

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER



OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

December 2011 #1741 Vol. 108 No. 10 \$2/ £2/ €2

**Legal Victory for Jimmy John's Workers**

5

**A Debate on Collective Bargaining & the IWW**

2&7

**Reports on the Oakland General Strike**

8-9

**A Critical Perspective of Social Unrest in Greece**

12

## Wobbly Cleaners Fight Back Against Sodexo

**From the London IWW Cleaners and Allied Industries Branch (IU 640)**

On Nov. 7, protests took place around the world in solidarity with cleaners (janitors) who work at the City of London Corporation's Guildhall, employed on contracts by the French-based corporation Sodexo.

The vast majority of cleaners at the Guildhall are members of the IWW. In the summer of 2011, the cleaners waged a successful campaign to secure months of unpaid wages and won reinstatement for a victimized trade union member (see "London IWW Cleaners Fight Back," on page 1 of the September *IW*). Since then the cleaners have been campaigning to secure justice on pay, equality and respect at work.

**Sodexo pays poverty wages**

The Corporation of the City of London, who hires Sodexo, is the richest lo-

cal authority in the United Kingdom. It encompasses the foremost financial center of the world. Yet these employers refuse to pay cleaners the London living wage of a mere £8.30 per hour—despite it being officially recognized by the Greater London Authority that a wage earner paid less will be living in poverty.

**A double standard**

When Sodexo took over the contract at Guildhall, they suspended the IWW representative Wilmer Cardenas, who faces dismissal. He has been accused of being "aggressive," simply for being outspoken in defense of fellow workers. In contrast, managers who have been accused of threatening workers with violence, including abusive and bullying treatment—including locking a woman up for two-hours—have seen no such robust action by Sodexo.

**Continued on 6** Sodexo workers picket on Nov. 7 in London.



Photo: Valerios Theofanidis

## Strike At World's Biggest Hotel

**By Monika Vykoukal**

Thirty-five maids at the four-star hotel Novotel Les Halles in Paris have been on strike for better working conditions since Oct. 6 (at press time). These maids are fighting for conditions equivalent to those enjoyed by staff directly employed by the hotel's owner, Accor—the largest hotel group in the world.

While lengthy strikes at several Accor hotels by cleaners in past years, particularly in 2004, led the former Director of Human Resources to state that ACCOR "want[ed] to internalize cleaning in our hotels," conditions seem to not have improved since then. The predominantly migrant women are given a target of rooms to clean per hour, leading to arduous workloads and an eventual pay of around €3 per room cleaned.

The strikers are represented by the unions Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques (SUD) and the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), with support from the Confédération Nationale du Travail, France (CNT-F) Nettoyage—the cleaners union—as well as an informal

collective and activists from a range of feminist organizations. They remain lively, with a steady racket of percussion and chanting, broadcasting their struggle for almost a month now, inside the hotel lobby and out in the front. Rather than seriously negotiate, Accor and Sin & Stes (the maids' employer, which is owned by the subcontracting company Elior) have so far tended to make mere token gestures—such as offering an increase of €25 for the end of year bonus—and have sought to deflect responsibility. Meanwhile, they have also suppressed the spirited protests by taking their delegate and the strikers to court in an effort to have their protests removed from the hotel's lobby.

CGT members at the union's luxury hotel branch made significant donations to the strike funds, while a solidarity collective organized surprise picnics in the lobbies of Accor hotels to garner the support of visitors and raise the profile of the strike. Donations also came from fellow workers in Nebraska and Frankfurt, which were received with great excitement at this

**Continued on 6**

## Whole Foods Shut Down In Oakland

**By X361943 and X359217**

In the weeks leading up to the Oakland General Strike on Nov. 2, Wobblies across the bay in San Francisco circulated agitational leaflets calling on workers in unorganized shops to "sick out" for the day. The city, under pressure from local labor groups, adopted a sick leave policy in 2006 which entitles most employees to paid days off if they're sick or caring for a sick family member. We recognized that most workers in San Francisco don't belong to unions and could probably not pull off an official strike, so we appealed to them to sick out en masse and potentially get paid for withholding their labor. This approach was received with enthusiasm by many workers and it encouraged several to sick out on the day of the general strike.

One particular group of workers we targeted was the low-wage food and retail sector. As it turned out, it was in that sector that we forced the first workplace shut-down during the strike. We approached a group of radical workers in the morning who we heard had called out of work from their food service job to participate

in the strike. Their coworkers, whom they had agitated to call out as well, expressed a desire to join the strike but reported to work instead for fear of retaliation from their notoriously abusive management. We were told that if a picket went up at their workplace, the workers would feel more emboldened to walk out.

Wobblies jumped on the opportunity. We coordinated with a contingent of 25-30 militant organizers from a few different radical organizations to march the few blocks from the main rally to Whole Foods, splitting up along the way to avoid being routed by security or police. Our arrival was timed for the beginning of the lunch rush, and we converged inside the store at 11:30 a.m. Massing suddenly inside the doors, we called out the customers and chanted "Let them strike, it's their right!" Overwhelmed, management conceded and told us they'd shut down and pay the workers the full day's wage. For our own assurance, we stayed and threw up a lively picket at the entrance while the boss locked the doors, keeping the workers

**Continued on 8**

## Forming A Larger Union For The Service Industry

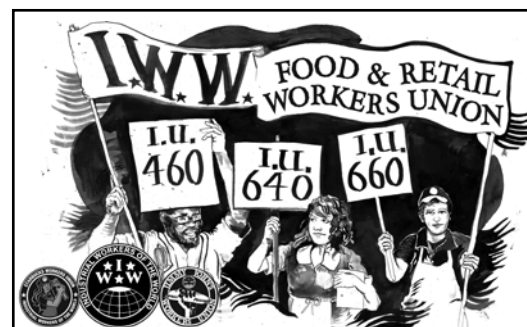
**By Cedar Larson**

On the weekend of Oct. 21-23, the IWW brought together members organizing in Industrial Unions (IUs) 460, 640 and 660 in Portland, Ore. These IUs embody foodstuff workers, general retail distribution workers and restaurant/hotel/building service workers. By and large, the highest concentration of the workers in attendance represented campaigns within restaurants and grocery stores ranging from public drives, such as the Starbucks Workers Union and the Jimmy John's Workers Union, to non-public campaigns at other big box stores as well as small individual shops across North America.

Throughout the weekend, these fellow workers gathered formally and informally to swap stories and knowledge of shop-floor organizing, build solidarity through

discussion of union and workplace issues, and create a strengthened network of Wobbly organizers across North America through the official founding of the IWW body of Food and Retail Workers United. Delegations of organizers came from Portland, Seattle, Kansas City, the Bay Area, the Twin Cities, Baltimore and Richmond,

**Continued on 11**



Graphic: Portland IWW

Industrial Worker  
PO Box 180195  
Chicago, IL 60618, USA

ISSN 0019-8870  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Periodicals Postage

PAID

Chicago, IL  
and additional  
mailing offices

Photo: Valerios Theofanidis



# A View From The Bottom At Walmart

By X372624

You're sitting in a small, cramped room with several strangers. You're anxious, and you don't know what to expect. You've heard rumors; everyone has heard the rumors. Eventually a lady walks in. She pops a DVD in and quickly gives an uneasy explanation: "Just to be clear, we're not anti-union...We're simply pro-individual!"

Welcome to Walmart.

It's been three long years since I first laid my eyes on that dreaded video. At the time, I was still learning of the class struggle. However, my experience and knowledge of unions was elementary at best. What I saw that day, though, I'll remember for the rest of my life.

Walmart, the largest private employer in the world, has over 2 million workers at its disposal. Almost every single worker (oh wait, I mean "associate") has laid eyes onto this anti-union video. It uses the typical rhetoric: "unions will drive up prices, they will steal your paycheck, they are bad for business, they'll donate money to candidates you don't vote for!" They keep emphasizing to you in the video: "Trust us, we're not against unions. Even some of our own customers belong to a union! We simply believe in the individual, rather than forcing a third party to filter your ideas." They go on and on about how a union is an evil third-party that is simply there to kill business, along with your paycheck.

It's funny because the last time I checked, unions started off as grassroots, organic workers' movements. The original idea behind a union is that we, the workers, are being exploited and only we can move forward together. If we tried this Walmart approach, the whole "one-on-one, don't worry we won't fire you if you complain!" idea, then we are stuck in the rut we are in now. The workers have the same interests, the same paychecks, the same workload, the same workplace, everything. So why should we all ask for our crumbs from the table separately?

I've seen some messed up stuff working at Walmart for three years—I would

call it "bureaucratic hyper-capitalism." Long, pretentious term aside, Walmart is the embodiment of what capitalism has transformed into during the past three decades in the First World. The company is vehemently anti-union; it understaffs stores; it provides unfair and unreliable schedules to its workers—thus denying many new recruits full-time status and therefore no benefits; and it pays a lower wage than most of its competitors. This is the world of neoliberal economics: to employ as few people as possible! Why run a stress-free front end with 10 cashiers when you can have three mentally-exhausted, stressed-out workers running it? The lines flow to the jewelry counter, to those familiar with Walmart layouts. I've seen the worst of it and this isn't fair to either the worker or the customer. In the hot summer, by the time a worker is done ringing up a fair-share of groceries, the customer's frozen food is already defrosting. Walmart brags about its customer service, but respect for the customer and my fellow workers is the least of the company's priorities.

But do you know what is truly sad? That customer will keep coming back, despite leaving disappointed and frustrated every time. Along with that customer, the underpaid, overworked employee will drag their feet back in everyday as well. There is a stereotype of Walmart workers being lazy, but having worked at four (yes, literally four) Walmart locations, I can say without a doubt that this is far from the truth. Why does this worker, who has no say in the workplace, who receives small paychecks and topsy-turvy scheduling, keep coming back? It's because in the world of neoliberalism, there aren't many choices. Sure, we have many places to shop at, but their business "ethics" are all the same. Go ahead and try working at Target—it is simply Walmart but painted in red. Workers at Target and other stores face the same problems: anti-union propaganda, small paychecks, and no respect.

However, despite all my ranting, I have



Graphic: edu.glogster.com

yet to touch upon another key aspect of Walmart's fine personality: bureaucracy! It's a word people tend to stray from, but I figured I would take a shot at it. At a company where efficiency and customer service is supposed to be on top of their list, they sure like to take their sweet time when it comes to treating their employees right. These may be petty examples, but you must remember that Walmart will fight any battle at any cost.

When I started my first day at the location where I work, there was a problem with the time clock. I eventually ended up missing a day's pay on my check. To them \$80 may not seem like anything, but to me it can make the difference between being evicted or not. I politely told my new manager of the problem, and boom, I was hit with a response of: "That's not my problem, go tell so-and-so..." Well, so-and-so didn't work that day, so I mentioned it the next time I saw her, three days later. Of course, it wasn't her problem either—it was personnel's problem! I called personnel the next day, and of course the game picked up again: a new maze I must find my way through. This process kept up for weeks, where I would call, and the "correct" person wouldn't be working, or would be at lunch, or they wrote down

my name to keep note of it. Funny how all these notes keep disappearing. I kept it up, because of the principle that these fuckers shouldn't be allowed to get away with taking someone's pay whenever they wish to. I started waiting around in the personnel office everyday to get the message across, and eventually they said the money would be on my next paycheck. When I received that back-pay, I counted the days. It took over six weeks to receive one mere day of pay. When I first raised the issue, they said they would probably take me to the cash office and pay me upfront.

Walmart raises serious concerns in confronting issues head-on: they treat their customers poorly, they treat their workers horribly, and when faced with an issue it suddenly isn't their problem. I have a laundry-list of complaints that I have mentioned and some that I haven't—such as illegal toxic dumping, sexism and racism), but when I face issues like these quite frequently, I hope it at least gives you the idea that Walmart's ruling class of lazy managers are simply useless and suck up all the wealth for themselves.

I see workers being discouraged from having no control. It's bad enough that they can't pay their bills, but when they do need one day off from work, the request is often denied. Workers have no control over their workplaces or their lives. However, this can be changed. We can make the change.

With a union, we can combat these issues together. We all strive for the same interests and solutions. We are weak alone, but we are strong together. Nothing can be accomplished if we all decide not to work. The truck cannot be unloaded, the shelves will remain empty, and no money can be taken in for corporate profits.

The solidarity I see at Walmart is quite amazing sometimes. We understand each other's problems when we know we'll be stuck at the cash register all night, and that will result in being yelled at in the morning for not having our originally planned work done (yes, Walmart under-staffs by having people run up to the register everyday). We understand low pay and no respect. We understand heavy lifting and unnecessary criticism. We're sick of it. We run this store. Someday it will belong to us. Organize!

## 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.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Post Code, Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Subscribe to the Industrial Worker

Raise eyebrows! Get ideas!

**10 issues for:**

- US \$18 for individuals.
- US \$22 for institutions.
- US \$30 for internationals.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/PC \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: PO Box 180195,  
Chicago IL 60618 USA

Subscribe Today!

# A Wobbly Speech From Occupy Portland

By Tabatha

Hello. My name is Tabatha. I'm a mother, a student and a worker. I'm here as a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. We refer to ourselves as Wobblies. I've been thinking a lot about wealth, lately, as I'm sure y'all have been as well. I've been thinking about where it has come from in the United States, and how it has accumulated. It started here by theft of land from indigenous peoples. Sacred land had been stolen and continues to be stolen to build up this accumulation of wealth. This is the origin of wealth in the United States in the form of real property. For each treaty that is broken, that wealth grows. Wealth is the accumulation of stolen lands.

From there this land was populated with slaves—people stolen from their families, from their land. For each child that was torn from their mother, that wealth grew. Immigrants from the world over came and continue to come to this country, driven from their own countries by poverty that has a direct line to the wealthy in this country. These immigrants worked and continue to work in some of this country's worst conditions. When they organize, and they do, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is called and immigrant communities are torn apart. For each immigrant that suffers terrible working conditions in fear of being imprisoned or deported if they organize, that wealth grows. Wealth is the accumulation of stolen people.

Workers in this country go without healthcare. We are told that we are lucky to have a job. Lucky, while our families literally die for want of needed medicine. For each death due to negligence of our country to take care of our own, that wealth grows. As our homes are taken from us and given to banks, the wealth in this country continues to grow. Wealth is the accumulation of desperation.

Wealth, then, isn't just an accumulation of money. It is the accumulation of

human suffering due to capitalism.

I do not wish for wealth to be more fairly distributed. I do not wish for the 1 percent to be 5, or 10 or even 20 percent. I yearn with every piece of my being for wealth to stop. I ache for a world where we take care of each other and our planet. I look around at what we have now and am consumed with sorrow. But there is hope.

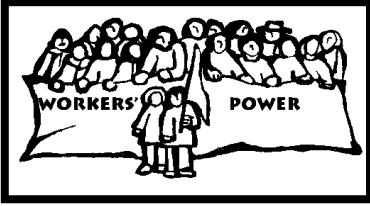
There's a saying in the IWW that originated when one of our organizers was unjustly murdered by the state: "Don't mourn, organize."

The wealthy in this country are powerful. They have resources and they are guarded by the military and the police. We all pay for the police with our taxes. They are paid to protect us. Instead they oppress us and protect the wealthy

that is destroying our lives, our earth. At times, the totality of their power is overwhelming. But we know how to overcome it. We know what the path out of this is. We've used it in the past, as workers. We organized and went on strike. And when we went on those strikes, we got children out of factories; we fought and won breaks and weekends. We fought for this, and we took it, because it was rightfully ours. And how we did this was to join together and refuse to work for them. We refused to give them our labor for their profit. A general strike, where every worker everywhere refuses to work is the vision of Wobblies. We know that if we cease to line the pockets of our oppressors, they are weakened. They need us. We already know how to make everything we need; they don't know how to do anything.

The people in Oakland know this. They are calling that all workers refuse to work today. And we are here in support of them. We know that when all workers refuse to work in solidarity with each other, we can change the world. We know this, because we already have.

The key to our liberation in each other's hands: we must join together and free ourselves.



# A Visit With FW Joe Monson

By Neil Parthun

I recently had an opportunity to interview veteran mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Jeff "The Snowman" Monson over email.

Most *Industrial Worker* readers will wonder why space has been given to a profile of an MMA fighter and another sports story. While some see just another athlete, many others will see a man who has a Bachelor's and Master's degree in psychology, a man who has inked his body with Wobbly tattoos and anarchist images, a fellow worker in our One Big Union and an outspoken advocate for a more just and peaceful world.

Prior to his MMA career, Monson had spent time as a mental health professional in crisis evaluation and as a child/family counselor. When I asked him about this period of his life, he said, "I greatly enjoyed my time as a mental health professional. I worked with kids, families and the severely mentally ill during a seven-year span. I think it is an overlooked need in society in helping those with mental illness."

He wrote further about his experience with how mental health and social services were treated financially: "the money allocated to our agencies kept getting cut year after year." Monson also put the blame where it belonged: "The problem is the financial system—capitalism. It is a viral system where greed and exploitation are seen as positive traits. The first systems to fail are those that do not contribute wealth, i.e., education, health care, social service programs, etc."

Monson also spoke about how he began thinking more liberally while in college "after taking some community psychology courses." But it was his early experiences as a mixed martial artist that really influ-

enced some of his radical politics. "The Snowman" told me that it was "traveling to different parts of the world and seeing the destructive forces of capitalistic globalization [that] really got me involved in learning more about anarchism."

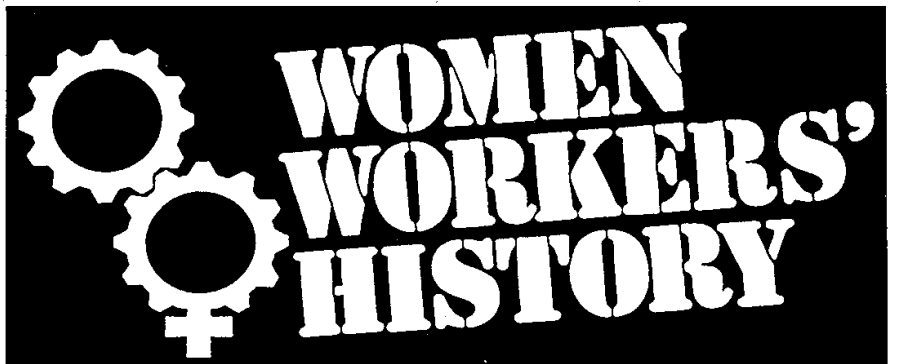
Monson has participated in numerous activist campaigns, opposed the U.S. war in Iraq and took part in the 2008 Republican National Convention protests in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn. When I asked him if his imposing size and tattooed body influence how police treat him, he responded, "I know that my presence gets the attention of the police and security. Honestly, this is the only time I really think about my size or appearance, and I do want them to take notice. I think it is important to speak with intelligence and demonstrate calmness during these protests, as it adds validity to the actual action of protesting."

He also spoke about the Occupy movement and said that he has "great hope that they can continue to grow until people realize that they are the ones with power and something truly great happens, such as shutting down the NYSE [New York Stock Exchange] or a general strike."

When I mentioned the criticism that professional athletes were not workers, Monson offered the following: "It is a job, no doubt. If it were easy, then a lot more people would be professional athletes. However, that being said, I do love my job and I feel blessed to have a job that I enjoy. I don't think many people do the work that really makes them happy."

In an interview with MMA Fighting.com, Monson took the idea even further.

"I'm like everybody else. I live in a capitalist system, so that's what I have to do...I may not like it or agree with it, but that's our society. I'm trying to change it,



## Chapter 49

## Triangle Tragedy

Few New York garment shops resisted workers' demands for union recognition and higher wages any more bitterly than the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. Scarcely a year after the Uprising of the 20,000 (see Chapters 47 and 48), Triangle's greed and hostility to unions became responsible for one of the greatest tragedies in labor history.

On Saturday, March 25, 1911, a muffled explosion from inside the Asch building drew curious passers-by to the corner of Washington Place and Greene Street. Smoke, then flame, could be seen coming from the eighth floor, the middle floor of three used by the Triangle Shirtwaist Co.

Suddenly, what one onlooker thought was a "bale of dark dress goods" came hurtling from the eighth floor; then another, and another. These were not bundles of cloth, but women fleeing the flames.

The one fire escape quickly collapsed from the weight of women rushing from the ninth floor, where the fire started. Others, their hair and clothing on fire, jumped to their deaths. The fire swept through the sweatshop so quickly that some women were later found at their workbenches.

The tragedy took the lives of 145 women and girls, most of them immigrants.

THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST CO. FIRE  
SISTERS MINE, OH MY SISTERS; BRETHREN,  
HEAR MY SORROW;  
SEE WHERE THE DEAD ARE HIDDEN IN DARK CORNERS  
WHERE LIFE IS CHOKED FROM THOSE WHO LABOR;  
OH, WOE IS ME, AND WOE IS TO THE WORLD...  
- MORRIS ROSENFELD



Doors were locked to keep workers in and union organizers out. Floors were stuffed with flammable material. There were no sprinklers. There had never been a fire drill. Still, the owners were found "not guilty" on charges of manslaughter. Commented one newspaper: "Capital can commit no crime when it is in pursuit of profits."

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

but I'm not a hypocrite either. I know that I have to earn money to pay bills. I just happen to have a job that I enjoy, and I do feel blessed. If I could make any job for myself, this would be one of them...

"At the same time, these people paying me to fight, they're making a hell of a lot more off the fighters than they're paying them. They're doing it to make a profit. In essence, they're stealing from me. It's like someone working in a shoe factory making shoes, that person doesn't get paid what those shoes are worth. They get paid a fraction of it. They [are] paid the minimum they [need to] stay living and employed and keep them from quitting.

They're wage slaves, just like I'm a wage slave," he concluded.

His final statements were amazingly strong and were very inspiring.

"No matter what our profession, title, income, etc., we are all united together as human beings. We have the capacity to do wonderful things, whether inventing a new technology or running 100 meters in less than 10 seconds. We should never settle for the status quo [of] 'It's not a good system, but it's the best we have' mentality. That apathetic, lazy approach is the worst of us. We owe it to ourselves as a society and our human distinction to strive to make life as good as it can be for even the least of us."

## Wobbly News Shorts

# Phoenix IWW Supports Indonesian Miners

By the Phoenix IWW

Thousands of striking copper and gold miners have been blockading the Grasberg mine in West Papua, Indonesia, since Sept. 15. These miners are demanding wage increases from their current \$2.10 per hour to the modest wage of \$7.50. Violence by the Indonesian military has been severe as soldiers, acting as security for the mining company, attempt to clear the blockade and break the strike. Eight demonstrators have been killed so far in this bitter struggle over the conditions at the world's second largest copper mine.

These strikers are waging a battle against global mining giant Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. (FCX). For those of us here in Arizona, "The Copper State," this fight has particular significance. Not only is Freeport's global headquarters located in downtown Phoenix, but Freeport purchased notorious Arizona mining villain, and IWW nemesis, Phelps-Dodge, in 2007.

On Oct. 21, the Phoenix IWW held a picket and rally in solidarity with the Indonesian miners and against Freeport-McMoRan's low wages and brutal repression. Approximately 100 people picketed in solidarity that afternoon and media agencies picked up the story as it traveled to Indonesia overnight. Officials from the Indonesian miners' union, FSP-KEP, sent solidarity messages thanking the IWW and a dozen Papuan activists have found the Phoenix IWW's website in an effort to make a personal connection.

This rally was a model coalition-building event in that it was co-organized by East Timor and Indonesian Action Network (ETAN) members and Occupy Phoenix. It was also supported by pro-migrant activists and 25 mine workers, members of the United Steelworkers (USW) union, who drove two hours to walk the picket line in front of Freeport's corporate offices.

Asked his thoughts on the Indonesian



Photo: Phoenix IWW

miners' strike, local USW official Manny Armenta said, "All they're trying to do is make an honest living and the Steelworkers are in support of that and want to help them out." Armenta and his fellow workers organized their delegation from Kearny, Mammoth, and other nearby mining towns. These miners work for Asarco, a subsidiary of mining corporation Grupo Mexico (GMEXICOB), at their open pit mine and processing facilities east of Phoenix and Tucson.

Armenta stressed the connection between the actions of their bosses, Grupo Mexico, and the actions of Freeport-McMoRan. "The killings that they are doing down in Indonesia against the miners that are on strike," said Armenta, "is no different than what Grupo Mexico has done to miners in Mexico." The USW have been supporting striking miners in Cananea, Sonora since 2007.

In addition to violently breaking the miners' unions in The Great Arizona Copper Strike of 1983-1986, it will be remembered that Phelps-Dodge (now Freeport-McMoRan) is the company responsible for forcibly deporting 1,000 striking IWW miners out of Bisbee, Ariz. in 1917. We also hold this corporation responsible for the death of FW James Brew, who refused to be deported, and for the death of the sheriff's deputy, Orson McRae, who, under orders from Phelps-Dodge, attempted to illegally remove an armed IWW miner from his home.

## Perth Wobblies Protest War Criminals

By Jake Scholes

Members of the IWW in Perth, Australia protested a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) meeting on Oct. 28. The CHOGM meeting included 54 representatives from the Commonwealth nations, including Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is responsible for murder of 40,000 Tamil civilians during



Photo: Jake Scholes

2009. Our message was that despot war criminals are not welcome here and that

the \$100 million it cost to host the event was a waste of taxpayer money.

## Update On The Ottawa Busker Appeal

By Peter Moore

When the City of Ottawa installed speakers and started broadcasting muzak in Raymond Loomer's favorite underpass, he cut the speaker wires one day in May 2009. He then taped the wire on the office door of the Downtown Rideau Business Improvement Area, a business lobby group that has waged a campaign to remove street people and performers from the city center.

As a tin flute player, he was one of several buskers (street musicians) who relied on the unique acoustics of the downtown Ottawa underpass near the Rideau Centre to make a living. Loomer is a member of the IWW. He did not take kindly to having his live music replaced by a machine.

City police arrested Loomer and charged him with two counts of mischief. He was convicted on May 25, 2010 with a sentence of 12 months probation and 20 hours community service. He is now facing 30 days in jail for refusing to do the community service.

The courts are calling his refusal "flagrant disregard." Loomer's appeal will be heard on Jan. 18, 2012.

One barrier to his appeal is the cost of a court-produced transcript of his trial. According to Loomer, the transcript costs \$500, which is money he doesn't have. He thinks that this requirement should be waived for low-income people who earn less than \$30,000 per year. He has asked for help from Legal Aid Ontario to buy

# Jimmy John's Workers Make Headway

By David Feldmann

For several years, the IWW has had an active organizing drive in Jimmy John's sandwich shops, most notably in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn. (the Twin Cities). Earlier this year, six Jimmy John's workers were fired, ostensibly for violating the company's attendance policy regarding sick days. The workers were all IWW members who had been involved in attempts to publicize the food safety concerns of Jimmy John's sandwich makers in the Twin Cities. Naturally, the union members contend that they were targeted because of their involvement with the IWW and not because of their attempts to call in sick without finding someone to cover their shift (the contentious policy in question). On Nov. 4, Erik Forman, longtime IWW member and Jimmy John's worker, announced that "the NLRB [National Labor Relation Board] is going to file a complaint against Jimmy John's on every single charge we filed against them."

The Jimmy John's campaign went public in 2010 after a long period of clandestine organizing activity. In October of that year, the first fast food workers' union in the United States lost a union election (85 in favor, 87 against) after franchise owner Mike Mulligan spent more than \$84,000 on union busting, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. IWW members argued that Mulligan, who owns ten Jimmy John's stores in the Twin Cities, broke labor laws in trying to stifle the union's presence and influence. This position was reinforced by the NLRB, who threw out the election results in January 2011 after declaring Mulligan had, among other things, lied to employees about the union and unlawfully retaliated against IWW members. To date, the IWW hasn't



Graphic: Jimmy Johns Workers Union called for another election, but has instead focused on exposing alleged health code violations at Jimmy John's locations and getting the fired workers reinstated at the fast food chain. After the results of the NLRB investigation were announced, the Jimmy John's union proclaimed that all "six fired organizers will go back to work, with back pay, hopefully within the next few months."

For a labor union that has historically eschewed legal recognition, the IWW has been surprisingly successful at convincing the NLRB that they are in the right, not just in regards to Jimmy John's but also in the more established campaign to organize baristas at Starbucks (the IWW has won even more legal victories in that struggle). Time will tell whether the IWW can withstand the onslaught of anti-union tactics employed by Mulligan and the rest of Jimmy John's management in the Twin Cities and continue to expand the union. Now that the NLRB decision has strengthened their resolve, this prospect seems very likely indeed.

## FW Chomsky Speaks On Rebellious Media

By Carlos Guarita

Fellow Worker Noam Chomsky gave the keynote speech at the Rebellious Media Conference, held in London on Oct. 8-9. Over 1,000 people met to strengthen radical media, including journalists, video-makers, generators of radical internet content and activists from as far afield as Spain, Slovenia and the United States.

Other speakers included veteran war correspondent John Pilger and Michael Albert from Z Communications, while dozens of discussion workshops addressed issues like internet and cell phone surveillance, community newspapers, blogging, and mainstream coverage of the wars.

The conference was organized by a coalition of U.K.-based magazines including *Peace News*, *Ceasefire*, *Red Pepper*, and media groups such as the National Union of Journalists, Under-



Photo: Carlos Guarita

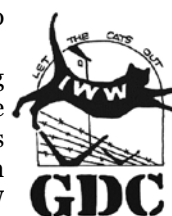
currents and visionOntv. The conference was based on the premise that "For radical social change movements to succeed, they will need radical media organizations to provide channels for information, insight and internal debate. In turn, for radical media organizations to develop and thrive, they need to be part of movements for radical social

the transcript, but had no response yet.

He will be pressuring the courts to waive the fee so that he can launch his appeal. He has refused an offer of help from IWW General Defense Committee Local 6, saying that "it's their responsibility to pay for it, not yours."

While Loomer is an active volunteer in the community, he refused to do 20 hours of community service with the Salvation Army because he says it is forced labor sponsored by the state and benefiting a church organization.

For more information, visit <http://www.ottawaiww.org>.



# WANTED:

IWs from 1943 and earlier. Please send any PDFs of cartoons featuring Olly Garch or Pluto Crat to: [plebs.col@virgin.net](mailto:plebs.col@virgin.net)

Special

# Wobbly Cleaners Fight Back Against Sodexo

Continued from 1

## Management nepotism

For years cleaners at Guildhall have witnessed the management operating a system of favoritism with promotions and the allocation of work. Family and friends of bosses have been given the best jobs, access to higher wages and opportunities for promotion to become supervisors.

## Defending union rights

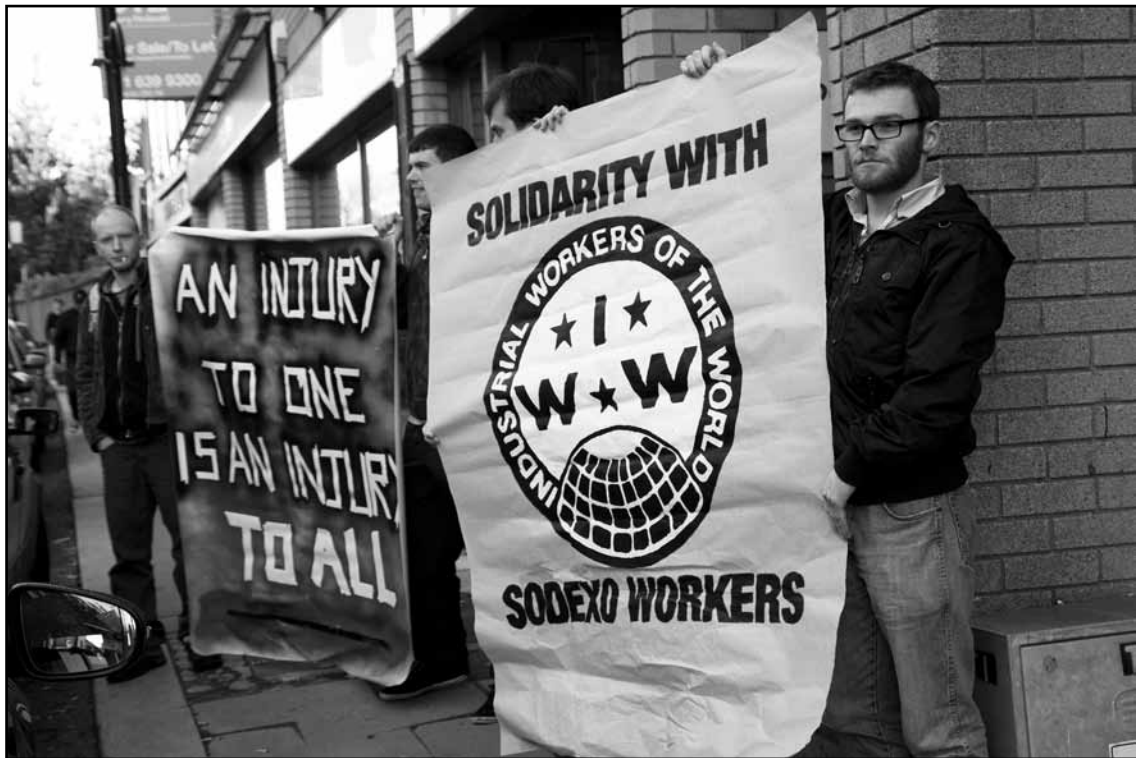
When Sodexo took over the contract, they made an agreement with the IWW to tackle the issues of inequality by the end of September, and they assured the union that there would be robust action against abusive managers. While the IWW kept its part of the agreement to suspend demonstrations, Sodexo did not fulfill their promises. They cheated the cleaners. Many union members continue to be the subject of hostility by bosses. Those who led the union campaign against unpaid wages have been targeted for revenge. Some who complain

are made to clean toilets day after day. Meanwhile, workers who present medical evidence have been forced to do tasks that can make their conditions worse.

Sodexo wants one thing—flexibility. They want workers who will obey their every command. IWW cleaners will not suffer in silence! They are fighting back and demanding:

- An end to bullying, abuse and nepotism
- No more victimization of IWW union activists
- The London living wage of £8.30 per hour

*Note: Solidarity demonstrations took place in Paris (Sodexo), Cork, and Birmingham. See reports*



Independent Workers Union hold solidarity demo in Cork, Ireland. Photo: Independent Workers Union

## Wobbly Solidarity In Birmingham CNT-F Solidarity In Paris

By Russ Spring, West Midlands IWW

On Nov. 7, the West Midlands IWW staged a two-hour picket outside the Birmingham Children's Hospital in support of the London IWW Cleaners and Allied Industries Branch (Industrial Union 640) protest at Guildhall in London and part of the International Day of Action Against Sodexo.

Sodexo maintains the cleaning contract in London and the catering contract at the Birmingham Children's Hospital. With a banner stating "Clean Up Sodexo," passers-by, staff and visitors at the hospital were all informed of the day of action and the fact that Sodexo makes their huge profits from exploiting cleaning and catering staff by paying pitiful wages and using intimidation and bullying to prevent workers from organizing to improve their pay and conditions.

Positioned right outside the hospital entrance, the protest soon attracted the attention of the hospital security, press office and estates manager. This eventually brought out a manager from Sodexo, who claimed ignorance of Sodexo's poor reputation and insisted the staff at the hospital were paid and treated well. It turned out



Solidarity in Birmingham. Photo: West Midlands IWW

that they were still under the conditions of their old contracts. The hospital clearly did not like the adverse publicity their catering contractors were bringing them and the Sodexo manager was insistent on not having her photo taken. The Sodexo manager disappeared back into the hospital to a chant of "Sodexo equals exploitation / They're a scourge across the nation / The workers won't take anymore / A living wage we're fighting for."

Protestors had no problem handing out their leaflets which were eagerly read by their recipients. As the protest finished up, a worker from the hospital came out to talk and agreed to take leaflets into the canteen staff and ensure that they knew of the protest.

By Monika Vykoukal

One of the Sodexo offices in suburban Paris—Issy Les Moulinaux—was the scene of a solidarity protest by members of the Confédération Nationale du Travail, France (CNT-F) Nettoyage—the cleaners union—with workers from other French unions and organizations such as AutreFutur.

We arrived around 7:30 a.m. and several comrades from the CNT-F arrived with their flags. People were from varied backgrounds and mostly participated in an individual capacity. We put some posters with photos from the London IWW Cleaners and Allied Industries Branch (Industrial Union 640) pickets up around the Sodexo entrance, as well as some posters with larger text about the struggle. We then leafleted, lining up on both sides in front of the Sodexo building. A bunch of us were on the other side of the building where the staff car park is. By 9:30 a.m. we had handed out all our flyers and then left, leaving our posters up.

It was interesting that the head of Human Resources at Sodexo here in Paris knew all about the case of the IWW representative in London and came out to argue this with us.



Poster on Sodexo's entrance. Photo: Monika Vykoukal

We focused on the fact that as long as Sodexo was not negotiating with the IWW in good faith, we were compelled to take steps to persuade them to do so. We also told them as we left that we were just being nice for now, but if necessary we could step up our solidarity actions. There are more actions planned in France to support the IWW cleaners.

# Strike At World's Biggest Hotel



Novotel workers protest violence against women on Nov. 5. Photo: Solidarity Collective

Continued from 1

international show of solidarity. The cleaners and supporters were again out in force to raise funds at the national demonstration to protest violence against women on Saturday, Nov. 5. Spirits seemed high, and during the day over €1,000 was donated.

On Monday, Nov. 7, another rally in front of the hotel saw CGT officials propose changed and rather more modest demands to advance the negotiations with management. Then on Nov. 8, the judge ruled in the case against the striking workers, ordering the removal of the strikers from inside and in front of the hotel, if necessary by force. The judgment in the hotel's case against the SUD delegate has been postponed until later in the month.

The very same day, the striking workers signed an agreement which remains far from meeting their initial demands, but without their courage and determination would not have been possible at all. The outcome yet again shows the difficulties faced by work-

ers in precarious job situations, caught between changing subcontractors and the multinationals who hire them. Five workers (out of more than 30) will get a permanent contract; seven others will get a full-time job; the end-of-year bonus will be raised by up to €200; and workers will get additional pay for each courtesy tray they prepare as well as several other potential improvements to job conditions. On Nov. 9, the CGT-HPE (Hôtels de Prestige et Économiques, the luxury and economy hotels section of the CGT) filed 43 individual claims at the employment tribunal covering infractions such as illegal subcontracting, concealed work, and unpaid overtime.

Despite assurances that workers will not be penalized for participating in the strike action and that the new agreement will be implemented, Accor's history of "exploitation with a smile,"—which is also validated by claims of union-busting at three of its hotels in Canada—suggests that it will require continued vigilance to try and ensure they now do as they promised in the newly negotiated agreement!

# Special What Wobblies Can Learn From “Direct Unionism”

Friends,

I am entering an ongoing conversation about “Direct Unionism” and recognize that I have missed out on earlier episodes. I also am less informed about the early history of the IWW than either Juan Conatz or Sean G. Here are my two cents’ worth of opinions:



nothing inherently sinful about reducing an oral understanding to writing. At the big Westinghouse plant east of Pittsburgh in the 1930s, if the management and the

union reached an understanding about a particular matter, it would be written up and posted in the plant. And under Section 301 of the NLRA as amended, such an agreement can be enforced in the courts, and is therefore less likely to be ignored by management.

3. Where the problem arises, in my opinion, is what it means for a union to be “recognized.” The usual understanding, favored by U.S. labor policy, is that when a union is recognized it becomes the exclusive representative of workers in that bargaining unit. Such recognition puts the union in a position to have management automatically deduct dues from the workers’ paychecks, the so-called “dues check-off.” Workers interviewed in the 1960s and early 1970s who had experienced the self-organization of workers in the 1930s mentioned this most frequently as the reason that “your [watch]dog don’t bark no more.”

I think there is much to be said for the typical European arrangement of many “recognized” unions in the same workplace, as opposed to the idea of a particular union as *exclusive* representative.

- FW Staughton Lynd

I’m writing in response to FW Sean Gallagher. I am a member of the Portland IWW branch, which has a number of contracts. Unlike FW Gallagher’s experience, I don’t have as nearly a positive view on the impact and role of contracts in the IWW as he does.

A starting point for me in criticizing contractual organizing is that it absorbs too much time and energy in an environment which we have little expertise in. Research, drafting articles for a contract, and the perpetual back and forth at the bargaining table is both time and labor intensive and often creates a drain on shop-floor activity. This occurs in opposition to the employer’s lawyers, who are better versed in legal language and have the incentive of getting well paid while finding ways to navigate contractual language. We are not lawyers, nor are we well-versed in how to use the language or even read it, let alone argue it across from the table from a lawyer. On a more basic level, it’s tedious and difficult to sustain energy when focusing solely on this approach.

If a contract has been reached, then another series of problems arise. Sustaining motivation and organization can be difficult even with premeditated inoculation around the idea that the struggle is never done even after a contract is



Graphic: libcom.org

attitude that “we can just wait until the contract is open again,” even if it’s not for another year or more.

Anyone who has had to deal with a laborious and ineffective grievance procedure will also be able to speak to the limits of contracts. The grievance procedures serve as a trap to drain more energy and time from workers when other tactics would likely resolve the issues at hand in a faster way that simultaneously emboldens workers.

Of course bread and butter issues need to be pushed if we’re trying to support workers, but I’ve often seen the “either/or” approach taken in contractual organizing where bread and butter issues get traded for other work conditions. Bread and butter issues in a single shop’s contract, and single shop contracts in general, do not address issues on a larger industrial level. This means that we spend our energy defending a single shop when we could and should be trying to organize on a wider level.

- FW Chris A.

## A Debate On Collective Bargaining And The IWW

I write in reply to Fellow Worker Sean Gallagher. I thank him and FW Juan Conatz for their replies to the “Direct Unionism” discussion paper. I’m pleased to see this discussion happening in the *Industrial Worker* and I hope the discussion continues.

I agree with some of what FW Gallagher writes. Due to space limitations I reply now only to a point where I disagree, which is with FW Gallagher’s advocacy of collective bargaining for the IWW. FW Gallagher is right that “ideas only matter to the extent that they correctly reflect historical experience and objective conditions,” so I will discuss some of the history of the capitalist state’s sponsorship of collective bargaining in the United States.

The U.S. government increasingly promoted collective bargaining in the early part of the 20th century. To take one important example: In 1919, economically disruptive disputes escalated between the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and capitalists in the textile industry. In response, the New York governor appointed a state commission aimed at preventing “industrial war” which created “distrust and hostility” between classes. This commission recommended collective bargaining in order to reconcile the union and the employers. As the commission wrote, a “collective bargaining agreement calls for the utmost good faith on both sides to perform (...) every term and condition thereof; whether it refers to shop strikes on the part of the worker, lock-outs on the part of the employers, or the maintenance of its terms as to wages and hours. This Board desires to emphasize this point as fundamental in any contractual relationship.” Contracts require such good faith and, from the point of view of the capitalist state, contracts helped create such good faith.

With state help, the ILGWU won an industry-wide collective bargaining agreement, which the industry association soon violated in 1921. The ILGWU sued and won an injunction against the employers. The New York Supreme Court said it issued this injunction to prevent “the continuance of an industrial impasse.” The Court said that no matter who won the dispute, “such

industrial struggles lead to lockouts, strikes and acts of violence” and in the end “the employer and employee, instead of co-operating to promote the success of the industry, become permanently divided into hostile groups, each resentful and suspicious of the other.” Therefore, “it is the duty of the court to (...) compel both parties to await an orderly judicial determination of the controversy.” In other words, the capitalist state began to believe that promoting collective bargaining agreements would help create industrial peace. The role of law is not simply to protect individual capitalists but to bring greater stability to the capitalist system as a whole. (On this point, I encourage fellow workers to read the discussion of the English Factory Acts in chapter 10 of Karl Marx’s “Capital.”)

The state’s role and strategy of promoting stability in the capitalist system by promoting collective bargaining explains U.S. labor legislation created in the 1930s. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (hereafter, “Recovery Act”) said “disorganization of industry (...) burdens interstate and foreign commerce, affects the public welfare, and undermines the standards of living of the American people.” The Act argued that one key tool for more efficiently organizing industry under capitalism was to promote collective bargaining agreements. Thus Congress should “remove obstructions to the free flow of interstate and foreign commerce” by “induc[ing] and maintain[ing] united action of labor and management under adequate governmental sanctions and supervision.” The Recovery Act added that contracts would raise wages for workers, “increas[ing] the consumption of industrial and agricultural products by increasing purchasing power” of workers. More money in the pockets of more workers would help stabilize the American economy by providing a larger base of consumers.

The National Labor Relations Act (or



Graphic: D.J. Alperovitz

the “Wagner Act” named after its sponsor, New York Senator Robert F. Wagner) took up the labor relations provisions of the Recovery Act, adding little except for extra enforcement. Senator Wagner argued before Congress that the Wagner Act was “novel neither in philosophy nor in content. It creates no new substantive rights,” and went on to list various prior examples of workers’ legal right to collective bargaining. The real change with the Wagner Act, he argued, was greater enforcement of rights that the state already recognized workers as having. By providing better enforcement for workers’ right to collective bargaining, he said, the Wagner Act would be more conducive to industrial recovery than the Recovery Act. Wagner said that lack of adequate enforcement in the Recovery Act brought “results equally disastrous to industry and to labor. Last summer it led to a procession of bloody and costly strikes, which in some cases swelled almost to the magnitude of national emergencies.” That is, Wagner argued, it was precisely the lack of collective bargaining that led to the strike wave of 1934.

Wagner identified a second consequence to the lack of enforcement provisions in the Recovery Act. Without collective bargaining, he said, workers “cannot exercise a restraining influence upon the wayward members of their own groups, and they cannot participate in our national endeavor to coordinate production and purchasing power.” Wagner argued that Congress should pass the Wagner Act in order to “stabilize and improve business by laying the foundations for the amity and fair dealing upon which permanent progress must rest.” If Congress didn’t pass the Wagner Act, Wagner predicted that “the whole country will suffer from a new economic decline.”

The Wagner Act’s full title was “An act to diminish the causes of labor disputes

burdening or obstructing interstate and foreign commerce, to create a National Labor Relations Board, and for other purposes.” Like the Recovery Act, the Wagner Act’s first priority was to keep the economy flowing as smoothly as possible by reducing labor disputes. The Wagner Act said “denial by employers of the right of employees to organize and the refusal by employers to accept (...) collective bargaining lead[s] to strikes and other forms of industrial strife or unrest.” Furthermore, “inequality of bargaining power between employees (...) and employers (...) substantially burdens and affects the flow of commerce, and tends to aggravate recurrent business depressions, by depressing wage rates and the purchasing power of wage earners in industry.”

FW Gallagher is right that “ideas only matter to the extent that they correctly reflect historical experience and objective conditions.” “Direct Unionism” is far from perfect, but its criticisms of contractualism are based on analysis of the history of the U.S. government’s embrace of collective bargaining. The U.S. government backed contracts because they believed this would make the capitalist system more stable and resilient. As the Wagner Act said, “protection by law of the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively safeguards commerce from injury (...) and promotes the flow of commerce.” Furthermore, the Act added, collective bargaining would encourage “practices fundamental to the friendly adjustment of industrial disputes.” U.S. Congress passed the Wagner Act in 1935. When President Roosevelt signed it, he declared that the Wagner Act was “an important step toward the achievement of just and peaceful labor relations in industry.”

The Preamble to our Constitution states that the IWW’s goal is help our class advance the historic mission of abolishing the wage system and declares that the working class and the employing class have nothing in common. We should hesitate, then, before pursuing strategies which U.S. presidents and senators deliberately encouraged in order to achieve industrial peace within the capitalist system.

- Nate Hawthorne

## Special

# Thousands March & Shut Down Port, Oakland

By Bruce Valde

On Wednesday, Nov. 2, we arrived at the intersection of 14th Street and Broadway in downtown Oakland. It was 5:30 a.m. The sound truck was already parked at the corner and the sound system was being set up. The encampment was still pretty quiet and most of the activity centered around the news vans parked along 14th Street. We deployed a pop-up tent and an IWW literature table and banners. I locked my bike to the railing that runs around the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station entrance. It seemed to me that being mobile would be the best way to participate in the afternoon marches. I was right about that.

It's been said but I'll say it again: the crowd kept doubling in size literally by the minute.

## Anti-Capitalist March

At around 2:00 p.m. marchers started to shape up at the intersection of Telegraph Avenue and Broadway. This is approximately where the 1946 General Strike began. By 2:30 p.m. the march stepped off. The size was impressive and marchers highly energetic. The number of marchers continued to grow as the crowd surged north on Broadway. A lot has already been written how some of the marchers were too aggressive about shutting down banks. Of course the intention was always to shut the 1 percent down, so this was going to be accomplished in various ways depend-

ing on one's orientation. As we were all in the march together and as there were ostensibly no "leaders," the people took it upon themselves to do what they thought necessary to shut it down.

The marchers next headed toward the lakefront. I could see the street we were marching on was packed with people from curb to curb for four or five blocks.

All of a sudden the arrogant façade of Whole Foods loomed before us like the Titanic. What happened next was interesting and divided the march somewhat along tactical lines. I'm not sure what most of the marchers thought they were going to do when they reached Whole Foods but word had gone out that Whole Foods was going to fire any worker that participated in the strike. Later the company claimed in an email this was false. But at the time, it was a strong motivation to go there, amongst other reasons.

We had heard that Whole Foods was being picketed but I saw no one picketing as the march arrived. As I mentioned, when the march reached the front of the store things got interesting. A large canister of paint was used to write the word "STRIKE" across the front windows. As the painters ran back toward the crowd some of those in the crowd decided these people needed to be tackled and knocked to the ground. Eventually, the scuffle grew to include the painters, the tacklers and the people who broke the painters free and allowed them to run into the crowd

for safety.

Any chance of a picket line was lost and the unruly crowd vented their anger further by tossing patio chairs and tables into the street and applying more paint. The march started to move on. At that point, a guy started screaming about outsiders and how the town where he lives should not get messed up like that. My guess is he has never shopped in Whole Foods because he can't afford it—and as I recall Whole Foods is from Texas.

## The Port March

The march formation was less tight now that people turned back toward Oscar Grant Plaza. I checked in with fellow workers at the literature table there. I was informed that a Teamster local was bringing busses to get people to the Port of Oakland in a hurry to make sure all working gates were picketed. Also, a bike bloc was going to form part of initial pickets at the port. I pedaled off to do a little scouting and reached the port in about ten minutes. Before leaving I ran into an organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) who I had met the previous day. He said the UFCW contingent marching to the port were going to a dock separate from the rest and we never saw them later. There are probably thousands of pictures online so I won't describe the layout of the Port of Oakland, but that particular gate is isolated. I deemed it the "dead-end march."

The port was crawling with frustrated independent operator truckers waiting for a load. The port was operating at 50 percent capacity most of the day so a lot of truckers were going to leave empty but they had still not given up hope of a load. I rolled up to some drivers: a couple of guys from Iran and three more Chinese guys.

They replied to my inquiry about how they were doing by saying "you protesters are making our lives difficult" and "why didn't you all do this on the morning shift?" We had considered shutting down the port during the dayside shift, but marching during the day and shutting



Photo: John Reimann

down the port during the nightside shift seemed to be a better choice. It definitely was, in good part because International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 organizers had spent the day curtailing most work before Occupy Oakland arrived around 4:00 p.m. The interesting thing is that while the truckers were complaining about the inconvenience, they ended by saying, "we wish you success," and "we are with you."

Next, I looked up and there were 200 bikers occupying the first terminal gate—not just the gate but the entire road. Soon after, four busses loaded with occupiers rolled by heading toward gates further down the way. It was on. Then the march came into view on the bridge over the railway at Adeline Avenue. This was one of two or three large marches that arrived at both ends of the port in the next hour. I will say in closing that in the past the awesome port shutdowns have been different because they closely followed a script: picket the gate, the longshoremen deem it a safety issue, arbitrators rule in their favor, no one goes to work. This was different. I rode from one end of the port to the other at 8:00 p.m. The port was not operating and at each entrance a party was going on. The night was still young.



Photo: John Reimann

## Whole Foods Shut Down In Oakland

Continued from 1

in and customers out. Several bewildered office staff looking for their soup fix were politely told that the place was shut down for the general strike, with some staffers vainly tugging on the locked glass doors anyway.

We asked one of the workers who was bold enough to talk to us through the doors whether they'd prefer us to stay or leave. "Stay" was the answer, and for the next hour or so we held our ground and chanted. The same worker who told us to stay said "You did it! You shut it down!" and gave me a fist bump through the glass door! We received very vocal criticism throughout the shutdown by one worker who screamed insults and attempted to persuade us that none of the other workers supported the shutdown. Shortly after she left, the largely Latino kitchen staff began to dawn smiles and a young female black worker met us at the entrance with her coworker to openly share their enthusiasm and express their appreciation. The display of a Spanish-language strike banner was a decisive component of the shutdown, especially with the kitchen staff. It was clear to us that this shutdown was well-received by the workers.

It was an inspiring start to an extraordinary day of working-class mass action. We hope our recounting here will offer even a minor contribution to those who



A monstrous picket at Whole Foods in Oakland.

Photo: X359217

plan to carry out similar actions, hopefully on a much larger scale.

We want to emphasize that shutting down the flow of production is not in and of itself a revolutionary act. In fact, as we saw in the shutdown of Whole Foods that took place later in the day, without the support of the workers such actions have the likely consequence of alienating and isolating majority sectors of the working-class, thereby weakening our message and missing the broader aim of overthrowing capitalism.

Much was made of the Whole Foods

shutdown in the press, and in the Occupy movement as a whole. During the scheduled Anti-Capitalist March midday, the crowd of several hundred or more snaked their way from downtown Oakland to the nearby Whole Foods, where it was rumored that workers were being threatened with firings if they joined the demonstrations. The Wobbly contingent saw an opportunity to picket the grocery chain and call out the workers in solidarity, shutting down the store by the workers walking out. Instead, as soon as the march arrived several demonstrators started tearing the

storefront apart—throwing rocks at the windows, pulling tables and chairs into the street, and so on. This had the effect of scaring and confusing the workers inside who didn't know what to make of the melee taking place outside. While we understood the rage being expressed by these acts of vandalism, we felt that an important opportunity to engage workers and expose the contradictions of liberal capitalists like Whole Foods was missed. Imagine if the several hundred of us on the march had surrounded the store with a picket line, and some of our number addressed the workers inside to get them to walk out with us. The store would have had to shut down immediately and I have little doubt that a significant chunk of the workers would have gladly joined us. The impact of a successful action like that could have had wide reverberations, emboldening many thousands of workers to engage in similar actions and challenge their bosses.

While it's important that we stand together as a movement and not allow certain groups to be "thrown under the bus" so that we appear acceptable to the media, it's also important to be critical of actions in a constructive and comradely spirit. It's our hope that we can reflect on what took place at the Whole Foods shutdown and draw lessons that will allow our movement to more fully mature to its revolutionary potential.



Special

# On The Ground At The Oakland General Strike

By K.R.

On Wednesday morning, Nov. 2, I sent a text message to my boss that read “Cough, cough. Capitalism is making me sick. I will be seeking treatment in downtown Oakland today.” He wrote back, “Nice try, you communist.”

On my way to the Millbrae Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station I contacted several friends. I convinced two of them to come to Oakland. One was a student who cut her classes for the day even though she had important assignments due and meetings scheduled. The other was a recently-laid-off former co-worker.

Coming up the escalator to Oscar Grant Plaza from the 12th Street BART station I heard amplified speeches—I had heard there would be a flatbed trailer, and I was apprehensive that Nov. 2 would devolve into the typical, deathly boring rally from which we have all had far too many years’ experience. And indeed, the intersection of 14th Street and Broadway had that feel at 9:30 a.m.: A few hundred people either facing or ignoring a stage of blabbering activists. But soon enough, the streets filled with people coming from all directions. Before I knew it there were thousands of us and the sound stage became practically irrelevant.

The first march pushed off and circled a few blocks. There were no police visible and we filled the entire street. I had the first burst of the feeling of elation, freedom and solidarity that would stay with me all day. I walked near the Brass Liberation Orchestra, which stopped on

Clay Street where a circle of cheering and dancing people formed. We chanted “Occupy! Shut it down! Oakland is the Peoples’ Town!” and “This system is about to die! Hella hella occupy!” These music and dance circles formed many times throughout the day, and I could not help but reflect on the accounts I have heard of similar behavior breaking out during the 1946 Oakland General Strike.

I noticed that many downtown businesses were preemptively shuttered for the day. I know that there were a few triumphant instances of flying pickets shutting banks and other businesses down, but somehow I missed being present at the moments these things happened.

The second march of the day was the 2:00 p.m. Anti-Capitalist March that wound its way through downtown and past a few banks, including Chase and Bank of America (both of which sported fresh face-lifts, complete with shattered windows, graffiti, and paint splatters). Word rippled through the crowd that workers at Whole Foods—the “yuppie sweatshop,” as a friend called it—needed support to shut down the store by Lake Merritt, and the march moved toward the store.

As Whole Foods came into view we could see “STRIKE” spray-painted across the plate glass windows. It looked like at least one window had been broken. I lingered here for a while with a few friends. Two passers-by voiced their displeasure with the vandalism, and seemed to blame us for either doing it or tacitly condoning it. Neither person was very articulate about their positions but they seemed to echo the typical peace-bully talking points, which I find exasperating and demoralizing, so we split to catch up with the march.

The Anti-Capitalist March returned to 14th Street and Broadway and a friend and I found a place to sit and rest. By this time the Alameda Labor Council had started their grill but we discovered the line was hundreds-long and we abandoned the idea of getting free food. Plans to find an open restaurant for food and bathrooms were dropped when the march



Thousands march through Oakland on Nov. 2.

Photo: John Reimann

to the port began; we had found some other friends and did not want to lose them again. Off we marched up 14th Street toward west Oakland.

A quick pit-stop into a taqueria for a bathroom and maybe some food was a bust—too long a line—but the workers there offered free bottles of ice-cold water. We took some and rejoined the march. From a freeway overpass we heard cars below honking wildly in support and saw traffic slow to a crawl as drivers took in the sight of thousands of people heading toward the port. Families watched from their driveways and cheered us on as we passed. Chants floated in the air: “Let’s go, Oakland! Let’s go!” The neighborhood smiled on the march and residents held up hand-made signs.

The flat geography of downtown and west Oakland made it virtually impossible to get a bead on the size of the march from ground level, but I got my first idea of its size as we rounded the corner of 7th and Adeline. Two blocks ahead I could see the rise of the overpass above the freight tracks. It was packed with people marching. Tractor cabs leaving the port were stranded in the sea of people, unable to move, and as we made our way across the overpass I saw many of the drivers grinning in awe, honking in support and laughing with protesters who hopped up onto the cab ladders to chat.

At the other end of the overpass the ground leveled out again along Middle Harbor Road. People climbed up on top of containers in triumph as we continued on to block all the gates. Each gate drew crowds of many hundreds, who stayed to secure the closure while others continued on to the rest of the gates.

Soon I was marching with four other women and we all had to pee. This stretch of road—train tracks on one side, cyclone fences and sheer walls on the other, and thousands of people all around—proved

an inhospitable environment for the task. Eventually we found a low concrete barricade and created a “human shield” for one another. Some guy stopped to pee in solidarity nearby. I don’t think he quite got it that it’s not really the same thing for men to pee in public, but it was a sweet and funny gesture all the same. When we marched on we occasionally overheard other women talking about needing to pee and offered our services as the “Ad-Hoc Girls’ Bathroom Brigade.”

BART trains heading for San Francisco thundered overhead as we walked west. We heard rumors that Occupy San Francisco had shut down the Bay Bridge, but as darkness fell I had seen headlights moving on the bridge so I don’t think that really happened. It was a nice thought, though.

Over time we made our way to 7th and Maritime, where a crowd of hundreds was holding down the westernmost port entrances. It was dark now, and it had been announced that shift-change at the port had been moved from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., then from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. I still don’t know if any of that was true. We were all waiting for an announcement that the arbitrator had ruled that conditions for workers were “dangerous” and that the incoming shift would be sent home.

When it was clear that we had succeeded in shutting down the port for the night, even if the official word was still about 20 minutes from arriving, I began the trek to the West Oakland BART station with a couple of friends.

When the tracks up on the elevated platform were free of trains we called “mic check!” across the tracks and we spoke to each other through the peoples’ mic and we cheered our victory. A woman read a message from Scott Olsen, written that evening from his hospital bed—his first public communication since his injury. Trains arrived and we boarded, tired but sleepless like young people in love.



Photo: John Reimann

Anarchosyndicalist/Anti-Racist

**insurgency**

**Web Store**

<http://www.zazzle.com/insurgency>

**RECOMPOSITION BLOG**

NOTES FOR A NEW WORKERISM

An informal blog of new and reposted material by IWW members. Recomposition includes Worker’s Power columns, reflections and discussions related to our organizing and solidarity unionism as well as classics by Martin Glaberman, Stan Weir and others.”

[RECOMPOSITIONBLOG.WORDPRESS.COM](http://RECOMPOSITIONBLOG.WORDPRESS.COM)

## Industrial Worker Book Review

## An Album Of The Blues With A Special Magic To It

Woodrell, Daniel. *The Outlaw Album*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011. Hardcover, 176 pages \$24.99.

By William Hastings

Until four days ago, I was reading Herman Melville's "Mardi," using the master to fortify myself against the coming fall. I set the book aside for Daniel Woodrell's "The Outlaw Album," a book I'd eagerly awaited. The last collection of short stories I read was so dismal, so appalling in its self-conscious over-wrought style (you could almost see the writer leaning out of his window, shouting to his wife entering the mini-van below, "Look honey! I'm writing short stories!"), it only served to confirm my feelings that minimalism and cushy academic jobs had long ago murdered the American short story. But then I finished "The Outlaw Album" and felt my hope restored. There is a writer in America creating great short fiction, stories that settle deep into your ribs and stay with you for some time. I haven't picked Melville back up again. I am re-reading Woodrell's story collection to hear the nuances I may have missed the first time. I want to see why the book sticks to me.

Many of the stories in "The Outlaw Album" have appeared in anthologies or literary magazines over the past few years. Taken together and sequenced as they have been, they work a different power than they do alone. "The Outlaw Album" is exactly that: a sequenced album of songs, much like the nearly forgotten concept albums of vinyl's heyday. A little less than half the stories in the collection are technically vignettes. They lack the development of theme a short story holds and they do not give the reader enough time with the characters to build the dénouement Poe required for a good short tale. Though that is not to say the vignettes lack a powerful effect. They carry plenty of that. Whereas

too many literary magazines and "story" collections publish vignettes as stories, Woodrell does not confuse the two. Instead, he weaves his vignettes against the long stories in the album to play counterpoint or conspirator to their themes and ideas. The vignettes are the rhythm guitar playing behind the solo.

It is in the short stories that Woodrell shines. Arguably, "The Outlaw Album" is proof he is the finest first-person prose stylist in the country. But no matter whether he is in the third or first person, Woodrell's sentences have a running bluegrass cadence to them that has correctly been compared to banjo music. He sings in a high-lonesome tenor of the broken and damned pieces of ourselves we keep trying to lose but find anyway:

"I held and held to the rock and forgot about breathing, sunk into that choice spot between breathing and not ever breathing, between raising up to walk on the bank and picnic or staying under to join that debris already lost to the rushing" ("Black Step").

The dozen songs (one is hesitant to call them stories) that make up the album shape and mark out a territory of the heart, one tough to look at but unforgettable to feel. Woodrell's characters are outlaws indeed, but not of the Tom Sawyer sort. Whereas Tom, perhaps the great and original American Outlaw, "would rather be outlaws a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States forever," Woodrell's outlaws run only from their own selves, the shadowed corners of their hearts. In the story "Night Stand" the narrator says "sometimes a man will dream about a moment like this, an opportunity for sanctified violence, a time to open the cage and allow the sleeping thing inside

out to eat its fill." That sleeping thing stalks the pages of "The Outlaw Album." Woodrell opens its cage in every story. In each one, despite similarities of context or event between a few of them, he looks at "the sleeping thing" from different angles, exposing a little more of man's heart as he does. The father in "Night Stand" tries to understand his son:

"He got different. He was always kind of lonely, you know, not so sure how he stood in the world, always lookin' for somehow to measure himself, prove somethin', figure what size of a man he was. Could be he found out and it broke him."

Later in the collection, a woman describes the town's men as "not men lamed by any sorts of doubts about anything they did. Or might do yet." That tension, between not doubting one's action and looking for

a way to measure one's self against the world, is the central thematic tension that binds "The Outlaw Album" into its remarkable tightness. The men and women in "The Outlaw Album" may be quick to violence, certain in it, but they are each unprepared for violence's after-effects. This also happens in the vignettes where Woodrell purposefully stops the story before the action has time to ripple outward. When taken next to all of the longer stories in the book, the vignettes' violence and threats appear both futile and doomed. Their fires will not cleanse, for as the stories show, history is long in the blood.

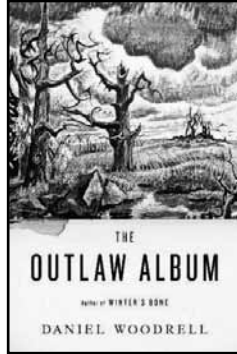
History seeps through the pages—both literally in the remarkable Civil War-era "Woe to Live On" and figuratively in the remainder of the stories—and Woodrell takes care to show we cannot escape what we create. Returned combat veterans are in many of these stories. In each case, they

drag the weight and history of their deeds and of what they've seen right back with them. The dislocated and broken combat veteran has been done before, but rarely, if ever in short fiction, have they been done this well.

Woodrell could have let these stories build in their violence and darkness, pulling a collection together as tight and horrid as a black hole. Instead, he allows light humor and even happiness to shine through some of the stories. This is his masterstroke. By balancing the redemptive off of the doomed he textures "The Outlaw Album" in a way that expands its best qualities. He has moved beyond the noir of his earlier work into something that encompasses a greater spectrum of understanding. He has cemented his role as one of America's greatest writers.

With "The Outlaw Album" the comparisons to William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor and Larry Brown are going to come. These comparisons will come about to label Woodrell as a "Southern writer," for he writes of, and lives in, the Ozarks. Labeling him as a Southern writer ghettoizes him and diminishes what he's accomplished in "The Outlaw Album." Woodrell's work takes place in the Ozarks, but it is merely a setting for the battles we all face, the loss we all must confront.

"The Outlaw Album" is an idiosyncratic, lyric, stunning collection of stories. It is one of the most important collections of short fiction produced in this country in over 50 years. It is a restorative to the brutal hangover we feel from all the soft, over-thought collections of "stories" published in this country. Woodrell's album has life to it. It swings and punches and moans through the endless drifting boogie of night. This is an album of the blues and there is a special magic to it; a magic that hums on long after the feedback has trembled out.



Graphic: powells.com

## Industrial Strength

## A Critical Look At "The Other Walk"

Birkerts, Sven. *The Other Walk: Essays by Sven Birkerts*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2011. Paperback, 175 pages, \$15.00.

By Eric Miles Williamson

"I was having lunch the other day with G., an acquaintance, in a coffee shop in Harvard Square," begins Sven Birkerts in an essay from his newest book, "The Other Walk."

The author biography tells us that Birkerts has taught writing at Harvard, Emerson College, Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, and Bennington. Some fancy places—it costs about \$40,000 per year in tuition these days to be "educated" at those joints—and Birkerts takes every opportunity to remind us of his positions. We'd expect some dazzling writing and some unbelievably splendid teaching from a superior human like Birkerts, a man who wears his associations like bourgeois designer sandwich boards over his elbow-patched brown tweed jacket.

"The Other Walk" is a collection of nearly 50 brief essays and a sampling of the titles betrays the gist of its contents: "Old Glasses," "Lost Things," "Barcelona," "Grandfather's Painting," "Cup," "Apple," "Photo: Father-In-Law," "Photo: Ring," "Archive," "The Other Walk," "Starbucks," "Coffee," "The Walk," and so forth. When Birkerts isn't telling us of his vacations in Europe or his strolls around Harvard, when he's not waxing sentimental about his parents and children, he's staring around his house looking for objects to write about, having nothing in his life more important to do that generate words on the page. His essay "Chessboard" begins, "This is a handsome, serious-looking chessboard, a kind of hinged wooden valise with squares on the outside and an embedded green felt space inside, with an elastic loop for each piece." And that's

what the essay is about. He opens the essay "Lost Things" by writing, "Lost things have their own special category. So long as they're lost, and felt to be lost, they belong to the imagination and live more vividly than before. They make a mystery. The other day I wanted to write about a tape dispenser." The world around Birkerts might be in the midst of a revolution or a nuclear meltdown, but Birkerts would be writing about tape dispensers, brown loafers, a ladder up against his house, or a red tin cup that "would make a tinny little clang if I reached over to tap it." For example, Birkerts begins an essay (titled "It") with the following:

"And how is it that 'It' comes to have a place of such honor—the open top shelf of the living room bookcase that otherwise tightly packed tartan of spines interrupted only here and there by a special photograph in a frame? I'll tell you. Oddness, beauty, and mystery—those are the criteria I come up with, but only after the fact, when I ask myself why I can neither get rid of this thing nor demote it. I don't mean this to be a guessing game." After building so very much interest and anticipation in the mind of the now breathless reader, then he finally tells us the subject of the essay: "It" is a light bulb. He's not being ironic.

Check this out: In "Barcelona" he writes, "I went to Barcelona in the summer of 1970, the great summer of European wandering, with cover stories in all the news magazines about a generation in search of itself, which is an irritating tag, a marketing hook, though I suppose it was also true." I was around in 1970 and remember it pretty well. That was the year my cousin Clyde came home from Vietnam

and killed himself in the basement of our house. That was the year two of the kids down the street came home somewhat reassembled in caskets and then their mother killed herself. What Sven Birkerts sees as "the great summer of European wandering" was, to us regular folks, another year of war and social upheaval. We weren't a generation in search of itself where I grew up in Oakland, Calif. We were a generation wishing we had bunkers to cower in.

My people were being shot to pieces both in Vietnam and in the warring streets of Oakland, being killed and killing themselves, so Sven Birkerts could go to Europe and wander around Brussels, Paris, and Barcelona, and now he's a professor teaching writing to some of the wealthiest, most privileged students the world has ever known.

Birkerts has an interesting teaching philosophy, too. He tells us all about it in his essay, "What Do You Do for Work, Daddy?":

"For me teaching is an add-on or, better, an off-shoot, something that both taketh away and giveth. It draws energy from the main thing, the writing, though it supposedly then compensates me by buying time and making the writing possible. And while it's true that a certain number of hours a week—mental hours, I mean—are given over to thinking and worrying about the teaching I do, I don't count those as part of my legitimate work. In fact, I barely even count as legitimate the hours spent conducting classes or meeting with students or grading papers."

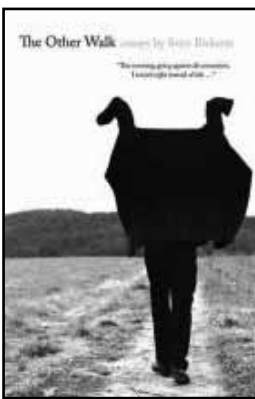
The students, I reckon, are supposed to bask in his greatness and osmose their writing skills.

No wonder the elite, the stewards of

the United States and, by extension, the world, don't give a shit about anything but their own pleasure. If this is what their academic and aesthetic role models—think, what they teach their students, the future CEOs, Wall Street bankers, and leaders of the world to write about, then our country's ongoing race into wealthy narcissistic decadence and destitute animalistic barbarism and sloth makes utter sense. Birkerts is a professor, for fuck's sake, who admits he doesn't give a shit about his students, that he'd rather spend his time writing about light bulbs than teach the folks who are paying his salary. Common people and their lives and struggles are things to be avoided or, at best, examined like stray dogs in the alleys on the way to work.

Oh, Birkerts has a couple really compassionate essays about the poor—"Every Day," for instance, an essay about a beggar he sees at the intersection every day. Birkerts kind of likes the beggar. He describes him in detail, as if he's a biologist using a microscope to examine a germ. Birkerts is both proud and uneasy about sometimes dropping a few coins in the beggar's plastic jar, but Birkerts decides that the beggar's "manners, if that's what they are, are perfect."

Of course, that's how I'd like to be perceived by some Ivy League asshole—as a beggar with perfect manners. I'd like to meet this Sven Birkerts, preferably late, the sounds of police sirens in the distance and fires burning in ash cans, homeless gentlemen with perfect manners warming their hands by the flames, piss puddled in the alley and the dumpsters crawling with rats, and see if he approves of my manners when I introduce him to my homeless junkie step-brother. I wish someone had told me when I was a kid that all I had to do to get some rich fuck to drop me some coin was be polite, and to have perfect manners.



Graphic: bookdepository.co.uk

## Analysis

# Workers' Worth: Reflections Of An American Expat

By Arthur Salazar

The welfare of the working class cannot and should not be decided by the machinations that take place in a board of directors meeting or in a session of some so-called "legislative body."

The working class, first of all, needs to reaffirm its worth, not in relation to what it can obtain from the capitalist class in terms of job benefits, working conditions or wages, or even what the State can guarantee with its "sacrosanct" labor legislation such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) violations, unemployment compensation, Social Security, federal minimum wage pay and overtime. The working class needs to reaffirm its worth as invaluable members of society that keep the cogs running and what we ourselves contribute to that same society:

- Our time
- Our labor potential
- Our physical ability and strength
- Our intellectual know-how developed through years of job experience and/or training and education.

Second, workers need to stop selling or offering all the above to the first "employer" that makes a job offer, especially if it is more than obvious that said job offer is truly lousy, such as an hourly wage not much higher than the minimum, 40-plus hour work weeks with no overtime pay, unsafe working conditions, no disability, no maternity or paternity leave, no health insurance, no days off, no sick time, no vacation time, and no chance for advancement.

Unfortunately, this happens very often, too often I would say, especially when the worker is going through very tough times, times of great personal need and scarcity, or when the "job market" is slim. It is a regrettable fact that is understandable, but which should definitely not be the norm to follow.

You see, by accepting such bad or ruinous job offers, the working class comes across as always being dependent on or endlessly in need of the "job handouts" of the capitalist class. Remember, we are doing the capitalist class a favor by accepting such "jobs"; they are not doing us the favor by hiring us.

In other words, workers have to put up with situations like ridiculously low wages,

crummy benefits, and unsafe working conditions because they simply have no choice. Either they accept the crumbs that the capitalist class throws at them or they end up homeless and living on the streets or living off welfare and food stamps.

The capitalist class wants to buy our most valued products, again:

- Our time
- Our labor potential
- Our physical ability and strength
- Our intellectual know-how developed through years of job experience and/or training and education, all at the lowest price possible, to be exploited in the most efficient way.

This is precisely the reason why the working class needs to value all these products very highly.

Let us never forget that to the capitalist class, workers are nothing more than expendable cogs, screws or nails that can always be replaced, but never fellow human beings.

For all these reasons, workers simply need to be extremely selective when accepting a job offer. By doing this, all workers are reasserting the dignity of the working class.

Again, let us not forget that it is precisely the working class which keeps any society running. It is of the upmost importance that the working class take pride in this fact, in itself, and its historical mission.

Every time we decline a bad job offer, we are letting the capitalist class know that we do not need their handouts, that we deserve much better, that our contribution to society is invaluable, and most importantly, that we still have our personal dignity.

Sadly, there are a lot of workers who, for whatever reason, continue to accept the crumbs that the capitalist class throws at them. They are unwilling to fight for or demand better wages, benefits, and working conditions, which is precisely what the capitalist class wants.

Others, very regrettably, dream of one day becoming members of the capitalist class itself, and "getting even" for what they "had to put up with" when they were workers.

This takes us to our next point: worker solidarity. Worker solidarity is very important, especially in these times, when

the organized labor movement is so fragmented and weakened—not just in the United States but worldwide. The word "union" has become a dirty word. All workers, it seems, have suddenly become self-absorbed individualists who only look out for themselves. They have no sense of or interest in being part of a class.

The union has lost its importance to the new generations of workers. Their only aim is to one day become part of the "financial elite" and "move on up." They feel no pride in just being a worker, especially a blue-collar worker.

In my opinion, undocumented immigrants are the new American blue-collar workers; they represent the new American work ethic. It is imperative that they be legalized, organized, and that they be paid decent wages. Who knows, maybe these foreign workers will help to revitalize U.S. labor unions and reintroduce a strong work ethic to the new generations of Americans.

Thus, worker self-worth recognition and solidarity are both the keys that will truly ensure the welfare of all the working class.

Nonetheless, for those that might still put all their hopes on the State protecting the working class, remember that more often than not, the capitalist class will go out of its way to try to circumvent, sometimes legally and sometimes not, all of the State's labor legislation, especially if such legislation threatens to affect the company's "profit margins."

A great example of this circumvention, which by the way is considered legal in the United States, is when a company suddenly decides to cut costs and moves its operations to some extremely poor third world country, where working conditions, benefits, labor laws and wages are truly disgraceful, if not utterly obscene, and border on slavery.

Here in Mexico, major corporations have found a government more than willing to bend over backwards to exploit its working class by offering ridiculous tax incentives and plummeting wages, so that these same corporations will set up their *maquilas*, or assembly plants, in the north



Graphic: recollectionbooks.com

of the country. The minimum daily wage for Mexican workers at these plants is less than the equivalent of \$5.

Workers in these *maquilas* assemble thousands of consumer products—plasma television sets, car engines, cell phones, refrigerators and jeans, just to name a few. All of these products are exported to the United States, Canada, and other so-called "first world" countries where they are sold for ludicrously high prices.

Ironically, these *maquilas* have never been able to stop the flow of undocumented immigrants from Mexico to the United States, who immigrate at great personal peril, looking for jobs that will truly offer, at least in their eyes, an honest wage for a hard day's work—something which they are definitely not getting in Mexico.

Interestingly enough, the money that these undocumented workers send back to their families in Mexico represents the country's second source of revenue after the sale of oil.

If this is not a great example of the paramount importance of the working class to a society, regardless of its geographical location, I do not know what is.

## Forming A Larger Union For The Service Industry



A working group session at the convention. Photo: Cedar Larson

Continued from 1

as well as other cities throughout the United States and Canada.

The convention opened Friday, Oct. 20, with a dinner hosted by Portland's IWW closed-job shop and collective, the Red & Black Cafe. Throughout the meal, Wobblies with varying levels of experience organizing restaurant, grocery store and coffee shop workers spoke on a panel about their campaigns' former successes and failures. One fellow worker commented that this dinner was "possibly the largest group of Wobblies [he'd] ever seen together in one room." The chance to socialize and discuss each other's work was

beneficial to many of the organizers present.

The next two days included business meetings to finalize founding bylaws and a founding statement that were eventually endorsed to be passed along to the IWW's annual referendum in November.

Fellow workers split into smaller working groups throughout the weekend to focus on creating projects and holding

accountability in pushing forward the work of the body. These working groups, who will continue to exist as smaller bodies of the IWW's Food and Retail Workers United are dedicated to legal work, education and campaign building, information technology, media, research and fundraising.

These groups' proposed projects include the creation of an organizing and mentoring toolkit, "Know Your Rights" pamphlets for both documented and undocumented workers in the United States, a formal training on press release writing, the creation of a website dedicated to Food and Retail Workers United, as well

as support of already existing projects like the IWW's Summer Institute educational summit, which is slated to take place in Minnesota next summer.

Alongside regular business, this convention allowed for fellow workers in the service industry across North America to connect and hold conversations about their place in the current capitalist order and what we are all doing to further our goals of its overthrow. On Sunday, Oct. 23, various individuals and the Portland General Membership Branch's Women's Committee held workshops centered on issues ranging from how to lead a successful direct action on the job to the everyday struggles of female workers and union members. Other workshops included how to form an Industrial Organizing Committee and taking action through smart media outreach. These workshops fostered opportunities for serious discussions on tactical and broader issues confronted by organizers throughout IUs 460, 640 and 660.

Other serious, intense conversation was generated by the entire group in an hour-long open discussion on the floor centered around a contentious topic in the IWW: our capacity and necessity to build a more diverse union that is truly representative of workers from the most oppressive industries in the world. Input from alternative models, like the Seattle Solidarity Network resulted in meaningful

conversation that delved deep into issues that are less often addressed by regular business meetings within the IWW. As a union rooted in historical organizing of non-majority ethnicities, gender and nationality, Food and Retail Workers United opened conversation of how to build and strengthen solidarity with some of the most marginalized groups of workers in retail and service industries.

Aside from the historical precedent set by martyrs and champions of the labor movement, Food and Retail Workers United holds itself responsible for reaching out to oppressed groups in the spirit of the working class. All those employed by capitalism are oppressed on a daily basis; it is through the work of organizing and of continuing constructive conversations and inclusion of these often-uncomfortable topics that the union and its work will continue to build.

If the currently proposed bylaws of Food and Retail Workers United are approved during referendum, the body will continue to meet once annually to further the revolutionary work of IWW organizers campaigning in low-wage, service sector work across the globe. With a North American labor environment mostly representative of large, bureaucratic unions, the founding of a body within the IWW for workers in food and retail is a truly historic step forward for the working class everywhere.



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).

## Support international solidarity!



Assessments for \$3 and \$6 are available from your delegate or IWW headquarters  
PO Box 180195,  
Chicago, IL 60618,  
USA.



# Let's Go One Step Further: On The Present Situation In Greece

By Dimitri, Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group (MACG)

Greece has become the center of the global struggle against capitalist crisis and the flames of the Greek working class' fight inspires the world over. Rather than acquiesce to the official lie of a nation united in necessary sacrifice for the common good, they have exposed the truth, that the working class is not the cause of the crisis and will not pay for it. The following is a critical analysis of the situation in Greece and a call for the development of a "new world in the shell of the old" based on individual and collective empowerment, solidarity, cooperative economics and direct democracy everywhere. We all carry that new world in our hearts and the Greek workers' struggle is proof that that world is growing this minute! - ISC

At the writing of this article, the ruling class is continuing to search for the "right" person who as "transitional" prime minister can guarantee implementation of the unpopular measures to be taken against the people of Greece, squeezing them once again and ensuring continuation of the most savage exploitation in recent history.

We are in a situation where new austerity and other measures are continually being announced, wages are being cut, redundancies are constantly growing, bargaining agreements are being hacked to pieces, the number of unemployed and poor people is increasing, social rights and civil liberties are being repressed and society is being further crushed every day.

As a result, there is massive social unrest, as thousands of demonstrators take to the streets and squares either as strikers or simply as frustrated people. There are numerous attempts at social organizing, such as the local people's open assemblies, while at the same time the overarching social movement clashes with the forces of repression and their parliamentary assistants.

The 48-hour strike, on Oct. 19-20, called for by the central General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and the Civil Servants' Confederation (ADEDY) produced a massive, unprecedented mobilization across the country as thousands of workers, unemployed, pensioners, students, and schoolchildren went on strike and took to the streets to show their op-

position to the measures being taken by the rotten political system and the plethora of laws that are now destroying our entire society. In Athens, a vast sea of people turned out—one of the largest strikes in recent decades—clearly showing the huge social and political rupture between the great majority of the people and the entire class of political and economic power. As a result, the social plundering has been fully delegitimized and the only weapons left in the hands of the State and its institution are complete suppression and the salvation generously offered by the world of parliamentary representation.

In particular, the All-Workers Militant Front (PAME, a syndicalist section of the Communist Party of Greece, or KKE), copying the counter-revolutionary practices of social democracy and Stalinism since the 1920s, is contributing to this process by blocking every movement with characteristics of their own, suppressing all forms of labor and popular radicalization and preserving and saving the bourgeois parliament building from angry demonstrators. Some other left formations have been moving on the same wavelength (perhaps with more audacity), including organizations like the Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left (ANTARSYA, a non-parliamentary coalition on the anti-capitalist left), their components, and a few Maoist groups.

Apart from the clearly repressive tactics by the Stalinists, the miserable attitude by some parts of the protesters must also be condemned. This includes self-characterized anarchists and anti-authoritarians, who did not attack the KKE guards, but instead attacked the simple PAME protesters with marbles and petrol bombs that fell into the crowd. We must condemn these practices in the most categorical manner, as we do the attacks by the KKE guards who used helmets and sticks against any other demonstrators.

However, we can now see that there is a broader "systemic arch" that includes the State, its institutions and the parties involved in those institutions, and also some leftist extra-parliamentary forces who have been deployed in the name of "safeguarding" the constitutional system and the "organized movement." This "systemic arch" is attempting to control and define the limits of bourgeois normality



A sea of workers march in Athens during the 48-hour strike.

Photo: anarkismo.net

within which the social anger and indignation can move.

As the crisis deepens and the social war is exacerbated, the challenge now is to bring up the issue of how to finally overthrow social barbarism, by collectively building a new life on the wreck of the entire old world which is adrift together with its components. Another goal must be to go beyond the limits of the spectacle of mass demonstrations, limits which are imposed by the system and the mass media, and turn the mobilization into something more real, with more concrete action—not just a regular spot on the TV news.

We are at a historic crossroads, in a situation where the possibilities for social counter-attack and subversion have now occurred and one can no longer hide behind the alleged passivity of society. We have seen the weaknesses and failures of those forces who act in the name of social change but who are hiding behind the mistakes and choices of the institutionalized Left.

However, the forces of class-struggle anarchists are still small and fragmented and cannot manage the burden of responsibility by themselves. The dominant characteristic of a significant portion of anarchists is still violence for the sake of violence, hostility to any organization and formalistic tendencies that lead nowhere, despite some flashes.

It is time that this current tendency for unmediated, horizontal, directly democratic social disobedience and change in society to develop its own independent, autonomous path of struggle for social counter-power through its own instruments. We need this social movement to establish its own counter-institutions for the organization of life on the basis of individual and collective empowerment, solidarity, cooperative economics and direct democracy everywhere. Grassroots unions in workplaces have appeared over the past few years—there are scattered, local, public and open assemblies, self-managed projects that have timidly begun to appear as a result of the generalized crisis. These all guide us in the right direction. There are also the class-struggle anarchists and various other militants who share the same views, despite their small and scattered forces and the lack of a relevant tradition. They too must play a multifaceted role.

Let's go one step further. If we are to bring about the social revolution we must begin from a change in our lives towards an organized, creative way! For anarchy and communism!

This piece appeared in its original format on November 11, 2011, on <http://www.anarkismo.net>, and was reprinted with permission from the author. For more information, visit: <http://ngnm.vrahokipos.net/>.

## Subscribe to the Industrial Worker

Subscribe or renew your *Industrial Worker* subscription.

Give a gift that keeps on giving!

Get 10 issues of working class news and views for:

- US \$18 for individuals.
- US \$22 for library/institutions.
- US \$30 for international subscriptions.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill out this subscription form along with a check or money order made out to "Industrial Workers of the World" and send it to:

Industrial Worker Subscriptions,  
PO Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618 USA

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

FOR A WORLD WITHOUT BOSSES, AND A SEASON WITHOUT WITHOUT EXPLOITATION



From the Industrial Worker