupt imposition of 20 percent pay cuts, harsh increases in housekeeper workloads, and new unaffordable health insurance rates by The Procaccianti Group management at the Westin. The union has filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board over The Procaccianti Group's conduct.

Pete Kuttner, of IATSE, stated "When the men and women I work with heard about the cuts in wages and benefits our sisters and brothers of UNITE HERE 217 were dealt, there was no way we could continue staying at the Westin. The unions who represent the workers on 'Body of Evidence' support the boycott."

"It's an outrage that the Procaccianti management has unilaterally

changed my wages and health insurance right in the middle of contract negotiations," said Chris Cook, a Purchasing and Receiving Agent at the Westin and an Executive Board member of UNITE HERE Local 217, the Union at the hotel. "The Procacciantis are making me choose between putting food on the table and keeping health insurance for my wife and five-year-old son."

The boycott means that the employees of the Westin Providence are officially asking visitors and conventions not to patronize the hotel. Some people and organizations have already decided to cancel events they had planned at the hotel or have booked rooms at another hotel because of the dispute.

Westin Providence workers say they will reconsider their boycott if The Procaccianti Group management resolves the unfair labor practice charges, including payment to the workers for the money they have lost as a result of the cuts.



Photo: Lucie Guillemette Burdick

Members of RI JwJ and UNITE HERE! on April 8.

### Support Westin workers

The Westin Providence Hotel unilaterally imposed a 20 percent reduction in wages for all workers. They tripled employees' health insurance costs and significantly reduced employees' sick days, vacations, and holidays. The Westin Providence is forcing the workers to bear the brunt of a financial crisis that the workers didn't create.

To view and sign the petition, visit: <http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/westinworkers>.



# IWW Members Tackle Obama's Healthcare Legislation

By Eugene Lerner and Leah Danger

The recent U.S. healthcare reform legislation is apparently the cause of yet another irreconcilable controversy between the two favored parties of capital. According to the Democrats in Congress and their apologists, it is undoubtedly the greatest single act of state since Lincoln freed the slaves and Roosevelt electrified the Tennessee Valley. But to hear their Republican counterparts tell it, it is in fact the worst thing since Lincoln freed the slaves and Roosevelt electrified the Tennessee Valley. Rightist pundits call it "socialism"—a word to conjure with if ever there was one. But when the actual content of this new law is taken into consideration, the Democrats' incessant self-congratulation and the Republicans' teeth-gnashing and doom-saying become utterly befuddling. One can't help but get the sinking feeling that these reactions are motivated by the mere fact that a healthcare reform bill was passed rather than anything in the bill itself. And the truly terrifying thing is that this attitude seems to be reflected every bit as much in the content of the legislation as it is in the discourse surrounding its passage into law. Let us then delve into the vital question which the political parties of the capitalist class seem to be avoiding with a vengeance: what does all of this mean for working folks?

The new healthcare law was largely drafted by the very actors whose predatory—though highly lucrative—practices would have to be curbed and ultimately legislated out of existence by any effective healthcare reform. The legislation passed by Congress and signed by the President is nigh identical to a bill that was presented by a health insurance industry trade group in 2009. For the price of a small annual fee used to maintain the exchanges, the insurance companies receive the vast majority of the U.S. population as a legally-bound captive market. And just about every new burden placed on these corporations is offset by either the presence or glaring omission of another provision in the legislation.

The drug companies get their money's worth too—there is a conspicuous absence of any provisions regarding collective national drug price negotiations or the broader and timelier

availability of generic drugs. The only "burden" placed on the pharmaceutical companies is an annual fee paid by those with sales in excess of \$5 million a year—a fee so small that it is for all intents and purposes purely symbolic. This legislation manages to avoid placing the most essential controls on the overall system-wide cost of drugs and care. For a law that was supposedly drafted to control the cost of healthcare for individuals and communities, this is unforgivable.

The chief premise behind the need for reform is the fact that the U.S. healthcare regime is broken. The new legislation presents us with a series of tweaks, but nothing that can be mistaken for an actual fix. Instead of rebuilding the broken system from the ground up while making temporary arrangements to keep people covered while institutions are restructured, this law accomplishes nothing less than the long-term preservation of a fundamentally unworkable system. Instead of adopting proven methods such as universal single payer coverage, the government has instead decided to simply force everyone to participate in a system that has proven to be a disaster. There is no "public option," there is no real universal coverage and there is no path to a single-payer system. "Too big to fail" has now officially been extended to cover the vast, needless, and extravagantly redundant profit-driven bureaucracies of the insurance corporations.

As is quite common in U.S. politics, the snake oil of 'the market' has been offered up as a grand panacea—embodied in this case in the internet-based insurance markets mandated by the new legislation. If nothing else, the mere fact that the health insurance industry is exempt from federal antitrust laws all but guarantees that these markets will not be free, fair, and open conduits for the acquisition of assured care. An industry unbound by the conventional prohibitions on collusion and price-fixing will be presented with millions upon millions of customers legally obligated to purchase its services. This is not a system that creates marketplace incentive to keep premiums down.

For the vast majority of working-class Americans, the bill provides no benefits. While government subsidies will be available to a few, buying private insurance is mandated for all. Not only will insurance premiums not be signifi-

cantly reduced, there is nothing in the legislation to prevent massive annual rate increases. Discriminatory rating is also still allowed; the bill does not prevent insurers from charging higher premiums for older consumers or for women participating in large workplace plans.

There are plenty of people today whose low wage jobs neither cover their basic cost of living nor are low-paying enough to allow them to qualify for sufficient public assistance. And as surely as this is an honored tradition within the American welfare state, there will be plenty of people who will fall into the gap between the government subsidies that are available to them and the cost of an insurance plan which they can actually afford. For many working people, it will come down to the cheaper of these options: a bottom-of-the-barrel insurance policy that balances its low premiums with co-pays so high that to term it "insurance" is laughable or having a portion of their income culled directly by the IRS.

Additionally, some provisions of the bill reduce benefits that citizens already have. For instance, those under age 65 will have to spend more than 10 percent of their income on health care costs before they can receive a tax deduction for them. At the present time, one need only spend 7.5 percent of one's income to be eligible for the deduction.

For those who did receive expensive, comprehensive health care from their employers the new excise tax of 40 percent encourages employers to provide plans with higher co-pays and reduced services, and there is no reason to believe that the money they save on insurance will be passed down to workers.

Most egregiously, the President has sold out American women in order to get this mostly worthless legislation passed. He signed an executive order in exchange for the votes of roughly a dozen anti-abortion Democrats opposed to the idea that taxpayer money could go towards clinics or insurance policies that might provide abortion services to women who were not the victims of rape, incest, or life-threatening illness. This order will create abortion coverage riders, which have to be chosen and paid for separately from a customer's regular insurance premium. Faced with these circumstances, most employers and

individuals choosing plans will not opt for the extra coverage, leading to most abortions becoming a costly out-of-pocket expense.

Small business owners will be provided with tax incentives to provide insurance for their employees, and employers of 50 or more workers who do not offer coverage will be fined \$2,000 annually per employee for any workers receiving subsidized insurance—but the first 30 employees don't count. Like many other "incentives" in the bill, these provide employers with a way of paying off the government in lieu of providing the necessary coverage. Low-wage employees who are not insured by their workplaces will remain a taxpayer burden; previously it was through emergency room visits, now through subsidies for private health insurance. Employers who pay their workers off the books will not only persist in not providing insurance to employees and not being penalized for it, but with the legislation officially barring undocumented immigrants from purchasing insurance through an exchange, those without papers will continue to seek all treatment for injury or illness in emergency rooms. Resident aliens must live in the U.S. for five years before they can qualify for Medicaid, although during that time they can be penalized for not buying health insurance.

Although the new law is (taken as a whole) a disaster, there are some provisions contained therein which are actually beneficial; albeit many of them are offset by the rest of the legislation, and are only tentative half-steps in the right direction at best. The increased payroll tax for Medicare for those earning more than \$200,000 annually will not, by itself, fix the many budget shortfalls

of the program. The extension of Medicaid to those earning less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level, the allowing of dependent children up to age 26 can remain on their guardian's insurance plans, and the insurance of those in the 'high-risk pool' will have immediate benefits. Of course 133 percent of the Federal poverty level is by no means the upper income limit of the working poor who cannot afford health care, there are limits on which family members can join an individual's insurance policy, and the definitions for what conditions place a person in the 'high-risk pool' have yet to be determined. And though there is a provision that seeks to prevent some people from being dropped by their insurers after developing permanent medical conditions, insurance companies will be allowed to retain their favorite tool for doing just that. Using a blanket assertion of "fraud" under the flimsiest pretenses to rescind coverage will remain perfectly legal.

There is most certainly some wisdom in not allowing the perfect to become the enemy of the good. However this vast bailout of the parasitic health insurance industry is the clear enemy of both. No, the perfect should not be the enemy of the good, but the just-good-enough ought always to be the enemy of the intolerably god-awful. As a wholesale reform of the U.S. healthcare system, this legislation is indefensible on any reasonable grounds.

*The opinions expressed in this piece are those of the authors, and do not reflect the IWW's official position.*



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# End Corporate Feudalism With Industrial Pensions

By Walt Weber

## Private Pensions in Crisis

Over the past two years of economic crisis, the system of workplace benefits in the United States has been under attack from greedy executives as well as prevailing capitalist economics. Pensions have been devalued and many of the funds have failed. Health benefits have become increasingly more expensive, with many companies forcing workers to pay more for their healthcare or refusing to offer it at all.

Through this all, the blame for these problems has been placed squarely on the shoulders of the workers themselves. The myth of the auto worker who makes \$70 per hour is probably the most popular example, with the capitalist press and government blaming the unions and the workers for the inability of the “Big Three” automakers to compete with other companies. If only the company did not have to abide by the union wage and benefit scale, they claim, the companies would be free to compete with Japanese and other auto makers who built their factories in right-to-work states where they would not have to worry about unions.

After the United Autoworkers (UAW) and other CIO-affiliated unions formed and displayed militancy in the 1930s, their sit-down strikes set the bar for establishing unions in auto plants. However, during World War II, the federal government moved towards a government-planned war-time economy, and many unions were forced to accept a no-strike pledge and a wage freeze to produce for the war.

Despite the wage freeze, many workers continued to agitate and strike, and employers needed to find a way to placate them. Employers found that the solution, with the help of the unions, was complimentary benefits—namely pensions and healthcare. Pensions were supposed to be simple. Bosses and



UAW workers engage in a sit-down strike against GM in Flint, Mich. in 1937. Graphic: badattitudes.com

workers both pay into a fund, and when workers reach a retirement age, they receive a monthly payment from the fund, with the amount based on the number of years of service to the company.

When these plans began, there were far more workers than retirees. So, if a worker was 64 when the pension was created, and they retired at 65, they would receive a full pension despite only paying in for one year's worth of benefits. This creates a shortfall, because current workers are paying in and benefits go to the current retirees. Companies promised to make up this difference with a lump sum payment sometime in the future. Instead, the employers tried to close the gap by investing pension funds for profit and hoping that there would always be more workers than retirees, so the shortfall could be put on the back of the workers, not the company.

During this same time period, the capitalists worked to find ways to shift production towards highly mechanized factories, which needed fewer and fewer

workers. This technological change led to higher profits and efficiency and less workers to pay for all of the retirees. Eventually, the capitalist system took its toll, and the situation reversed. Now retirees vastly outnumber the active workforce, and for each person working in the auto industry, there are several retirees collecting pensions. The system is short a great deal of money, and the companies claim that they don't have to make up the difference.

The companies that once masqueraded as benevolent patriarchs are now looking for ways to skip out on the check after years of dining at the worker's table. Hundreds of thousands of retirees and workers are wholly dependent on these corporate behemoths, who for years sold the lies that “we are all in this together” and of collaboration between workers and bosses for the benefit of both. Now the companies want to cut them off and destroy their retirement income as well as their access to affordable healthcare.

## Putting Workers' Wealth toward the Benefit of the Working Class

This privatized benefit system creates what Wobblies at the time called “corporate feudalism.” Corporate feudalism confuses the interests of the working class with those of the employing class, and workers and retirees become wholly dependent on the survival of a single corporation. Corporate failure is tied to the current and future success of working people, and the rhetoric of “we are all in this together” takes hold. Like the serfs in feudalism, workers produce all for the company, and when they are too old to work anymore, workers are dependent on the benevolent kings of industry to care for them.

Under the capitalist system of wage labor, workers are forced to work for a wage that is far less than the value of what they produce and the bosses keep the surplus value. This is one of the primary relationships of capitalism. Under feudalism, however, there was no currency. In exchange for labor, workers received food, housing, healthcare, and retirement care. Corporate feudalism mixes these systems, with workers generating greater surplus value for their bosses in exchange for benefits instead of higher wages. If you dare leave the industrial plantation, however, your benefits evaporate.

With corporate-managed pension funds, this situation gets even worse. Bosses use the workers' pension money to support other anti-union enterprises and increase class oppression. In addition to the surplus value, workers turn over a portion of their wages to the boss, who then invests it at their whim, sometimes losing money and always to the detriment of the workers.

Many workers have greatly benefited from these programs; retirees have lived out their lives without having to work and with expansive medical coverage that is very affordable or free. But now with the system crushing under its own weight and the pyramid turning upside down, it is time to return to the alternative visions that were offered in the 1930s. Wobblies at that time had ideas for regional-based benefit pools, or pools that covered entire industries, with control of the funds resting in a democratic organization based in local communities. As a complement to the struggle for industrial unionism, this would be a struggle for industrial pensions: a pension that moved with you from job to job in a fund that is managed by workers and not bosses.

The goals of these funds would be to ensure that workers do not turn over one more of their hard-earned dollars than is necessary to the capitalists and to ensure that workers' pension money is used to advance the cause of the working class, not the employing class. Instead, this money could be used to build schools, to make loans to construction projects that use union labor, offer low Annual Percentage Rate (APR) mortgages to union members, or to supply low-cost medical treatment in our communities. The most important principle has to be that if the fund will be used for investment, then workers' money must benefit the working class and not the employing class.

There are potential pitfalls with these models. Managing large sums of money can lead to corruption and bitter arguments. The craft business unions, such as the Carpenters and the Teamsters, give us a vision of what that could look like. The answer to these problems, however, is transparency, democracy, and education. If workers will manage their own retirement funds, everyone must know what the fund is being used for, how this will benefit all involved, and most of all, have a democratic say in the process. These other funds lack these elements, and that has led to drastic problems.

Nonetheless, as we reflect on workers struggle this May Day with the current system of corporate feudalism collapsing under its own weight, we have an opportunity to look to the future. We can all imagine a world where all workers are able to retire, live in a home, get enough nutritious food to eat, and have access to healthcare and education. But only the destruction of the capitalist system can ensure the end of instability in all workers' lives.

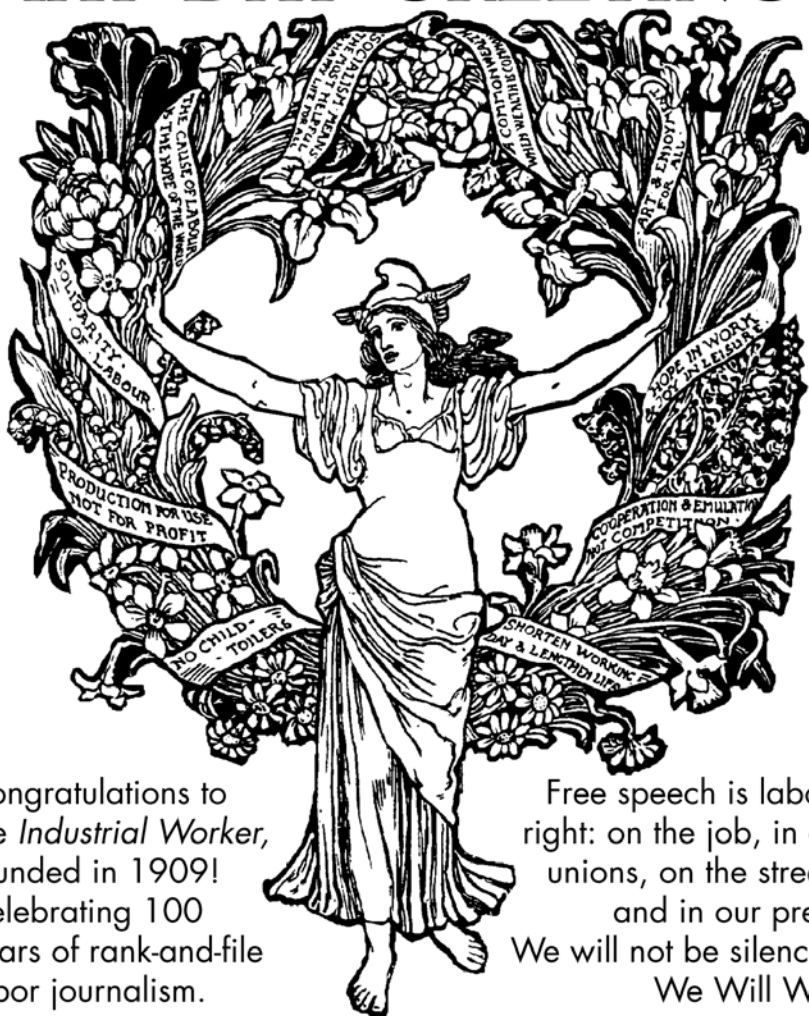
Destroying this system of corporate feudalism will not, in and of itself, end the capitalist exploitation of workers, but taking back the workers' wealth and putting it to the benefit of the working class would deal a devastating blow to the capitalist bosses who have profited off of this terrible and manipulative system for so long. We will never destroy capitalism unless we also destroy corporate feudalism!

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Graphic: badattitudes.com

## MAY DAY GREETINGS



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# May Day - The Real Labor Day

By Luther Gaylord

May 1st, International Workers' Day, commemorates the historic struggle of working people throughout the world, and is recognized in every country except the United States, Canada, and South Africa. The United States does not recognize May Day despite the fact that the holiday began in the 1880s in the United States, with the fight for an eight-hour work day.

In 1884, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions passed a resolution stating that eight hours would constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886. The resolution called for a general strike to achieve the goal, since legislative methods had already failed. With workers being forced to work 10, 12, and 14 hours a day, rank-and-file support for the eight-hour movement grew rapidly, despite the indifference and hostility of many union leaders. By April 1886, 250,000 workers were involved in the May Day movement.

The heart of the movement was in Chicago, organized primarily by the anarchist International Working People's Association. Businesses and the state were terrified by the increasingly revolutionary character of the movement and prepared accordingly. The police and militia were increased in size and received new and powerful weapons financed by local business leaders. Chicago's Commercial Club purchased a \$2,000 machine gun for the Illinois National Guard to be used against strikers. Nevertheless, by May 1st, the movement had already won gains for many Chicago clothing cutters, shoemakers, and packing-house workers. But on May 3, 1886, police fired into a crowd of strikers at the McCormick Reaper Works Factory, killing four and wounding many. Anarchists called for a mass meeting the next day in Haymarket Square to protest the brutality.

The meeting proceeded without incident, and by the time the last speaker was on the platform, the rainy gathering was already breaking up with only a few hundred people remaining. It was then that 180 cops marched into the square and ordered the meeting to disperse. As the speakers climbed down from the platform, a bomb was thrown at the police, killing one and injuring seventy. Police responded by firing into the crowd, killing one worker and injuring many others.

Although it was never determined who threw the bomb, the incident was used as an excuse to attack the entire left and labor movement. Police ransacked the homes and offices of suspected radicals and hundreds were arrested without charge. Anarchists in particular were harassed and eight of Chicago's most active were charged with conspiracy to murder in connection with the Haymarket bombing. A kangaroo court found all eight guilty, despite a lack of evidence connecting any of them to the bomb-thrower (only one was even present at the meeting, and he was on the speakers' platform), and they were sentenced to die. Albert Parsons, August Spies, Adolf Fischer, and George Engel were hanged on Nov. 11, 1887. Louis Lingg committed suicide in prison. The remaining three were finally pardoned in 1893.

It is not surprising that the state, business leaders, mainstream union officials, and the media would want to hide the true history of May Day, portraying it as a holiday celebrated only in Moscow's Red Square. In its attempt to erase the history and significance of May Day, the United States government declared May 1st to be "Law Day," and gave us instead Labor Day—a holiday devoid of any historical significance other than its importance as a day to swill beer and sit in traffic jams.

Nevertheless, rather than suppressing labor and radical movements, the events of 1886 and the execution of the Chicago anarchists actually mobilized many generations of radicals. Emma Goldman, a young immigrant at the time, later pointed to the Haymarket affair as her political birth. Lucy Parsons, widow of Albert Parsons, called upon the poor to direct their anger toward those responsible—the rich. Instead of disappearing, the anarchist movement only grew in the wake of Haymarket, spawning other radical movements and organizations, including the Industrial Workers of the World.

By covering up the history of May Day, the state, business, mainstream unions and the media have covered up an entire legacy of dissent in this country. They are terrified of what a similarly militant and organized movement could accomplish today and they suppress the seeds of such organization whenever and wherever they can. As workers, we must recognize and commemorate May Day not only for its historical significance, but also as a time to organize around issues of vital importance to working-class people today.

## West Virginia Mine Tragedy Was No Accident

Continued from 1

be empowered to refuse unsafe work.

As Representative George Miller of California put it in hearings following the 2006 disasters, "people are in a situation where they can be intimidated if they speak out because they really don't have the security of a safety committee" and "union representation."

Underground coal mining is some of the most dangerous work in the world, and requires an enormous amount of cooperation and communication among workers and with management in order to safely complete a shift. Union mines are significantly safer—last year, there was one union member among 18 fatalities—because workers elect their own safety committees and they know they can report hazards without fear of retribution. Union representatives accompany government officials during inspections as well.

Yes, the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act passed in the wake of the 2006 disasters significantly boosted mine safety. But much more remains to be done.

Employers like Massey remain determined to avoid and delay regulation, and they use their dominance in the mines and in the statehouses to kill union

organizing and the labor law reform that would give workers the power to protect themselves every day on the job.

And now another 29 miners are dead because employers like Massey believe they can get away with it.

## Union Maintains Standoff With Federal Forces At Mexican Mine

Continued from 1

statement blasting the Mexican government for failing to uphold internationally recognized human and labor rights, and called on President Calderon to withdraw troops from Cananea and assist in reaching a peaceful resolution. Government interference in union affairs and gross labor rights abuses against SNTMMSRM members is the subject of an ongoing complaint submitted to the International Labour Organization by the IMF in March 2006. In March 2010, members of the Committee on Freedom of Association discussed the complaint and will release their findings soon.

For more information, visit: [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=637](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=637).

# May Day Movie Marathon

By Jon Hochschartner

In honor of May Day, the international worker's holiday, I'd like to present five films based on class struggle. It was through struggle that workers won the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, Social Security, and the abolition of child labor. And it will only be through continued struggle, by everyday women and men, that economic justice is achieved. So enjoy these films. Then give your boss hell.

**5. "Matewan" (1987)** – Starring Chris Cooper and James Earl Jones, this movie tells the true story a bloody miners' strike that took place in 1920 West Virginia. Black and Italian scabs are trucked in to replace the locals, and the disparate groups must overcome racial prejudice to recognize their common enemy. As Cooper's character says, "They got you fighting white against colored, native against foreign. When you know there ain't but two sides to this world: them that work and them that don't." It's a valuable lesson, given how often anti-immigrant hysteria is stirred today. The film can be slow at times, with period dialect, but culminates in a western shoot-out that would make Peckinpah proud.



Graphic: utoronto.ca

**4. "You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train" (2004)** – Howard Zinn, the man behind "A People's History of the United States," died this past January. He lived an incredible life that this documentary tries to do justice. The film follows him from his days as an Air Force bombardier, to his professorship at a black college, to his Civil Rights era activism, to his arrest for speaking against the Vietnam War. Zinn was an agitator, in the best sense of the word, right until the day he died. On a personal note, I was in the process of scheduling an interview with him just days before he passed. I never got to speak with him, but I have little doubt he'd want his admirers to heed Joe Hill's advice not to mourn, but to organize. Take inspiration from this life well lived.

**3. "Norma Rae" (1979)** – It's always nice when average schmoes get the Hollywood treatment. Norma is a single mother living with her parents, working at a textile factory in Alabama. It's the kind of job that constantly demands one do more and more, faster and faster, for less and less pay. Maybe that sounds familiar. She lives a zombie-like existence

until one day a labor organizer shows up in town. He's a Yankee and, perhaps worse from the locals' perspective, a Jew. But he slowly wins the trust of Norma, and together they rally her coworkers to fight for better conditions. Sally Field, who plays the eponymous role, won an Oscar for her performance.

**2. "Reds" (1981)** – As historian Christine Stansell writes, "Reds is something of a marvel, possibly the only big-budget Hollywood film to take socialists, feminists, and Communists ... and package them gorgeously and sympathetically for a mass audience." Unfortunately, the audience didn't show up. That the film flopped is hardly a surprise, considering Ronald Reagan had just been elected, ushering in an era of harsh neo-liberalism. But it was America's loss on both counts. Nominated for 12 Academy Awards, this epic boasts an all-star cast, including Warren Beatty, Diane Keaton, Jack Nicholson and Gene Hackman. At its heart, "Reds" is a love story centered on the complicated relationship between the radical journalists John Reed and Louis Bryant. Emerging from the intellectual ferment of Greenwich Village, circa the 1910s, the pair view monogamy as little but a bourgeois conceit. We watch as they try to ignore the natural heartbreak and jealousy their "free love"

philosophy produces, with pitiful results. In 1917, Reed and Bryant sail to Russia to witness the Soviet Revolution firsthand. It's here, sadly, that Reed becomes an apologist for the Bolsheviks, defending them as the Russian Constituent Assembly is suppressed, and real socialism, which must be inherently democratic, is betrayed.

**1. "Harlan County, USA" (1976)** – If you watch one film on this list, I highly recommend it be this documentary. Nowhere else is the class divide so stark. Directed by Barbara Kopple, the film follows a Kentucky coal miner strike against Duke Power Company. It's riveting. State police drag away wives and mothers who lie before scab trucks. Private thugs, hired by the company, commit drive-by shootings on union members. But the workers are undaunted. "It's time for us to stand together and get just as violent as they are," one woman argues. "By God, you fight fire with fire." And so they do. Strikers are soon armed with sticks, bats, pistols and rifles. If workers today showed half such militancy, our country would be a lot more equitable.

## Workers Shut Down Brooklyn Coffee Shop

Continued from 1

with the understanding these changes were permanent, and those who had tendered their resignation, or were drafting it, decided to stay. When the business partner returned without explanation, staff approached the owner hoping to find out the reason for this sudden and unannounced return. Work environment and workplace issues aside, the workers collectively felt deceived and that they had been shown a lack of mutual respect. This only served to highlight and reemphasize the previously expressed concerns. As the staff was well aware, both through experience and through conversation with past employees, Gorilla Coffee has a history of this pattern repeating itself.

"It should be emphasized that the intent of the meeting was above all to find a solution to this unhealthy situation, a solution which involved the maintenance of these improvements to the work environment, and that would prevent any future returns to the previous unhealthy dynamic. Above all the attitude of the staff involved in the meeting (who were

representing the rest of the staff) was one of respect and positivity. A collective instant resignation was an agreed upon last resort and not a bargaining chip. It was simply that without change, we all felt unwilling to undergo another day in that environment. Hence, out of a collective feeling of self respect and job insecurity, the staff decided it would be in their best interest to find employment elsewhere.

"This isn't political and it isn't a strike. The staff quit and the matter will not be resolved. It's a matter of business, and a personal matter for each of the staff. Everyone at Gorilla Coffee, including the owners and the staff, are skilled, passionate, and hard working. It is unfortunate for everyone involved. The workers are grateful to the many wonderful patrons over the years, and we apologize that it was necessary to inconvenience them in this way. All we can say is 'thank you for the support and all the best.'"

The Workers of Gorilla Coffee  
Source: *The New York Times*.



## Reviews

# 'The Value Of Nothing' Defines The Value Of Solidarity

Patel, Raj. "The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy." *Australia: Black Inc.*, 2009. 256 pages, paperback. \$24.95.

By Mike Ballard

Raj Patel has written a fine book in which he describes the value of human tenacity, the value of people standing up to their rulers, the value of persistence and the value of solidarity; in other words, the value of nothing. Nothing which has a price that is. Nothing which is a commodity sold for the profit of its owners, unless they're small owners.

Starting off his critique of the prevailing ideology, which can be summarized in Gary Becker's concept of "homo-economicus," Patel writes, "The dazzle of free markets has blinded us to other ways of seeing the world. As Oscar Wilde wrote over a century ago, 'Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.' Prices have revealed themselves as fickle guides: The 2008 financial collapse came in the same year as crises in food and oil and yet we seem unable to see or value our world except through the faulty prism of the market." Patel is keen to link Becker's prescriptions for realism to commodification, making literally every human activity and nature into commodities for sale. He succeeds quite well and this is important in a day and age when becoming a "maximizing animal" in the global market is lauded by capitalist apologists world-wide.

"The Value of Nothing" is chock full of useful insights and history. Patel's summation of Polanyi's take on the "enclosure of the commons"—that is, the gradual privatizing of what had been land held in common by the peasantry during Britain's Middle Ages—is articulated with verve and clarity. His history includes a fine overview of the British peasant revolt of 1381 and is, itself, worth the price of the book. But like Wat Tyler, methinks the flaw in Patel's analysis and suggested practice is to be located in a reverence for the ruling system of contemporary class political power: the wage system.

Patel accepts markets and prices to value useful things. He sees them as being natural, but he also points to the flaws of equating price with its exchange-value. Bubbles occur in the global, corporate-dominated economy and when they do, price can become out of balance with value. As Patel points out, the 2008 deflation of the financial bubble in real estate was a prime example of a whole lot of pricey nothingness frothing around value.

In "The Value of Nothing," the reader will also find easy to read explanations of many concepts used in offhanded ways in today's capitalist media, "shorting" for example:

"Volkswagen was heading for tough times. Imagine you're a trader who feels in your bones that the stock price can only fall. One way to cash your hunch in is to sell Volkswagen stock today, and buy it back when the price falls. Since you don't walk around with Volkswagen stock falling out of your pockets, you'll turn to someone who does, like an institutional investor. You borrow their stock, for a price, and promise to return all of it very soon. The institutional investor is happy because they make money from lending out the stock, which they will get back in one piece. You're happy because you can sell this stock, wait for the price to fall, buy it back and with the profit, not only pay back the institutional investor, but make the next installment on your yacht in Monaco. This practice is called 'shorting.'"

But, here's the deal. Raj Patel wants the market for commodities to function in less fickle ways, to wit, in grassroots democratic ways. He wants us to examine our concept of value, price and profit, but not through, "the false prism of markets" prone to corporate driven price bubbles which blow out way beyond asset values. Instead, Patel wants his readers to tame the fickleness of market society by making it operate through their own ideals. There will be a lot of subjective commitment required to keep value in line with price, but Patel believes we can do it. Patel wants us to compare our ideals with actually, existing capitalist outcomes. When we contrast the two, he believes that we can then achieve that primary ideal of left-liberal discourse, social justice. We will attain this ideal by gradually reforming our way to a more democratic market system, one where the market is more and more controlled by grassroots organizations and less controlled by corporate capital than they are today.

But, of course, we must change our existing ideals first for, as Patel observes, most of us suffer from "Anton's blindness," or the ideological domination known as "hegemony," which most of us absorb as we mature within capitalist-dominated cultures. In other words, Patel wants people to take charge of markets as opposed to letting the markets rip, à la Reagan or Thatcher-inspired neo-liberal agendas. He believes this can be done, indeed, that it is already being accomplished in various ways by varying NGOs and peoples' organizations at the municipal level.

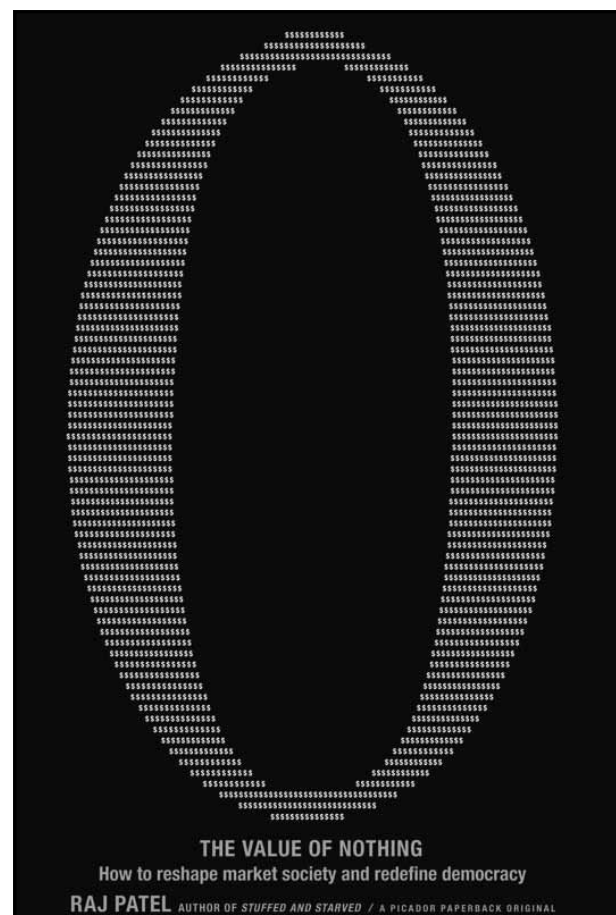
Patel is a democrat and as a democrat, he wants the people to rule. He rightly sees that corporate capitalism is undemocratic and he believes that small, decentralized, democratically-run capitalism is the answer to most of our political, economic and social problems. We, the people can do this, if we can develop and maintain our ideals, as he

says the Zapatistas have and the workers' collectives in Argentina have and, as members of *Vía Campesina* have. If we can be like them, we've got a shot at saving the planet from almost everything evil, including climate change. Well, that's what Raj thinks. In short, Patel's organizing vision doesn't aim at abolishing wage-labor, but of achieving a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and fair price for commodities which issue out of small businesses. He wants workers, farmers, peasants, women, along with assorted nationalities and ethnic groups to self-manage their own wage-labor and capital through small, democratically-run businesses mostly at the municipal level. It seems to this reader that he does so because of his sincere belief that there is no "realistic" alternative to making and marketing useful goods and services as commodities and that a kind of populist, municipal socialism is realistic to work for.

As a result of his faith in the value of grassroots, democratically influenced free markets, free time is not the focus of his programmatic thrusts. Working small farms to gain Patel's version of "food sovereignty" plays a major role in thinking behind "The Value of Nothing." It's a reformist time sink, in this Wobbly's opinion. Instead of advancing to a new way of organizing time, work and industrial production to maximize free-time, Patel seems to prefer spending free-time away from production in achieving consensus at meetings à la Zapatista or *Vía Campesina*. What is not said by Patel is that no matter how democratic and small commodity production is and can be made, it usually means less free time because the production of goods and services, even just for use and need, takes more human labor time, thus reducing the potential of free time for ourselves.

Of course, we could always shoot for living with a LOT LESS in the way of good and services, and this is a solution which Patel strongly suggests. But what is forgotten is that small scale production is where humanity came from historically, and there are reasons why most humans don't want a return to back-breaking, time-consuming production and consensus politics as a way of life, when it really isn't necessary. However, if carried out with enough idealism, Patel argues that the political trajectory he proposes would take us to a free market society, one always kept small by our idealist convictions. Mindless, conspicuous consumption is being critiqued in "The Value of Nothing," and Patel's Buddhist angle is presented as a kind of ascetic cure, a kind of generalized monasticism as a way out of mindless, conspicuous consumption.

At the same time another denial is operative in Patel's thesis. It is a denial of what has actually occurred in history and the inner motivation of humanity to gravitate toward freedom as a whole within class dominated societies. Since the dawn of civilization, humans have wanted and indeed, worked to move away from chaotic domination by nature by creating more efficient modes of wealth production to release more free-time, especially as humanity has been eliminating the vestiges of feudalism and hurtling into full blown, industrial capitalism since at least the times of the great bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th Centuries. The drudgery



Graphic: portlandmercury.com

involved in spending one's life doing laundry with a washboard down by the river; going from human to horse-drawn plough and then to tractors—those and other assorted tasks associated with the reduction of the expenditure of human drudge time, have been historical motivators, based on the human desire for more freedom. Over the course of history, these innovations and economies of scale have led to large scale industrialized production. Granted, in class society up to and including the capitalist system of the here and now, the free-time implicit in large scale production has been available mostly to the wealthy and the unemployed, in great amounts with different outcomes. But in a hypothetical classless society (such as this Wobbly imagines) where there is equal political power amongst humans and common control over socially produced wealth within collective goals (goals which include most importantly the expansion of free time and living in harmony with the Earth), a free association of producers cannot make a fetish out of smallness and decentralization without serious consequences for say, the four-hour day.

Where decentralization and smallness function to promote more freedom, fine; where they end up becoming a time sink, they should be discarded. Certainly, we need to have the self-discipline to curb mindless consumption based on competitive status building, i.e., the inanity of keeping up with the Joneses. We should do this for our own sanity, if not just to promote environmental health and shorter work time. But, we don't need to do this by adopting Buddhist ethics of ascetic denial. Rather, a free association of producers can kill overproduction by using already existing productive capacity to reduce the labor time necessary to produce the good things of life. Of course, that would mean taking, holding and operating the existing means of production for ourselves, a goal which Patel doesn't mention nor, it would seem, endorse. Like the Zapatistas, Patel is NOT aiming for a social revolution where the workers take over the means of production and abolish the State, but for fundamental reform of the capitalist system without taking political power away from the ruling class. In "The Value of Nothing," he is advocating a "smaller is beautiful," grassroots, democratic, class society, based on a left-social democratic market, within an ahistorical, mythical, small capitalism which never grows.

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## Reviews

# How Wall Street Destroyed Jobs, Pensions, and Prosperity

Leopold, Les. "The Looting of America." Chelsea Green Publishing, 2009. 224 pages, paperback. \$14.95.

By John Maclean

Les Leopold, in "The Looting of America," says he felt uninformed, and didn't fancy "ideological blinders," so he decided "to figure some of it out and share it with [his] fellow ignoramus." He questioned the experts, their wondrous financial products, and whether or not they should be left to write the history of what happened. Leading into the crash of 2008, the financial sector made up 20 percent of GDP, and 27.4 percent of all corporate profits. During the 1940s and 1950s there were more than seven jobs in manufacturing for every one job in finance, and today the ratio is less than two-to-one. Because of the "unholy spawn" of Wall Street, Collateralized Debt Obligation (CDOs) and their "synthetic" kin, jobs are being bailed overboard, and tax monies up.

The inhabitants of Whitefish Bay (White Folks Bay), Wis., with its mansions overlooking Lake Michigan, were hit by the recent speculative bust. Wall Street, prior to the crash, had targeted school district trust funds, like those in Wisconsin, which in 2006 held over \$100 billion nationwide. Leopold calls it "an old-fashion financial romance"—a "perfect match." David W. Noack, of Stifel Nicolaus, got school districts throughout Wisconsin to "buy securities that offered higher returns than treasury notes [and] were just about as safe." Noack began by stressing the crisis the districts faced with retirement costs; then he added that all the districts "together" risked little and that the school boards could somehow "authorize" but not "obligate" in voting. The locals put up \$37.3 million, and borrowed \$165 million more from the Irish bank Depfa, owned by a larger German outfit, and

put it all down on "something called a 'synthetic' CDO." Incredibly the Wisconsiners had invested and borrowed to insure billions of dollars in debt held by another Canadian bank. It has been reported that over \$1.2 trillion of these collateralized debt obligations have been sold throughout the United States. The author calls this "fantasy finance."

In honor of the citizens of Whitefish Bay, Leopold proposes "a new iron law of economics" which states that if "surplus capital" from workers' productivity is allowed to flow to a few, it will end up in the "fantasy-finance casino" and when the economy crashes workers will pay again "in lost jobs...pensions" and bailouts. The old law was supposed to be that toilers would receive the benefit of their productivity. Leopold says: "Had wages increased along with productivity, the current average real wage for non supervisory workers would be \$1,171 per week—\$60,892 per year instead of today's average of \$31,824." Since the 1970s this benefit has been diverted to an investment elite, and we have been made to borrow it back, and pay again and again.

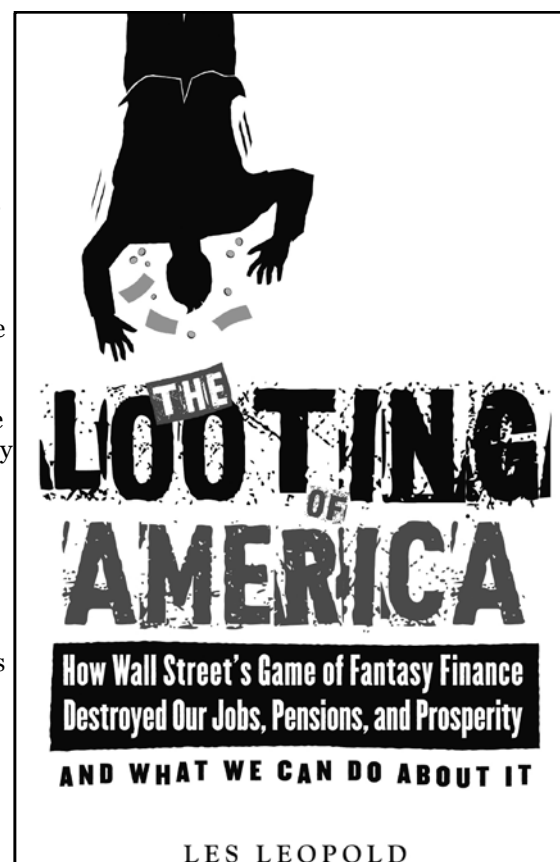
The "leave-it-alone" liquidationism of Andrew Mellon, the Secretary of the Treasury under former President Herbert Hoover, died during the Depression. Leading up to the Crash of 1929, the "usual suspects" were "easy credit, market manipulation, few regulatory safeguards, and a large dose of herd euphoria." The New Deal put in place the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC); the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC); the Glass-Steagall Act, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a homeowner program for people of modest incomes; and it extended bankruptcy protections to some wage slaves. This period also saw the resurrection of the housing market through the creation of "the long term fixed-rate, self-amortizing mortgage" and a government-created "financial instrument" that, for the first time, made home ownership possible for the general population. It fell to thinkers like Milton Friedman to undermine all this, along with "the prevailing common sense about the causes of the Great Depression." Friedman and Anna Schwartz argued, in their U.S. economic history, that "human error," particularly Fed monetary policy, was at the root of the Depression, not anything inherent to capitalism. This was "music to the ears" of self-styled conservatives, and from the 1980s up until today the fantasy finance casinos were back with a Savings and Loan multiplied vengeance.

James L. Bothwell of the Government Accountability Office warned Congress in 1994 about the harm that a growing \$12.1 trillion "derivatives casino" could inflict on the real economy. He even predicted likely bailouts devoid

of a "modicum of regulation." None other than Alan Greenspan, the Oracle of the Fed, "drowned out" these cautionary warnings, while lobbyists began a campaign to "expunge the word 'derivatives' from the press," in favor of securities. Leopold compares the activity in derivatives markets to the speculation on stats which occurs in "fantasy sports." Derivatives are fashioned to dump risk onto others, or to "speculate by picking up the risk." The author mentions the work of Satyarjit Das, and the story of a veteran banker, who trains salespeople: "Sonny, you give the guy a win first up. A nibble. He'll be hooked. Then, you reel him in real slow..." Leopold then tells of the Orange County treasurer Robert Citron, who heeded the "siren's call" of the derivative "pushers" and lost more than \$1.5 billion, as services to the poor got slashed and the county lost jobs. Then the baby of John Meriwether, Long Term Capital Management, collapsed. The little known Brooksley Born, as head of the Commodities and Futures Trading Commission, sought to bring regulation to this mess, but Greenspan, Leavitt, Rubin, and Senator Gramm said no.

When the trouble came in 2008, the media picked up a narrative of shared blame but the problem is that only elites "can play fantasy finance" and "very few of us had anything to do with the meltdown or the financial toxic waste that [was] polluting the economy." During the Depression, Fannie Mae was created to buy up good bank mortgages, taking them off of the bank's books so they were free to continue lending. Decades later, the mortgage backed security was invented, for VA Mortgages and other mortgages, and Ginny Mae was founded to sell these government-backed securities to investors. In the 1980s Larry Fink, of First Boston Bank, created the "collateralized mortgage obligation" and Michael Milken, of the now-defunct Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc., came up with the first CDO. The idea was to gather huge pools of "subprime mortgages" and chop them up "unequally" so that "risk and rate of return" varied between the tranches; they used the French word for slice. The three securities tranches were piled up from the "equity tranche," for Leopold toxic waste, to the "mezzanine tranche" and the "senior tranche" which had the first dibs on all incoming "interest payments." All that needed to be done to launch "a massive global market" was to get one of three SEC granted ratings oligarchs, Standard and Poor's, Moody's, or Fitch, to give a triple-A rating to the upper tranche. Then these derivatives could be sold to "pension funds, insurance companies, banks, and the like. Big, big money."

Warren Buffet called credit default swaps "financial weapons of mass destruction." Leopold calls these "the heart of fantasy finance" and lucrative protection for risky loans. First you set up a "big bank account" somewhere beyond regulation and taxes, and then "entice investors" building the account up to the desired amount of protection. This "insurance fund" can be drawn on if any of the underlying loans go bad. Next you deposit a little into the account every three months "like you were paying insurance premiums" and you pass on money to the investors willing to gamble and less to the others. You can further juggle "money and risk" by setting up tranches and awarding investors differently; then you invest it all in safe "treasury bills, bank notes, an money market funds" acquiring interest for the marks. Finally you can "toast everyone" know-



Graphic: chelseagreen.com

ing that future loan defaults are covered. As Leopold says this is not unlike fantasy sports, which is a "synthetic derivative" operating over "real" sports. Based on "junk debt" financiers sold an estimated \$70 trillion in swaps, almost "four times the value of the entire U.S. economy" and some believe that the "real number" is \$600 trillion. The reality is that "no one knows" but this is surely "the largest casino game in human history."

The explosive trigger which exposed the derivatives was "the bursting of the housing bubble." With this adjustment pension funds, insurance companies, university endowments, banks, and local governments saw their supposed triple-A investments "turn to junk." The small town of Narvik, Norway, lost \$64 million and couldn't cover its payroll or services. Bernanke believed, like Friedman before him, that the Fed had failed after the crash of 1929, and this time it would be different; and Leopold asks the reasonable question, what if they are wrong and the overproduction and underconsumption coming out of class war are inherent to capitalism? The "defenders" and the critics of the swaps both got it wrong and the author doubts the utility of these instruments. He says real "production takes place on the surface of the earth" not in the upper atmosphere. We must all find ways "to bring...surplus capital back to planet earth."

The author concludes with proposals that Wall Street really won't like. The government must step in again and boost demand, more than the one-tenth of the loss addressed by the Obama administration thus far. There should be some form of disaster insurance which is paid into through a financial tax. And the Tobin tax recommended by Nobel laureate James Tobin, should be placed against international currency transactions. The United States dearly needs a "financial-product safety" regime, and cannot continue to rely on the market for this. Leopold says that most of us would rather "bitch about the rich than exercise more power and take more responsibility for ruling society." The vaults of the rich need to be raided, their "supply of surplus capital" should be cut off, and productive finance should be nationalized. According to the economic research of Jamal Rashed and Subarna Samanta, when the "discrepancy between rising productivity and wage stagnation is large, stock markets crash, banks fail, currencies depreciate, unemployment rises, and a longer recession or full-fledged depression may follow." Wage slaves, join the One Big Union, be bolder than the bankers, and demand it all.



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# FW George Mann: Keeping The Wobbly Troubadour Tradition Alive

By Greg Giorgio

*Traveling musician, songwriter and union activist George Mann is a creative whirlwind. He has written dozens of labor and peace songs, produced a vital series of protest records and toured incessantly playing his latest creations as well as many tunes from the Wobbly canon and beyond. He sang with his mentor, the late Julius Margolin, for many years and now looks at his music and life's work for us on these pages. Don't miss his gigs in the Albany, N.Y. area and in Boston on May 14 and 15. Contact the Upstate N.Y. and Boston IWW branches for details.*

**Greg Giorgio:** How did you get started in music?

**George Mann:** I have played the guitar since I was eight years old and always wanted to be a folksinger. Before The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and The Who, there was The Kingston Trio. I remember being stricken, at eight years old, by this woman named Joan Baez who sang a song about a guy named Joe Hill on my sister's album of the Woodstock concert.

**GG:** How did labor and social justice eventually fit in with your music-making?

**GM:** I was socially-conscious when younger, but not in a focused way, playing left-wing hippy music and rock and roll in various bands growing up and while going to college. Ultimately, working in the union movement as an organizer led me to the music of people like Utah Phillips, Woody Guthrie, Anne Feeney, Billy Bragg and singers like them who know that a good story and the struggle for justice beats pop music any day of the week. I had always played for activist causes, but singing the labor classics, and 10 years in the New York City Labor Chorus, helped turn my ear more toward folk music. I began writing songs again, eventually recording CDs.

**GG:** What other kinds of work have you done?

**GM:** I was a journalist and editor for years and have always had that thread worming through my life as a source of income. Nine years as an organizer, working for the musicians' union and the Communication Workers of America, among others, taught me that I cannot work in the labor movement and play music for it—both vocations demand a full-time commitment. These days, I play music full-time and live a lot cheaper, but I am enjoying life a lot more. I have several “steady” gigs, including working as an accompanist in school plays and playing for veterans and nursing homes on both coasts.

**GG:** How did your association with the late Julius Margolin get started?

**GM:** I met Julius when he was 79 years old, and he was just beginning to write songs about labor struggles and opposing the Gingrich-led “Contract with America.” As we became better friends, he recruited me to the New York City Labor Chorus and I eventually convinced him to try recording and making music with me. We had no idea that it would turn into 12 years of fun and struggle against the anti-union and pro-war forces of capital! And I always knew it could end at any moment, but I am grateful for the chance to have been with him during that journey, right on through his final illness and death last summer at 93.

**GG:** He was an incredible human being. What was the most important lesson you learned from him?

**GM:** I hope that any person who met or comes to know of Julius takes three things away: his lack of ego, his militant anger at and determination to act against the ruling classes, and his love for the working class and all the peoples of the world. Julius also believed in one very simple concept—if you are going to talk

the talk, you should also have to walk the walk. He served proudly in the Merchant Marine in World War II, survived the blacklist that removed him from the boats in 1949, worked for 30 years in the film industry, and was active in his union [the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, or IATSE] right up until his death. His calendar was filled with solidarity activities and committee meetings until he grew too sick to participate anymore. And when he died, he left such a surge of energy, love and determination among those who knew him. I still draw strength from that, as I continue to miss his presence and face the challenges in my life and the disappointments of everyday struggle.

**GG:** You have a great amount of creative energy. Talk about some of your solo work and collaborative recordings of the last decade or so.

**GM:** I recorded three CDs with Julius and I treasure the memory of each one, as I saw Julius develop as a songwriter and I found a production style—and great musicians—to present the music in a way that did justice to our work. Along the way, we were fortunate to create the four CDs in the anti-Bush “Hail to the Thief!” series—finding like-minded folksingers to present our opposition to the Bush regime and its imperial goals. And the documentary film we made about Julius, “A Union Man,” was also a collaborative project, with so many people pitching in to help make this story of Julius's amazing life.

I love the process of writing songs and the magic of recording and producing CDs. And I am finding that the folk world, and the intertwining circles of labor/green/anti-war activism, can provide meaning and support to my life and work. That's a big lesson, not one easily learned, but I'm working on it.

**GG:** Can you discuss your creative process a little and describe your musical stylings?

**GM:** Not really, some secrets are best kept in the closet! I wish I could explain the magic of writing songs, but it is something that is very private and mysterious. All I know is that I get better at self-editing as I get older, i.e., only writing/releasing songs that meet my goals/standards.

I think of and “see” music, and new songs especially, as the platform for creating an interesting combination of sounds in the studio, and my studio arrangements tend to be fuller and sometimes even with “rock”/electric guitars and drums backing. But I am always conscious of how that song will sound solo with an acoustic guitar, the way it was written and is usually performed live.

**GG:** Utah Phillips urged us to “seek out our elders” from the union movement. You have taken that to heart, haven't you?

**GM:** I think that one reason Utah took to me when we finally met was because he saw I had already learned that lesson, and in bringing Julius out to the world, I was working in the same field that Utah was tilling. But as I told Utah many times, it was his music, his stories and preservation of workers' histories—his example—that led me down that road. I'll never forget what a lightning bolt Utah's work was to me when I first heard about him and began buying his CDs in the mid-1990s: his clarity, his outrage, his sheer skill at singing and telling stories of the workers who fought and died for safe, fair working conditions and the right to a union—this did so much for me at that point in my life.

And so my work with Julius was part of repaying that debt, that collective debt that all of us owe to people like Utah, Faith Petric, Woody Guthrie, Joe Hill and many more of those who came before us and gave us these songs, these stories that resonate 20 years, 40 years, [or even] a century later.

**GG:** Tell us about your union memberships.

**GM:** I have been in the American Federation of Musicians for about 20 years. Most of that time, I've been in Local 1000, the non-geographic local chartered for traveling folk musicians. In 2005 I joined the New York City branch of the IWW. While my schedule does not permit me to be active in the branch's work, I believe that the IWW is the union that best reflects my beliefs and I like to spend my money wisely.

**GG:** What's the latest recording?

**GM:** After the Bush error ended, Julius and I were wondering what we would do next. When I heard about efforts to help our veterans who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, specifically the work of The Welcome Home Project [<http://www.thewelcomehomeproject.org>], I decided to create a new compilation CD, “Until You Come Home: Songs for Veterans and Their Kin.” Both Julius and Utah are on it, as well as many other great artists like Tom Paxton, John Gorka, Holly Near and David Rovics.

I am also releasing my new solo CD, “Songs for Jules and Bruce,” in May. This project is very dear to my heart as Julius sings on several songs, Anne Feeney and Mark Ross are among the guests, and many of the songs are about or in tribute to Julius and Utah. My website [<http://www.georgemann.org>] has information on all of our work.

**GG:** What's next for your musical adventure? Any other projects in the works?

**GM:** I am taking a vow not to step into a recording studio for a year and to spend that year touring, traveling the country, and writing new songs that show the hope and ability to fight back that exists in us all, if we just seek it out. May brings the May Day concert at the Botto House and concerts for both the Upstate New York James Connolly Branch and the Boston Branch of the IWW. I would love to go play for some of the other IWW Branches and expect to be doing a number of concerts with Veterans for Peace tied into the “Until You Come Home” CD.

**GG:** How important is our music and our culture for the survival of a working class movement?

**GM:** What's most important for the survival of a working class and union movement is for people to educate themselves and to find the courage to stand up and fight back. Songs and stories educate people and preserve that long memory that Utah often spoke about, so in that sense music and labor culture are great tools. They help to preserve and present that long memory.

**GG:** Any last words for our readers?

**GM:** While there is always a price to pay for activism and challenging authority, direct action is the only thing that gets the goods. This is another lesson impressed into my mind by my elders, but also seen in the struggles I've been in. Power yields nothing without pressure, and you cannot build that pressure without extreme commitment, strength and sacrifice. If you want to win, you have to be ready to offer all.

**A CD Release Concert for “Until You Come Home” and  
A Benefit for the Utah Phillips “Long Memory Project”**

## George Mann

### Friday, May 14 @ 7:00 PM

## Altamont Village Hall

**115 Main Street (Rte. 146)  
at the Firehouse (Free Parking)**

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George Mann is a New York City-based folksinger who sings songs from the last century of labor and social activism, and his own songs are powerful and funny takes on the state of the nation. He also writes songs of hope, healing, struggle and triumph, and for years he recorded and performed with Julius Margolin, who was 93 when he died last August.

His new CD, “Until You Come Home,” features such folk legends as Tom Paxton, Utah Phillips, Holly Near, Magpie, John Gorka and many more artists singing songs about the experiences of war and of returning home. Inspired by the book “Voices of Vets,” George produced this new CD to help welcome home our returning service members and recognize the sacrifices they and their families have made for our country. He is also releasing his new CD, “Songs for Jules and Bruce,” in May.

George and the IWW will present the proceeds from this concert to the “Long Memory Project” in honor of Utah Phillips, singer, storyteller and Wobbly. Beer and wine will be served, feel free to bring snacks. Doors open at 7 PM for reception and the music starts at 7:30 PM.

On the Web:

[www.georgemann.org](http://www.georgemann.org)

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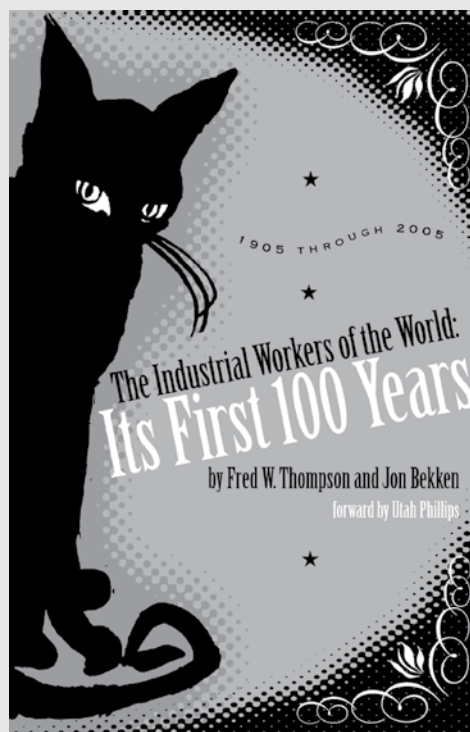
\*George Mann will also be performing at 10:00 p.m. on May 1 at Surreal Estate in Brooklyn, N.Y., and at 8:00 p.m. on May 15 in Boston, location TBA.



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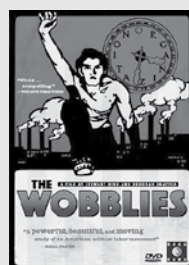
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**The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years**  
 by Fred W. Thompson & Jon Bekken forward by Utah Phillips

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

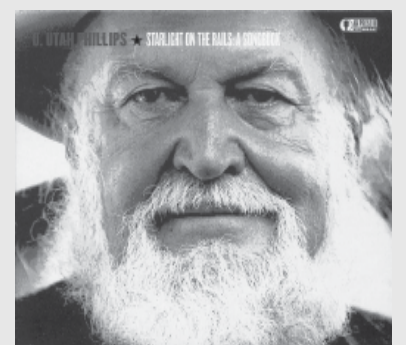
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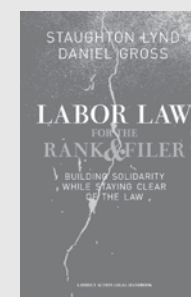
This documentary from 1979 takes a look at the IWW's early days, with a combination of interviews and archival footage.

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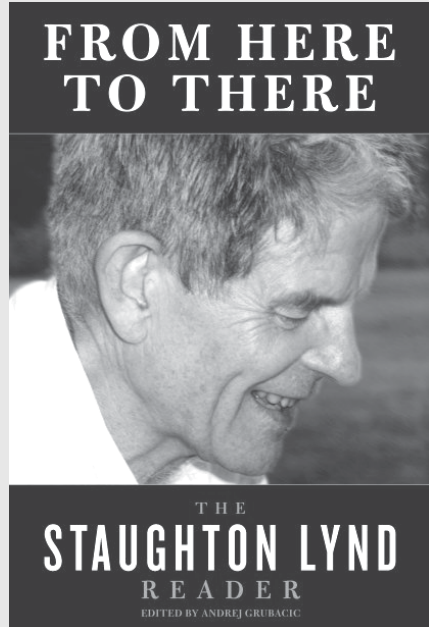


**Labor Law for the Rank and Filer: Building Solidarity While Staying Clear of the Law**

BY STAUGHTON LYND AND DANIEL GROSS

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

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**From Here To There: The Staughton Lynd Reader**  
 Edited by Andrej Grubacic

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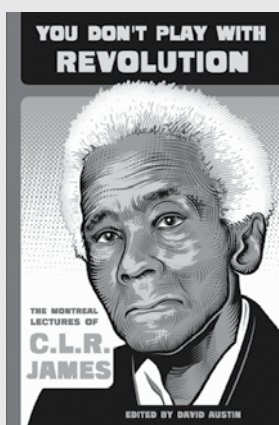


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## Wobbly Arts

# The Making Of Wobbly Songs

By Joe Grim Feinberg

In Part I of this article, which appeared on page 11 of the April 2010 Industrial Worker, I recalled the origins of Wobbly songs: how the IWW's biting parodies and gallant anthems emerged from a variety of genres to become the One Big Union's distinctive calling cards. The new, 38th edition of the "Little Red Songbook" will bring back the best-loved songs from over the years, alongside newer pieces never printed before. The Songbook Committee is counting on all of you to keep the tradition alive by singing heartily and by writing new songs.

### Part II. Present and Future

In his "Afterword" to the "Big Red Songbook," Utah Phillips offered "four lessons in the craft of song making": make your songs simple, useful, adaptable, and hopeful. I wanted to look a little more closely at each of those lessons.

#### Simplicity

Wobbly songs should be easy to understand, quick to remember, and simple to sing. But "simple" can mean a lot of things. How do we know what kind of simplicity is needed?

It helps to know your genre. If you're writing a slogan or chant, you can be brief and explicit with your message, and maybe add a clever rhyme. If you're writing a song, it's often better to be less explicit. Even if your song is short and simple, you need something unexpected or even a little bit obscure to make it worth singing. Take this song by FW Kyle Mills:

*We have got a world to gain, nothing to lose but these chains.*

*Keep your hand on the union plow.*

*The workers and employers share, absolutely nothing but the air.*

*Keep your hand on the union plow.*

(second and fifth verses of "Union Plow," written 2009 to the tune of "Gospel Plow"; sent by the author to the Songbook Committee)

A one-line internal rhyme makes each verse, followed by a short refrain. The verse lines are straightforward, like chants. But the refrain gives us a metaphor that can be sung slowly and often, to reflect back on the seemingly simple verses. You don't want a song like this to be too straightforward or too complicated—it works by stating the obvious slowly, in some less-than-obvious way. Other songs, like the great ones by Joe Hill or T-Bone Slim, make themselves interesting by unfolding their message obliquely in a crescendo of events. By the time we reach the glorious conclusion, the message is clear whether it's restated or not: the scab will go to hell; the workers will unite; the boss will cook his own meals. There are different kinds of simplicity; the thing is to find what's simply interesting to sing.

#### Usefulness

Wobbly songs aren't just contemplated; they're used. But how are they used? And how does this affect the way we write them?

Some songs are great for expert performers singing to silent crowds. This doesn't make them good for union halls and picket lines. Songs for performers can have meandering or speech-like melodies, startling syncopation, tongue-twisting lines. But for rank-and-file Wobbly singers, it helps to have a memorable and predictable melody, a regular rhythm, and frequent repetition of phrases. Now the rules of sing-ability can be broken; but then other means are needed to make the song work. For example, "The Eye-Double-Double-You" by FW Jim Crutchfield combines some syllable-packed lines with a fast-paced melody that can be hard to keep up with (tune: "The Shores of Botany Bay"):

*Hooray for the Revolution!*

*Hooray for the Working Class!*

*I've joined the One Big Union*

*And the boss can kiss my ass!*

*I'll fight for better wages*

*And shorter hours too*

*'Cause I've got my Red Card and I'm gonna work hard*

*For the Eye-Double-Double-You.*

(chorus; printed in the Industrial Worker, July 2007)

If this song also had abstruse lyrics or an unusual chord progression, it would be hard for rank-and-file singers to sing (even if it were still nice to listen to). But since most aspects of the song are easy to pick up (simple rhymes, familiar and repeated phrases), the slight challenge of fitting the melody to the words could be easily overcome and might actually add to the song's interest. The important thing is to write songs not for listening but for singing.

#### Adaptability

Every Wobbly song was written in a specific place and time. The songs that last are those that get adapted and reused as their context changes. It can be deceptively difficult, though, to make a good adaptation.

The biggest problem of adaptation stems from the difficulty of making a new version respond to the version you're adapting from. This comes up even with seemingly minor additions of new verses to old songs. Some songs are designed to accept new verses; so "Banks of Marble," for example, functions as a catalogue of exploitation, and verses could be added infinitely as long as they describe a new kind of exploitation. But other songs can be hurt by adding new verses; so for example "Solidarity Forever" (in my view) follows a specific verse-by-verse development, which can be broken up by hastily placed new verses.

The challenge is all the greater when you're adapting a whole new song, as in the common Wobbly practice of parody. It's true that you can easily take any song and change the words to give it a Wobbly message. But the best parodies do something more, making use of the original song in creative ways. So Joe Hill used specifically religious songs when he was lampooning preacher-hypocrites. Or the Polish-German Boleslaw Strzelewicz used the holy calm of "Silent Night" to set in relief the violent oppression of the working class:

*Silent night, sorrowful night, Deep in the shaft, far from light,*

*The air, like a storm, strikes with*

*hideous work.*

*The miner digs up what the rich man*

*is worth.*

*He starves 'mid the smell of gold...*

("The Workers' 'Silent Night'" ["Arbeiter 'Stille Nacht'"]; ca. 1890; my translation; considered but not included in the new Songbook)

#### Hope

There are plenty of songs that reflect our miserable world. What sets Wobbly songs apart is that they also present a way out of this misery. Pick up almost any song in the new edition of the "Little Red Songbook," and you'll see.

## How To Tame The Spirit Of A Rebel

By Ambrose Nurra

Christen a wayward street after them in the city center so that their fatigued name on its post is no different than the gutter or plastic tumbleweed bearing witness to your latest charge card triumph

Plaster their face on posters tshirts billboards the force of a holocaust of a thousand blazing irises dimmed on those who can purchase readymade REVOLUTIONS ON SALE DISCOUNT HALF OFF!!!

Profane their vision in the ridiculous garbled rhetoric of academia and banish it to their halls where it will be whipped shackled into submission so it won't even recognize itself

Erect a monument in their honor where those who killed them can drop a few hollow words of honor like they dropped this rebels corpse with a few now hollow bullets

But most of all make sure that not even for a second that they stop admiring that pristine placard face stop paying tribute to a name and start believing that maybe we are all this rebel...

## The Mute Uprising

By Ambrose Nurra

the citizen.  
the pencil.  
the naked seat.

they cast off the crust of years of slumber  
and slip into the part-time role of  
the citizen.

to salivate each issue imagine the smell of each bouquet of names  
and decide with the proper gesture of  
the pencil.

then return, take the day off and turn away lidheavy in the electric smog  
of TVs hissing the headline that hails one new nation under  
the naked seat.

a ballot was too small  
for  
their dreams

## Death Penalty Targets Working People

By the Pittsburgh GMB  
Chartered May Day 2002

May Day marks the 1887 execution in Chicago of four labor organizers accused of an explosion in Haymarket Square that killed eight policemen at a rally of the International Workingmen's Party on May 4, 1886. Prosecutors failed to directly connect any of the defendants to the explosion, using as "evidence" political slogans that workers should revolt. Suspect William Seliger became a prosecution witness and testified that one organizer made four bombs that day, although none were used in the attack. In 1893, Governor Altgeld concluded that all eight convicted organizers were innocent, and pardoned the three who were still alive in prison.

The affair mirrored show trials that took place ten years earlier in Pittsburgh. Between 1877 and 1879, over 20 Molly Maguires were hanged on trumped-up murder charges in the second-largest execution in U.S. history. The Mollies are considered one of America's first labor groups. Coal companies blamed them for exploding coal mines. Patrick Hester, Patrick Tully, and Peter McHugh were convicted of murdering a mine boss almost solely on the testimony of the real killer, "Kelly the Bum." When the defendants pointed out that the Bum's pardon did not follow an open hearing with public notice as the constitution required, Pennsylvania's Supreme Court, sitting in Pittsburgh, replied that only prosecutors could challenge pardons unless there was fraud. In 2006, Pennsylvania's legislature passed a resolution recognizing violations of due process in the Molly trials, and asked Governor Rendell to issue an order of recognition. He has not.

On May 15 at 1:30 p.m., Hal Smith, a member of the National Lawyers' Guild, will speak at Homestead's Pumhouse on Pittsburgh's "Haymarket" about how documents he discovered in state archives show fraud in Kelly's pardon.



Suppression of the 1877 railroad strike.  
Photo: "History and Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties, PA."

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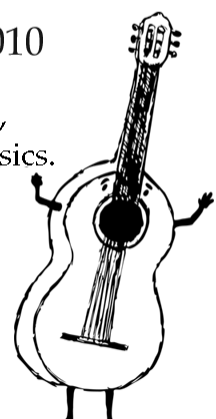
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# Philly IWW Demonstrates At The German Consulate In Support Of The FAU Berlin

By John Kalwaic

Despite freezing cold weather on January 29, members of the Philadelphia General Membership Branch of the IWW picketed the Philadelphia German Consulate as part of an International day of action in solidarity with the FAU (Freie Arbeiterinnen-und Arbeiter-Union) in Berlin, Germany. The FAU Berlin has come under attack from the city government, which is trying to outlaw the FAU, and from the employers of the Babylon Cinema, where workers are trying to organize. Philadelphia IWW members displayed signs in both English and German expressing solidarity with the FAU. In addition to distributing flyers, branch members sang labor songs and chanted that workers had the right to organize anywhere in the world.

Originally founded in 1919, the FAU has a long history fighting for workers' rights. The international day of action was called to protest a Berlin court ruling on Dec. 11, 2009, that strips the FAU of its right to call itself a union, making their organization illegal. This court ruling was a result of the refusal of the management of the Babylon Mitt Cinema to bargain a contract with the FAU. Rather than negotiate with the FAU, the management claimed that the FAU could not negotiate a contract because the FAU



Philly IWW Demonstrates at the German Consulate on Jan. 29.

Photo: Chris Walters

was not a "legitimate" labor union under German labor law.

Both the mainstream ver.di union, which is a part of the state-backed DGB (German Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) union confederation in Germany, and the former communist "Left Party" (Linkspartei), joined with Babylon Cinema bosses in trying to outlaw the FAU as a union. The staff of the Babylon Cinema refused to go quietly and organized a boycott and protests against the employees, the ver.di union and the Left Party negotiated an ineffective and weak contract with the cinema management that was well below that of the average ver.di union shop.

Not satisfied with the lower court ruling, the Babylon Cinema bosses have continued their legal attacks on the workers, demanding that the FAU's officers be jailed and fined thousands

of euros because they have refused to abandon their union and its members. This would be the first time the FAU has been outlawed in Germany since the Nazis rose to power in 1933 and crushed all independent trade unions.

The Philadelphia IWW made repeated requests for a meeting with the Honorary German Consul, Barbara Afanassiev, with no response. Instead of continuing to wait for an appointment, the Philadelphia IWW decided to stage a picket at the German Consulate in coordination with the day of action. The protest started with an hour of picketing and distributing informational leaflets. After the picketing, two Fellow Workers entered the building to deliver a letter of protest to the consul on the third floor. Security authorities said that the FWs could not go up to the third floor, as "there was no one there to receive them."

One of the IWW members called the

Consul's office, and after several attempts, was connected to Consul Barbara Afanassiev, who then agreed to meet the Fellow Workers in the lobby to receive the letter. Afanassiev was already aware of the IWW picket, and claimed that she had not ignored the requests for a meeting, but had just been too busy to follow through. The branch members delivered the protest letter

in support of the FAU, and Afanassiev said she would forward it to the German Consul General in New York City. A brief exchange ensued, with IWW members making it clear that repression of workers' rights is not acceptable and that this treatment of the FAU cannot continue. Again, Afanassiev stated that she was very powerless in this situation, and that she would forward on the message to the Consul General.

The picket was a great success and the message was conveyed to the German Consul, as well as many others in the building and the general public. The Philadelphia IWW plans to continue to monitor the situation in Berlin, and will keep the pressure on until the repression of the FAU is ended.

For more information and to find out how you can support the FAU, please visit <http://www.fau.org>.

Walt Weber contributed to this story.

# Carmen M. Is Not Alone: The Irresistible Rise Of Grassroots Syndicalism In Greece

By the Greek Waiters' and Cooks' Base Trade Union of Propylea, Athens

The following is a rough translation of the most recent statement by the Greek Waiters' and Cooks' Base Trade Union (σωματείο σεβτιτόρων μαγειρών) about the firing of member Carmen M. in February.

**No Worker Is Alone – War Against The Bosses' War**

Carmen M. is a member of the waiters' and cooks' base trade union in Athens. After returning from a short medical leave she was fired by her boss, Stelios Karezos, owner of VIA VAI, a large coffee shop chain in Athens. At the meetings that followed to arrange for the salary and compensation she was owed, Karezos was provocative against the worker as well as representatives of the base union.

On March 23, the day when the final settlement was to be made, Karezos saw there was a mass presence of members of the union and started photographing them with his digital camera. After a demand from the workers that he delete the photos, he pulled up his shirt to show the gun he was carrying.

The story continued at the local

police station, where the police "suggested" to Carmen that she did not sue her ex-boss because he could countersue her, which would result in all of them being detained overnight. During the entire incident Karezos repeated the phrase "Now you got yourselves into trouble."

The next day, late in the evening, Carmen M. was attacked by persons unknown as she was heading to her home. She was brutally hit on the head and abandoned bleeding and unconscious outside her house. The motive of the attack was not robbery, since Carmen still had her money and phone on her.

On March 26, members of the union and supporters blocked off the entrance for VIA VAI in Athens for many hours while the up-to-that-point provocative boss Karezos hid in the basement. Similar interventions followed at the VIA VAI cafes on Panepistimiou Avenue (opposite Propylea) and on the corner of Mpenaki and Feidiou Street. On the evening of the same day Karezos got in touch with our union, telling us he was willing to pay Carmen the money he owes her and claiming it was all a misunderstanding.

There are obviously no misunderstandings and no isolated incidents. Unpaid overtime, "forgotten" medical insurance contributions, the nonpay-

ment of supplements, firings, and wage decreases are all part of the reality we experience daily in the labor galleys.

Whoever dares to speak of this is faced with, on the one hand, the terrorism of the bosses that includes guns, threats, bouncers and sulfuric acid, and on the other hand the terrorism of unemployment. All these take place at a time when the State, this time under the pretext of the financial crisis, redefines the terms of paid employment in favor of the bosses, institutionalizing the abolition of gained rights and opening a path for the intensification of exploitation and repression.

In this attempt of theirs, the State and the bosses have found as willing allies the leaders of the sold-out trade unions, giving them future government and party positions in exchange. In this direction, the latter sign collective agreements that include the freezing or lowering of wages, ignore the assassinations and butchering of workers, cover for the mega-contractors' businesses, and refuse to call for general strikes. When they do at times call for strikes under the pressure of the workers, they sabotage and repress them. A typical such example was the stance of the General Confederation of Workers (GSEE) at a strike that

took place on March 11, when, in cooperation with the police, it distanced itself from the base unions, which resulted in the attack of the union members by the riot police.

Within this bleak reality, the mass media are on an assignment to try to convince us that it is all happening for our own good. According to the media, "we must all make sacrifices in order for the economy and the country to be saved." As it is well known, the journalist's microphone reaches where the cop's baton can't.

From our own labor experiences, we believe that EACH OF US and ALL OF US TOGETHER must take responsibility for:

- \* the formation of Base Unions in all labor sections where they do not currently exist
  - \* the support of existing Base Unions
  - \* the strengthening of the General Assemblies of workers
  - \* the overcoming of boards of directors and all mechanisms of mediation
  - \* our lives and all that concerns us
- RESISTANCE to the terrorism of the bosses!  
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May Day Salute to honor:

**TOIVO HALONEN**  
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Finnish-American Wobbly  
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Alumnus of IWW's Work Peoples College

~ Harry Siitonen, Bay Area GMB

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# World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email [solidarity@iww.org](mailto:solidarity@iww.org).

By Matt Antosh

## Solidarity Statement with Workers in Struggle in Greece

The International Solidarity Commission (ISC) of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) supports the workers in struggle in Greece and their strike actions in opposition to the threat of “austerity measures” by the Greek government, who claim that those measures are needed to stop the country from going into bankruptcy. We are encouraged to see workers across Greece take a stand against the government’s gamble with their livelihoods and exploitation of their labor. They have taken to the streets and stopped working in a visible and powerful refusal to pay for the mess of the banks and financial speculators.

Rather than acquiesce to the official lie of a nation united in necessary sacrifice for the common good, they have exposed that the working class are not the cause of the crisis. We will not suffer for it. As the slogan goes, in Greece and elsewhere, “we won’t pay for their crisis!” As one of the first countries threatening such wide-sweeping cuts, and in turn verging on bankruptcy in this crisis, the protests of workers in Greece are for us all.

As governments across the world respond to the current recession, fruit of the unfettered gambling by capitalists with the wealth of the earth and the labor of workers everywhere, by further cutting into the subsistence and rights of the working class, we are glad to express our solidarity with the workers of Greece. We are grateful to them for refusing to comply with the lie of “austerity measures,” which amount to the demand of a sacrifice by the poor for the benefit of the rich and for continuing to take a brave stand in the face of police repression.

In the hope that their struggle, which is also a struggle for workers everywhere, may continue and succeed,

the IWW aims to lend our support, by action in solidarity, where it is within our grasp to do so, in our firm knowledge that an injury to one is an injury to all.

## No to Union Repression Against the People and Baby CNT Section

Following a strike aimed to obtain better working conditions and a new direction for professional practices in the childcare field, six workers of the Giono day care center in Paris who had just created a union section, have received notice that they were being laid off.

In order to justify these actions, People & Baby’s management, which owns Giono day care, evoked calls to question the sanitary conditions of the facility. However, none of these employees had previously been subject to any sanction or even a remark about sanitary conditions.

The Work Medical Administration has countered that the sanitary concerns directed at the workers actually concern the management itself! On its side, the Work Inspection Administration has sent a letter to the management, asking it to withdraw its sanctions. The parents have also shown their support for the employees, as they were extremely satisfied with the current staff and its pedagogical project. The parents were shocked that their children could be put into the care of an entirely new staff.

Today, the management confirms its will to fire most of the employees of the Giono day care center! In response to this violent act from the management against employees, we have to act.

We invite you to join the international campaign led by the CNT by sending protest emails to the management of People & Baby: [odile.broglin@people-and-baby.com](mailto:odile.broglin@people-and-baby.com), [anne-laure.prieur@people-and-baby.com](mailto:anne-laure.prieur@people-and-baby.com), [emmanuel.dussolier@people-and-baby.com](mailto:emmanuel.dussolier@people-and-baby.com). And please CC the emails to [sectionpetb@cnt-f.org](mailto:sectionpetb@cnt-f.org) and [fede.sante-social@cnt-f.org](mailto:fede.sante-social@cnt-f.org).

sick. Management has warned staff that anyone who takes time off sick on strike days will be considered to be on strike and will be disciplined and have their pay docked.

Meanwhile, BA management could face opposition on both sides of the Atlantic. Senior figures at Unite have been meeting with their counterparts in the U.S. Teamsters. Teamsters Airline Division Director Captain David Bourne condemned the combativity and bad intentions of British Airways management over the weekend and issued a statement promising that “should events cause the cabin attendants to be forced to strike, we will support them in any way possible in the U. S. cities that are served by British Airways.”

What this support would mean in concrete terms is unclear, and could range from demonstrations at airports serviced by BA to boycotts of scabbing BA flights by the ground crews represented by the Teamsters (though legal action from the airline is a possibility for workers taking legal action). Unite has also approached unions in Italy, France, Spain and Germany, and according to the media has received commitments of solidarity from them. Secondary action

## French Workers Threaten To Blow Up Factory

By John Kalwaic

Around 40 workers of the Sodimatex car parts factory near Paris threatened to blow up their factory on April 2. This was due to a redundancy pay dispute. The workers have claimed that management owed them more than €15,000. For a week prior to the threat, workers barricaded themselves in the factory. The Sodimatex workers threatened to blow up the factory many times because of disputes in redundancy pay. This action came on the eve of the conservative party’s election defeat in parliament.

There is a new wave of strikes in the transportation sector. Strikes happened with sea ferry workers and other transportation workers in France to protest President Nicolas Sarkozy’s neo-liberal reforms. Hundreds of thousands of peo-



Photo: theepochtimes.com

Several thousand people demonstrate on March 23 in Rennes, western France, as part of a nationwide day of protest against job and wage cuts the high cost of living, and plans for pension reform. Most of France’s unions joined forces to organize strikes in dozens of cities, stepping up pressure on President Sarkozy after his government reshuffle in response to a stinging regional election.

ple came to protest reforms in March. French workers have threatened to blow up factories months ago over redundancies as the global economy started to collapse. It appears the wave of factory occupations and threats of explosions will continue.

## Chinese Workers Engage In First “Bossnapping”

By John Kalwaic

Chinese guest workers took nine of their bosses hostage in the oil-rich Gulf state of Bahrain near a construction site in Zallaq, south of the capital city of Manama. The workers, who were employees of the state-owned China State Construction Engineering Corporation, were acting against the fact that they were underpaid. They had staged a wildcat strike a week before. Bahraini police stormed the

barricade of the worker housing where the workers were holding their bosses after Chinese diplomats refused to intervene on behalf of the employers.

The workers claimed that they were underpaid and mistreated by the nine bosses they kidnapped. This incident was the first of its kind in Bahrain, one of the few Gulf states where unions are legal. The bosses who were kidnapped are not planning to press charges.

## Beer Workers Strike To Oppose New Regulations

From [libcom.org](http://libcom.org)

On April 8, scores of Carlsberg workers walked off their jobs in protest after the Danish brewer tightened laid-back rules on workplace drinking and removed beer coolers from work sites.

The warehouse and production workers in Denmark are rebelling against the company’s new alcohol policy. Previously, they could help themselves to beer throughout the day from coolers placed around the work sites, with the only restriction being “that you could not be drunk at work. It was up to

each and everyone to be responsible,” a company spokesman said. Carlsberg now wants to restrict this to lunch time only.

Around 800 workers went on strike Wednesday and around 250 walked off their jobs Thursday, resulting in interruptions to beer transports in and around Copenhagen.

Carlsberg’s truck drivers joined the strike in sympathy—even though they are exempt from the new rules, although by longstanding policy their trucks have alcohol ignition locks, preventing them from driving drunk.

## BA Strikes: Management Ups Its Bullying As The Dispute Goes International

From [libcom.org](http://libcom.org)

Prior to the British Airways (BA) strike that began in late March by members of the labor union Unite, management furthered its attacks on the workforce, while the airline faced international solidarity with BA workers.

With an election on the horizon, the two powerful British parties are attempting to outdo each other by attacking the BA cabin crew looking to defend their terms and conditions. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, whose party’s biggest donor is Unite the Union, has called the strike “unjustified and deplorable.” The Tories, damaged by revelations over the embarrassing tax-dodging of their major donor, Lord Ashcroft, have claimed that the labor force is hobbled by powerful unions, or the “the new militant tendency.” Meanwhile, the media and business has clamored for the government to stop the strike, which has a huge democratic mandate from Unite members.

BA management has upped the stakes by threatening to sack the Unite shop stewards at the heart of the dispute. Seven members of Bassa (Unite’s cabin crew branch) face disciplinary charges over their role, charges which BA has refused to drop in the course of negotiations. On top of this, bosses are targeting workers who are attempting to avoid disciplinary action for refusing to cross picket lines by calling in

appears likely in Europe, in the form of boycotts or go-slows from ground staff, flight staff and air traffic controllers, depending on the laws in place in each country.

Though the strike is beginning to assume the status of a set piece battle between macho management and workers looking to defend their terms and conditions, Unite should not go without criticism for its

attempts to act like a junior management partner and impose a pay cut on its membership. It is true that management have acted in bad faith in negotiations. For instance, last week management had the union put an offer forward to its members, only to retract the same offer after the fact. Nonetheless Unite’s own offer meant a 2 percent pay cut for many BA workers, ostensibly in order to save jobs. Unsurprisingly, management and the right-wing media have pounced on this to split BA workers. BA management have described the offer as “morally wrong” for the pay cut involved, and have eagerly recruited scab “volunteers” to staff strike-breaking flights. The union has accepted management’s terms of reference—that one way or another, front-line workers have to pay for the airline’s losses. From Unite’s perspective, the dispute is over the form these cuts will take and how much “consultation” the

union gets in the process. This is likely not what staff had in mind when they voted overwhelmingly for strike action.

The other important aspect of this dispute is the fact it has already proven to be the testing ground for a new crop of employer-instigated strikebreaking activities. In particular, it was back in December that the BA cabin crew initially voted to strike. Turnout was high and workers voted 9-to-1 in favor of action over the Christmas holiday. Management then went to the courts and, based on various legal technicalities, secured an injunction against the strike. Unite, despite the incredible mandate it received from its members, quickly capitulated. Besides giving up the bargaining power workers would have had by striking over BA’s busiest time, Unite refused to actually confront the U.K.’s blatantly anti-worker legal system by going ahead with industrial action. Since then many other employers, not the least of which is Transport for London (who operate the London Underground), have used the exact same tactics to prevent strikes.

All these issues notwithstanding, the anger, determination and militancy of the BA cabin crew is clear. For the bravery they have shown in defending their working conditions in the face of an employers’ onslaught, they deserve our full support and solidarity.



Photo: libcom.org