

INDUSTRIAL WORKER

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

October 2012 #1749 Vol. 109 No. 8 \$2/ £2/ €2



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For The Works: Report From The 2012 IWW General Convention

By Ryan G.,
Portland IWW

Over 75 fellow workers from around the world descended upon Portland, Ore., this past Labor Day weekend, Sept. 1-2, for the 2012 IWW General Convention. The Portland General Membership Branch hosted this annual gathering of IWW members, providing housing, food and social gatherings for all attendees.

Over the course of two days, assembled delegates at the IWW General Convention were responsible for representing their branch in this important decision-making body of the union. Many different proposals were heard, debated and decided upon, all of which seek to implement changes to the IWW Constitution. These proposals will soon be mailed out to every IWW member in good standing in the form of the referendum ballot. Fellow Worker: as an IWW member, you have the right to directly vote on these changes!

We heard reports from many of the

mandated committees throughout the union. A highlight was hearing reports from the Organizing Department Board (ODB), as well as the Organizer Training Committee, that the union's developmental program of workplace organizer training is alive and well. In addition to hosting dozens of Organizer Trainings (OTs) throughout North America, the ODB is also busy at work preparing for an upcoming IWW Organizing Summit next February. We also watched a great video produced by the Work People's College and heard about plans to continue this educational institute.

Finally, delegates and members alike were able to nominate fellow workers for various union offices, such as the General Executive Board, the General Secretary-Treasurer and many others. Most offices will feature candidates appearing on the upcoming referendum ballot, again, giving all IWW members the opportunity to

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IWW members from across the globe come together for a group photo at the General Convention in Portland.

Photo: FW DJ A. of Vancouver Island

The NCAA: The Boss's Dream, The Worker's Nightmare

By Neil Parthun

College sports are a multi-billion dollar enterprise. Universities and conferences earn millions by slathering their respective athletes in logos from their corporate sponsorships. Television deals yield billions in profit for schools, their conferences and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Bowl Championship Series games (bowls) form nonprofits that gain millions at the conclusion of every football season. The system is awash in money...except for the people who create the value by playing the games.

The NCAA's "March Madness" basketball tournament recently settled a deal that will pay out \$10.8 billion over the length of the agreement. Conference television deals range from \$35 million to a staggering \$3.6 billion over the duration. When it comes to college football, each of the bowls takes in millions. At the university level, college coaches make six to seven figure salaries. All of this money is around but none can be given to the players, as that would constitute a "scandal."

There have been a myriad of schools where players faced suspensions and public animus for their acceptance of "impermissible benefits." University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) players are being investigated for receiving plane tickets home to see their parents from boosters. Students at multiple schools are being looked at because they received cars or money during their time on campus. Ohio State players were even punished for getting discounted tattoos after giving the shop autographs.

At Ohio State, players sold their awards—conference championship rings, gold pants given for beating Michigan, etc.—and were punished. Georgia wide receiver A.J. Green sold a game-worn



Graphic: theurbantwist.com

jersey. Yes, these players sold their own private property and the NCAA swooped in to say that the players did not have a right to sell those items. Yet it is perfectly fine for the NCAA, conferences and individual schools to auction game-worn jerseys and

to sell replicas whose value was generated by the play of these athletes.

Scholarships Are Payment? Hardly

Now, many people have argued that scholarships and the room and board are appropriate payment for the labor of these student athletes. However, the reality is much murkier.

A recent study by Ithaca College shows that the average Division I student athlete still pays \$2,951 in school expenses despite

receiving what is commonly described as a "full ride" scholarship. The study also showed that some schools have even more costly amounts that students must finance since the scholarships do not cover the true cost of living at the university. At the aforementioned Ohio State, the U.S. Department of Education noted that despite full ride scholarships, students are \$3,500 to \$5,000 short of meeting the true living costs on campus.

Often times these students come from lower-income homes and cannot afford to bridge these costs. While some would suggest that they get a part-time job, students on athletic scholarships work full time with the team and are required to maintain a strong academic record to stay eligible, so the functional reality creates an inability to get a job and have it be allowed as a real option. So what are these students to do? Borrow money from the banks and become victims of debt peonage with student loan debt? It should really be no surprise that students are continuing to take payments

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Solidarity With Murdered South African Miners

By the IWW

The Industrial Workers of the World extends solidarity to the Lonmin strikers, their families and communities. In the pursuit of better working conditions, standards of living and personal freedom, they chose to exercise their rights as free people to stop work. They were met with a brutal attack by the State leading to the massacre of over 30 miners and the injury of more than 70 others. Adding insult to injury, over 200 strikers were arrested and charged under an apartheid era law with the deaths of their murdered fellow workers. This is a clear attempt by the State to intimidate all workers into submission and to prevent self-organizing and direct action.

We are united in resistance to the violence of capitalism and of States that uphold the neoliberal system. We condemn the actions of the Lonmin owners, man-

agers and shareholders, who reap their wealth from the exploitation of working people and the State-sanctioned robbery of valuable resources from beneath their feet. We condemn the cops and guards who protect the interests of the powerful by arresting, beating and murdering workers. We condemn the actions of any person or group who engage in strike breaking and scabbing: they betray all working people and are a disgrace to the history of class struggle.

While the murder charges of their fellow workers have been dropped, we will not be satisfied until the people who pulled the trigger are brought to justice and the strikers' demands are met. Wherever solidarity is criminalized, we too stand guilty. We are ready to aid the strikers and their brave families in whatever capacity we can. An injury to one is an injury to all!

See full story on page 12.

Industrial Worker
PO Box 180195
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Building Blocks

Calling The Question: Building The IWW GMB In Richmond, Part 2

By Kenneth Yates

This is part 2 of a Building Blocks series on building the Richmond General Membership Branch (GMB). The first part of this series, "It's All Relative: Building The IWW GMB In Richmond, Part 1" appeared on page 3 of the September 2012 Industrial Worker.

Drawn together by a lack of revolutionary organization, we hoped to build something that would be able to address, from an anti-capitalist perspective, the everyday struggles of working people. The IWW is that revolutionary organization, and its method of "solidarity unionism"—focusing on the organization of the worker and the utilization of direct action to get their demands met—was a distinct departure from how other groups were organizing.

What set it apart from other forms of revolutionary organizations was that it is, first and foremost, an organization for the workers, by the workers. The IWW does not align itself with any political party or ideology, freeing much of its energy to focus on organizing rather than supporting political candidates or lobbying for reform. With this form of organization, we hoped to develop the union in such a way that wasn't only organizing workers in shops, but was also organizing those same workers in their communities, and vice versa.

We had been meeting on a monthly basis, with the above goals in mind, mostly discussing our work with the Richmond Transit Riders Union, spending a lot of time with one another, establishing an at-large delegate, signing up new members and really just getting to know one another. It wasn't until we finally were able to attend an Organizer Training 101 in November 2010 that we were able to really visualize what direction we needed to go in as a union.

We began incorporating what we learned at the training into our organizing right away. We found that we were already doing much of what we had learned. How-

ever, the training helped refine some of our ideas and provided structure to the chaos. At this point, we found ourselves with somewhere between 10 and 15 members, half of them being extremely active, and the other half, not so much. Seeing as we were consistently collecting dues for the international and we had exceeded the minimum number of members required by the constitution to apply for an official branch charter, we felt it was time to apply.

The IWW's General Secretary-Treasurer at the time, Joe Tessone, suggested that we should continue to meet as a group for another year just a few months prior, because we were only four months old. This was to ensure that we did in fact have the makings of a solid branch, for there had been many branches formed in haste who were de-chartered almost as soon as they were formed because they did not meet constitutional requirements.

We seriously considered Joe's advice, but, three months later in December, we voted as a group and chose to apply for a branch charter. We formed a committee that drafted our bylaws, elected officers, adopted Rusty's Rules of Order, collected signatures from all of our members in good standing, sent everything in for the General Executive Board's approval, and, finally, in March 2011, we were chartered as the Richmond GMB.

So when do you know it's time to formalize a group into an organization? In terms of the Richmond GMB, honestly, I think that we took a risk and hoped for the best. However, in retrospect, we had a core



Graphic: richmondiiww.org

group of really dedicated members who utilized their skills to move our work forward. We had members who were extremely skilled in research, who were organized, consistent, persistent, enthusiastic, social and willing to talk with strangers, and we all understood, whether it was thoroughly articulated or not, that we wanted to see this organization evolve into something that was truly influential.

We also understood from early on, mostly through working in other organizations, that in order to retain interest, or membership for that matter, we had to keep members engaged. Many people will join with the idea that someone will tell them what needs to be done, and when this doesn't happen they tend to feel uncomfortable and don't return to the group. To keep this from happening, we made sure everyone understood the importance of greeting new members, calling them and inviting them to events, actions and meetings. We made sure everyone understood the importance of asking new members about their day, their passions, why they joined and what sort of experiences brought them to this movement.

There will definitely be members who are perfectly happy supporting the work of others, paying dues and simply observing. For those members it is still very important to develop relationships and find ways to make sure they are included, because at some point, they may feel compelled to get more directly involved with the union. Even though the IWW proudly declares every member an organizer, not everyone is an organizer. Some people are very

good at and perfectly happy with doing administrative work, providing services for trainings, driving people around, doing research, facilitating workshops, reading groups and training, maintaining social networks, etc., and this is all very important to the work of the union.

All these things are what helped us develop into a branch and maintain membership, but, at a point, when you've reached a certain number of members, it becomes apparent that you also need to develop programs within the union that ensure that fellow workers are growing proportionately with one another. Do all our members understand the philosophy and principles of the IWW? Are branch meetings operating as close to consensus as possible? Are we disproportionately privileged white and male-bodied? Have claims of patriarchy gone unrecognized? Are we engaging workers in our own places of work? Do we all have at least a basic understanding of capitalism and its relationship to class, race and gender? If not, why, and what will we do about it?

These are struggles within the organization that cannot be ignored and require an immense amount of commitment and sacrifice on the part of all fellow workers to effectively find resolve. If we are going to see a movement grow out of our union, then towards a movement is where we need to put the majority of our free energy. Fellow Workers fought and died for the eight-hour work day, but perhaps, instead of the conservative watchwords, "Eight hours for work. Eight hours for rest. Eight hours for what we will," we should live by a more revolutionary slogan, "Eight hours of work. Eight hours for rest. Eight hours for ORGANIZING TO ABOLISH THE WAGE SYSTEM!"

In the third and final part of this series, we'll hear directly from our current membership on what they see is necessary for a growing branch and revolutionary movement.

IWW Constitution Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

Join the IWW Today

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

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

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

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

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

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

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

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

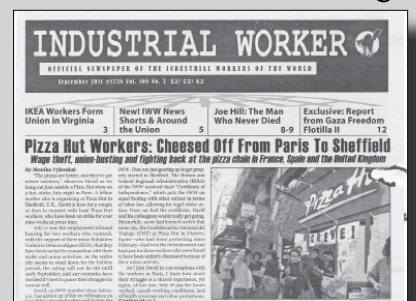


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Wobblies And Unfair Labor Practices

By Kevin S.

We stand up against the boss, demanding change and stopping work. The boss fires us. We immediately mobilize, rushing to...the office of some government lawyer. What's wrong with this picture?

When private sector employers in the United States break the law, workers can file what is known as an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Violations



include threatening or retaliating against workers for lawful union activity or for acting as a group without a union, also known as "protected concerted activity." When found guilty of a ULP, an employer may face various penalties, like an order to reinstate a fired worker with back pay.

There are many examples of the Wobblies using ULPs. The charges filed against Starbucks eventually led to a fired worker's reinstatement. In Minneapolis, charges were filed against Jimmy John's after a failed union election in 2010, and again last year when the company fired six union members. The NLRB nullified the election due to management's illegal behavior. The illegal firing charges were won in court, but the employer appealed and the appeals process could take years.

ULPs are used for pragmatic reasons: we need protection against employer retaliation, and it makes good press when we charge employers with breaking the law. Protection is hard to ensure through direct action alone, especially in the IWW, since we are small, with few friends in high places and little interest in having such friends. Yet filing ULPs is precisely calling on friends in high places to solve problems for us—except the NLRB is not really our friend.

ULPs are a crucial component of the state's most perfected instrument for enforcing labor peace: arbitration. While many Wobblies criticize union contracts' management rights clauses, no-strike clauses, and bureaucratic grievance processes as being obstructions to direct action, all these practices predated and are far less effective at preserving class peace than government arbitration. Workers have hostile interests to employers and may force their unions to adopt a militant posture. As a result, even the craft unions of the old AFL often used violent disruption against stubborn employers and broke their own no-strike agreements, due to threats from angry workers who frequently split and formed more radical competing unions. The capitalist state's answer to this was state-sponsored arbitration.

Labor law as we know it was a response to mass "industrial warfare" during the last century. Courts, local and state governments, and wartime federal agencies all experimented with various practices to ensure "industrial peace" in order to protect the flow of commerce and meet the production needs of the state. Federal

A Dull Title For A Serious Problem

By x372624

You are at your workplace, and you decide to look down at your watch or phone to glance at the time. You see it, and a hopeless sigh is your immediate response. We always encounter this situation. You want to be out of there. It's a long time until your next break, and it's even depressingly further from walking straight out of the door. Under capitalism, we suffer from not only poverty, stolen wages, and injustice, but also alienation, boredom, stress, and dare I say...routine.

I have severe Attention Deficit Disorder. I get cabin fever when I stand in the same grocery aisle alone for 10 minutes. I have to keep my mind busy constantly, occupied with thoughts just so I can resist the urge from walking away from what I am doing. This, however, is a prominent feature of capitalism. Making workers do the same routine everyday sucks the life out of them: we become mindless zombies, set out to do simple tasks over and over, for several hours a day, the majority of the

legislation codified these practices in the 1930s, with the explicit intention of restoring economic tranquility. ULPs are a product of this period and are part of the state's mechanism for controlling labor conflict.

Wobblies often rightly view labor law with skepticism. A while back, the *Industrial Worker* published some critical responses "Direct Unionism: A Discussion Paper," which criticized the "pitfalls of contractualism" and called for "organizing without contracts," describing some historic examples and specific tactics for non-contractual organizing. The paper expresses doubt that "labor law can ever be a liberating force for workers." It asks, "Can even defensive use of labor law, ULPs for example, disempower workers?"

While "not universally opposed to ULPs," the discussion paper turns "a very skeptical eye," concluding:

"ULPs and other forms of government-recognized grievance procedures... removes power from the worker's hands. Knowing basic labor law and being able to 'represent oneself' are worthwhile skills, but labor law always attempts to individualize grievances, and thus lessen collective power and put up walls to effective solidarity."

This skepticism could go farther. Wobblies ostensibly use ULPs as a last resort when other forms of escalation fail. In practice, folks often treat them as a form of de-escalation. A phrase some Wobblies use is: "Direct action is our sword, while labor law is our shield." A better phrase might be: "Direct action is our sword, while labor law is capitalism's shield." The whole point of labor law is to restrain workers' power, encourage class collaboration, and prevent economic disruption.

It's problematic that ULPs are treated as standard union practice. ULPs often act as a relief valve when struggles reach a point where further escalation poses hazards for the union, especially potential legal consequences. This happened when Jimmy John's fired six Wobblies. A plan to escalate through a series of direct actions fell apart when an action was canceled due to the lawyer's concerns about potential legal issues. The lawyer was afraid direct action would have negative repercussions for the fired workers' court case. The decision not to use direct action transformed the workers' struggle into a legal battle.

It can be a smart move for individual workers to file ULPs but it depends upon the situation. Workers have little power right now and sometimes the odds of winning grievances are better in court than on the shop floor or in the street. Because of this we get in the habit of filing ULPs when we want better results. Yet when the union pursues pure legalistic practices, even when individual cases are won, it does nothing to build power for the union or the working class.

week, and we become downtrodden with boredom. Humans are creative creatures: we like experiencing new things, and thrive to prosper at what we are good at. Capitalism is the complete opposite of this: bosses simply hire whoever is the best at lying in the interview (we all do it). Once we have landed the job, we are trained to repeat the same task over and over, whether we like it or not.

A cruel feature of capitalism is that you always want to get out of work. What sane person doesn't have this thought come across their mind a couple dozen times throughout the workday? We think of what we want to do when we're out of this wage-slavery; to cherish our few waking hours not working or sleeping. However, a common occurrence is that once you are out of work, the thought of work pops right back into your head, such as: "I can't go out tonight, I have to be up early tomorrow morning for work," or "I can't go to such-and-such, I have to save money for bills, rent, and so forth." We have to

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

CHAPTER 57

Not Deaf, Dumb or Blind

Helen Keller (1880-1968) is best known for her personal triumph over the handicaps of blindness and deafness. But she also deserves recognition as a lifelong ally of working women. Keller championed labor's cause despite the criticism of the wealthy, who sometimes would have preferred that she remained deaf, dumb and blind.

At age 17 months, Keller's sight and hearing were destroyed by an undiagnosed illness. At age seven, her family hired Anne Sullivan, a noted teacher of the blind. With Sullivan's help, Keller was able to enter Radcliffe College in 1900. After graduation she campaigned to clean up poor working conditions leading to accidents that cause blindness among workers.

Helen Keller joined the Socialist Party, and defended the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the one organization trying to organize all workers regardless of skill, craft, sex, race or national origins. In 1913, she came to the aid of poor immigrant women taking part in an IWW strike in Little Falls, N.Y., a major center for knit goods and underwear.



Declaring to the strikers that "their cause was her cause," Keller said: "It cannot be unreasonable to demand the protection of women and little children, and an honest wage for all who give their time and energy to industrial occupations."

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

plan our lives accordingly to the wages we make, and the time we spend working. We live to work. The burden of money is ever constant, and we are forced into making decisions that are out of our reach.

Maybe I want to take a lovely Wobbly to a concert and dinner? Too bad. I have to spend all my paycheck on bills, rent, gas, food, everything that matters just so I can live to work, get to work, or have access to work. I can take the risk of not paying my phone bill, just so I can have some "fun money." At what cost might that be? Phone companies, among others, are notorious for downrating your credit rating. Therefore, in the future, I might have a high interest rate if I need a car (so I can once again get to work), or have a place to live, or so forth. It's a full circle: I end up spending more of my money just so I can live to work, and get to work.

Capitalism surrounds us, just not at our workplace, or paychecks, but our minds. It burdens us with an ever-constant

stress from all aspects of life, both in and outside the workplace. We work our dull jobs, and get yelled at by our boss, just so we can go home and receive a small paycheck and not have time to see our friends and family. We work our jobs, just to end up not having access to the goods of our labor. I work in a grocery store, however, between rent, gas, debt, utilities, and many other burdens, I rarely have any food in my household! I am constantly surrounded by food, yet I barely have any myself. I am forced to live on rather unhealthy meals, because it is cheap and that is all I have access to. The ruling class has access to whatever they desire; whereas I spend my entire life working, only to have a very limited means to what I have in my own life.

We need to fight not just the boss, but the whole concept of capitalism and the wage system. It is necessary to change our social relations, and the ways we perceive "work." We don't simply want better wages: we need an escape from this boring life.

Wobbly & North American News

Centennial Of The Bread And Roses Strike



Members of the IWW gather at the new Bread and Roses monument in Lawrence, Mass.

Photo: Daeve Whelpley

By X325068

The 28th annual Bread and Roses Festival took place in Lawrence, Mass., on Labor Day, Sept. 3. This year's festival was especially large and spirited in commemoration of the centennial of the Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912 when 25,000 textile operatives struck "The Woolen Trust" and, after two months of bitter struggle, won all their demands in one of the most significant of workers' victories, organized by the IWW.

An estimated 5,000 people attended the event on Campagnone Common in Lawrence this year. The festival was kicked off by a march for social and economic justice, which began at Polartec, Lawrence's sole remaining textile mill. Contingents from the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE), the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, the Lawrence Teachers' Union, the IWW, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and others paraded through the city's major thoroughfares to the Common.

Activities at the festival included performances by Si Kahn, the Bread and Puppet Theatre, the Workmen's Circle chorus A Bessere Welt, the Folk Song Society of Boston's tribute to Woody Guthrie on

his centennial, and many presentations of ethnic culture in recognition of Lawrence's rich immigrant traditions.

A highlight of the festival was the unveiling of a permanent monument on the Common opposite City Hall, created by internationally-recognized sculptor, Daniel Altshuler of Gloucester, Mass. The monument, a 22 by 40 inch bronze relief depicting scenes from the strike mounted on a 15-ton granite plinth, features IWW labels in the two lower corners. Twenty-five to thirty IWW members in attendance at the festival gathered around the monument and sang "Solidarity Forever." The results were so impressive that a slightly smaller Wobbly contingent was requested to do a repeat performance for Lawrence Community Access TV. It was scheduled to air later in September.

Festival goers were greeted at two IWW tables set up by the Boston General Membership Branch (GMB) and the New Hampshire/South Maine group. We distributed copies of the *Industrial Worker* and sold a lot of literature, t-shirts and paraphernalia, and made many new contacts. A few new members signed up.

The festival was the culmination of a year of events commemorating the strike held in Lawrence and around the world.

Longshore Workers Confront Retaliation

By Linda Averill, Freedom Socialist

The battle between Export Grain Terminal (EGT) and longshore workers in Longview, Wash., has moved from the waterfront to the courts, where anti-labor laws and officials are aiding EGT.

Throughout 2011, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) fiercely defended its 70-year jurisdiction in Longview. ILWU Local 21 and supporters, including Occupy activists, employed class-struggle tactics including civil disobedience to thwart EGT from establishing scab operations.

Historically, the ILWU doesn't settle contracts without securing amnesty for members on the front lines of the conflict, which has helped make it one of the strongest U.S. unions. But, under heavy government pressure, ILWU officers signed a contract in February without such protections; prosecutions and blacklisting followed. The contract also eliminates ILWU's hiring hall, a key tool to stop favoritism and blacklisting. This has allowed EGT to exclude leaders in last year's fight from work. EGT can also now nullify the contract if ILWU engages in effective job actions. In sum, the contract is a green



ILWU members stop trains destined for EGT's scab terminal in Longview in 2011.

light for more anti-labor attacks. Meanwhile, dozens of protesters arrested in last year's mass actions are plea-bargaining fines and community service to avoid felony charges. ILWU member Ron Stavos spent 22 days in jail.

The ILWU international is fighting back with a civil rights lawsuit, scheduled for trial in March 2013. More battles are on the horizon as Northwest locals prepare to negotiate a grain-handling agreement with multiple employers. Public discussions by ILWU members and supporters to assess the fight will take place in Seattle and San Francisco.

This piece appeared in its original format in Freedom Socialist newspaper, Vol. 33, No. 4, August-September 2012.

Wobblies Celebrate Labour Day In Ontario



Wobblies gather together for the Windsor Labour Day Parade on Sept. 3.

Photo: FW Ian Clough

Labor Day Anew For Northeast Ohio IWW

By the Northeast Ohio GMB



Photo: Matt Meister

The Northeast Ohio General Membership Branch (GMB) of the IWW marched in the Barberton Labor Day Parade this year on Monday, Sept. 3. At one time, Barberton had more union members per capita than anywhere else in the country. The parade is Ohio's largest, and this was the first time in generations that the IWW was present.

Thousands Rally For Labor In Philadelphia

By John Kalwaic

Tens of thousands of union members arrived in Philadelphia, proudly wearing their union t-shirts, for a labor rally on Aug. 11. Organizers of the national AFL-CIO rally—Workers Stand for America—claimed more than 35,000 attended, exceeding expectations. Organizers expected about 20,000 on 300 buses to arrive from nearby states.

The AFL-CIO organized the event to draw attention to issues involving the "middle class." The rally was open to all, union and non-union workers alike. The rally started with 1,000 Verizon workers marching from Chinatown to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where the larger rally was being held. Some people in their cars honked in support of the march, while others yelled at marchers for blocking the roads. The energy for this march was much higher than the overall event, which was still spirited.

This rally was planned in response to the Democrats choosing a non-union location for the Democratic National Convention (DNC). Though the AFL-CIO still backed President Obama, the rally was supposed to indicate what grassroots support he could have gotten if he had listened to their demands. One of the cornerstones of the rally was to push for Franklin Roosevelt's Second Bill of

Rights, which calls for every American to have the right to education, health care, a job and collective bargaining.

The rally included a cross-section of the American labor movement—public employees, teachers, construction workers, electrical workers and workers in the telecommunications industries. Some attendees spoke about their frustration with the state of the economy and the way politicians have held unions responsible for it. The rally included a relatively good mix of race, gender and age groups, though it still could have been more diverse.

Political views at the rally ranged from liberal to more radical, including many from the Occupy Wall Street movement. There were also a few reactionaries in the crowd and groups calling for "clean coal." The AFL-CIO unions were put in a difficult position this election year as President Obama has largely abandoned them, but presidential hopeful Mitt Romney is incredibly anti-labor. This rally came on the heels of Romney choosing Paul Ryan as his running mate; many of the speakers at the rally expressed disgust with Ryan's politics.

One lesson many of us could learn from this rally and similar events is that the problem with labor backing politicians is that you don't know if the politicians are going to back labor.



Graphic: njafclcio.org

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Special For The Works: Report From The 2012 IWW General Convention

Continued from 1

directly appoint their General Administration.

Being in meetings for 8 to 10 hours a day is never easy, but despite the sometimes grueling procedures and business, there was a strong air of camaraderie and responsibility amongst delegates. This spirit was perhaps aided by the amenities of the venue: a space featuring comfortable tables and chairs, catered food service, wireless internet and air conditioning!

In addition to all the constitutionally-mandated business, the General Convention is also an opportunity to meet up face-to-face with our co-organizers, friends and fellow workers. These personal bonds are invaluable in building a culture of solidarity and understanding amongst various regions where the IWW has a presence. To

this end, the Portland IWW coordinated social events to accommodate the General Convention in-between sessions.

A Solidarity Party was held at the Red & Black Café on Friday evening, featuring music from Brendan Phillips (son of the late Utah) and Portland's own house band, I Wobble Wobble. The Red & Black Café is a collectively-owned and operated business and has been an IWW union shop since 2009. It was fantastic to be able to spend the evening in an explicitly IWW space, especially when it came time to sing rousing verses of all the great IWW songs.

After General Convention business concluded for the day on Sept. 1, attendees were whisked away in a school bus (driven by an IWW driver!) to a bowling alley, where we proceeded to "Bow! The Union On."



A school bus filled with IWW delegates going bowling.

Photo: FW DJ A.



Delegates listen intently as reports are delivered and discussed.



The Portland IWW banner drapes the outside of the General Convention hall.



Wobblies join together for the traditional singing of "Solidarity Forever."

Photos: FW DJ A.

The IWW General Convention Adapts To A New Era In Portland

By Ryan G., Portland IWW

The IWW General Convention is the annual opportunity for our members to propose amendments to the IWW Constitution, debate resolutions which signify union policy or general political sentiment, and to make nominations for the General Administration in the coming year. However, the way Convention operates is still very new to the current generation of IWW members, having only voted as an organization to adopt the model in 2008.

Previous to that year, our annual constitutional convention was called the General Assembly. In this format, which was utilized for the last several decades, voting privileges in the proceedings were based on "one member, one vote." This model seemed to work well during this period, as the union was only composed of 200-500 members internationally, at most.

The IWW began to grow exponentially beginning in the late 1990s. This period signified the union's transition from a grouping of labor militants seeking mainly to keep the IWW name and ideals alive in the movement, into a blossoming of younger members who took those ideals and began actually applying them to workplace organizing. Coupled with this new wave of IWW workplace organizing came the growth of IWW membership beyond the United States, particularly in Canada and Europe.

Suddenly, the union was expanding both in numbers and in geographical representation. This organizational development posed new challenges for the General Assembly system. It became apparent that the greater mass of votes required to pass a resolution or proposal was largely influenced by the regional location of the meeting. For example, if the Assembly was held in a large city, the



Delegates from various cities cast their votes on the Convention floor.

Photo: FW DJ A.

host branch and/or neighboring branches would constitute the largest majority of attendees. With the "one member, one vote" system, branches from locations further away had difficulty making their voice and vote heard on an equal footing, as typically only one or two members could afford to make the journey.

Unfortunately, there were a few instances where this imbalance was exploited by members seeking to "control" the outcome of voting by the Assembly. I remember one General Assembly in particular where I was in attendance. During the debates on various proposals, several dozen or so members went outside the hall for a break. On several occasions, during critical votes, somebody would run outside and quickly herd them back into the building just prior to the main motion

decision. These individuals could easily be heard instructing members to "Vote yes! Vote yes!" They would then vote, in some cases not having any idea what it was they were voting on. Simply by their numbers, members were able to "pack the vote" and control the motion.

As the IWW was developing internationally, and after experiences such as the one previously mentioned, it became clear to many in the union that we were quickly outgrowing the General Assembly system. The idea began to emerge that a more representative model was necessary, in order to enfranchise branches who would need to send members over greater geographical distances in order to participate. Again, the critical element of this was that branches should have equitable representation regardless of the distance between

their home cities and the location of Assembly (which alternated from year to year, mainly in the United States).

Out of this necessity, the General Convention system was developed and approved by the IWW membership in the 2008 General Referendum. The Convention model establishes voting rights to branches based upon the number of members they retain in good standing. A branch with 10-29 members is allotted one delegate, a branch with 33-59 members can have two delegates, a branch with 60-89 members can have three delegates, and so on. While IWW members are allowed to attend the Convention and have voice in the debates, only delegates elected by a chartered IWW branch are allowed to vote.

This structural shift has produced a refreshing balance of representation between the IWW branches in attendance at our annual constitutional conventions. Branches are able to discuss the proposed constitutional amendments in advance, and instruct their delegate(s) on how to vote at Convention. Additionally, a branch can raise funds toward the cost of sending their delegate to the proceedings, which helps ensure that members with limited financial means are given the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. In this way, there is much more of an incentive for branches to send a delegate to convention; there is a proportionate balance of voting ability based upon the number of members in a branch, not their geographical proximity.

Significantly, all amendments to the IWW Constitution approved by delegates at Convention must then be ratified by the membership in a referendum. The greater decision-making power in the union ultimately rests directly with the membership at large.

Analysis

The NCAA: The Boss's Dream, The Worker's Nightmare

Continued from 1

or receive benefits since the true goal of the NCAA is to ensure that its labor force remains outside of receiving the billions of dollars in college sports.

Scholarships also fail to be an appropriate compensation because it is all too often the case that the schools don't really give a damn about whether or not the players actually receive an education. Multiple cases have shown that students have been brought to universities simply due to their sport prowess and that lots of schools have had to create scaffolding programs to ensure that these students with lacking academic skills are able to stay eligible with college level curriculum. Joseph P. Luckey, the president of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics, made the following statement about his observations at a school in Memphis: "I was like, 'Holy crud, I can't believe how many kids are reading below a seventh-grade level.'"

Recent allegations have also been levied against the University of North Carolina. There had been a pattern of grade padding that kept football players eligible. New allegations and evidence have led some to believe that this academic dishonesty to ensure sport superiority had been occurring much earlier than previously believed.



Graphic: Melbourne IWW

Such cases should clearly show that universities are in the "keeping athletes eligible" business, and are not ensuring that their student athletes actually learn anything.

True Compensation

There is currently a lawsuit filed by current and former NCAA players demanding compensation. They allege that they have the rights to royalties for the use of their images, names and likenesses in advertisements, video games, videos, etc. While the case continues to work its

way through the courts, the players have suggested a new option for proper compensation.

Since paying players as the workers they are has upset too many, the plaintiffs suggested the establishment of a trust fund to hold the money until the players' eligibility expires. Then, the players would receive the money that would be due to them. This case, headed up by former UCLA basketball player Ed O'Bannon, is something that will be very important to watch as it continues through the court system.

Colleges have increasingly given up their academic mission in the name of pulling in billions from advertisers and creating an informal minor league system for the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL). This system of college athletics has contributed to an "arms race" mentality where schools are only concerned with keeping the best players eligible and always having funding available for coach pay and athletic department building development. Meanwhile, too many of these same schools are facing larger class sizes, budget cuts and tuition increases.

If the NFL and NBA want a minor league system, then it is their responsibility and their cost to create it. It should not be that universities must undercut their academic missions and create an unpaid labor force that sniffs of the plantation, as Taylor Branch wrote in "The Shame of College Sports" in the October 2011 issue of *The Atlantic*.

We can have a system that respects schools, their academic missions and the players for the value that they create on the court and field. However, of course, power never gives up anything without a strong demand. It is up to advocates of social justice, workers' rights and sports to help athletes fight for just compensation for their labor.

Reds Riot At Steel Mill: 75 Years Later

By Mark R. Wolff

Although the United Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) won a contract from the largest steel company, U.S. Steel, in 1937, the "Little Steel" corporations—including Bethlehem Steel Corp., Republic Steel Corp., Youngstown Sheet and Tube, National Steel Corp., Inland Steel Co. and American Rolling Mill Co. Republic Steel—refused to recognize the new union. In May 1937, steel workers from these plants struck for union recognition, including the workers at Republic Steel on Chicago's South Side.

The "Little Steel" corporations were controlled by its anti-union chair, Tom M. Girdler. Under his direction, Republic had stockpiled a large accumulation of weapons to be used against strikers.

SWOC struck at Republic, Youngstown Sheet and Tube and Inland all at once in a broad front. On May 26, 1937, 25,000 workers went out on strike. Inland Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube closed in response, but many Republic mills remained opened, including the Chicago South Side plant, where about half of the 2,200 workers went on strike. In defiance, Republic Steel shipped in food and bedding so their scabs wouldn't have to cross the picket line.

On the first day of the strike, the Chicago police went right into the mill and pushed out the union men. Then they tore into the picket outside the plant, making the workers move to a location two blocks away, while arresting some of them. The next day, the police, who had joined the remaining workers inside the plant, came out and beat picketers with their clubs, shooting their guns in the air. During the confrontation, the strikers' sound truck was demolished, and women strikers were beaten and sent to jail.

The SWOC strike committee called a meeting in response. On May 30, 1937, over 1,000 strikers and picket supporters, many of them women and children, gathered at Sam's Place, a bar near the Republic Steel plant that became strike headquarters.

There, SWOC organizers and reps from Amalgamated Clothing Workers outlined the history of the national labor movement in support of the right to organize, and how the passage of the Wagner Act by the Roosevelt administration had helped.

According to the SWOC leadership,

membership increased from less than 100 members in 1936 to over 75,000 members, despite anti-union efforts by the corporations. The SWOC leaders compared the pickets at Indiana Harbor plant that were without incident to the police tactics that violated the Wagner Act at Republic Steel.

Resolutions against police conduct were approved by the assembly of strikers. From the floor of the assembly, a motion was made that strikers should form a line to set up a picket outside the plant. From Sam's Place the assembly lined up behind two American flags. One version of the story is that they went directly in a parade-like fashion to an open field outside Republic Steel, some in their Sunday dress, some setting up soup kitchens in support of a rally. A platform was constructed from which families could hear speeches as they picnicked. Girls led IWW fight songs. Another version is that marchers followed the procession behind the flags down Green Bay Avenue on the South Side, but the route changed to a dirt road across a prairie at 114th Street and Green Bay, and that they were cheering the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). At this point they were met with a police lineup of over 200 police.

Photographers from the local papers arrived in time to take photos of the confrontation of strikers and picket supporters in the prairie where they had assembled as they were confronted by the cops.

Police officials yelled expletives at them, calling them "communists" and demanding that they leave. Picketers shouted back that the police barrier violated their rights and the Wagner Act. Some accounts claim members of the strike-support crowd heaved rocks and other objects at the police.

Onlookers, such as David Krech, a researcher in psychology and member of the social democrat organization, New America, witnessed 10 people being shot and 80 being wounded, as the Chicago police opened fire on the "symbolic picket line" of steel workers and their wives and children in holiday dress. Krech and his New America comrades had supported the pickets from the start, only to witness the police violence.

A Senate investigation would later show that police had used weapons from the stockpile at Republic Steel along with their own issue to shoot directly into the rally and onlookers. As police shot at



"The Chicago Memorial Day Incident" from the U.S. Archives. Photo: wikimedia.org

fleeing marchers, they stopped and beat those who had fallen with clubs. Others, including the wounded, were dragged and then shoved into overcrowded police wagons. As the barbarism halted, 100 were wounded and 10 were to die from beatings and gunshots.

The *Chicago Tribune* and other press affiliates blamed the violence on the strikers and their "communist" organizers. The police attack was labeled as "self-defense," and the innocent were labeled as instigators. The headline read: "Reds Riot at Steel Mill."

A *Chicago Tribune* editorial congratulated the police who controlled a "murderous mob" with "relatively little loss of life." The *New York Times* headline read, "4 Killed, 84 injured As Strikers Fight Police, in Chicago, Steel Mob Halted."

According to the *Chicago Daily Worker*, on Friday, June 11, 1937, a citizens' committee was organized in protest when the eighth striker was to die as a result of gunshot wounds inflicted by police. The slogan, "They Can't Get Away With It" was used by Carl Sandburg, Chicago poet, as he spoke to a mass meeting of 5,000 at the Civic Opera House, along with Meyer Levin and A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, seeking justice for the mass murders.

New American and well-known novelist, Levin wrote "J'Accuse," which included a petition signed by Krech and notables, such as Clarence Darrow, Carl Sandburg, and famous activists in the Chicago community asking that the police violence against the Republican Steel

workers killed and injured at the picket be prosecuted.

A "Paramount News" photographer had used newsreel photography to record events that day, but the story was suppressed by Paramount. An investigation conducted by the *St. Louis Dispatch* revealed the censorship of the footage that eventually was used as evidence in the LaFollete Civil Liberties Commission investigation into the massacre by the police.

Seventy-five years later workers marched in procession to the location of the plant to commemorate the mass murders and pay tribute to the strikers. People met at Washington High School on 114th Street in Chicago for an educational event about the massacre. U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. joined the discussion. Panelists and discussion participants walked to the site of the killings, across the street from The Zone Youth Center and placed a wreath.

According to journalist Gregory Tejeda, the Illinois Labor History Society showed newsreel footage of the police beatings at the event. It was explained that at that time, a coroner's jury in Cook County found all 10 deaths to be "justifiable homicide." Not a single police officer was prosecuted.

Jackson described at the event how the 1937 Memorial Day travesty was called a "labor riot" caused by "red communists." He outlined his plan to introduce legislation to raise the minimum wage and also to pay tribute to the 10 union members who died 75 years ago.

Reviews

“Slaughter in Serene” Connects Modern-Day Massacres With A Culture Of Violence

May, Lowell and Richard Myers, eds. *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader*. Denver, CO: Bread and Roses Workers' Cultural Center & Industrial Workers of the World, 2005. Paperback, 198 pages, \$23.00.

By John MacLean

“Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader,” edited by Lowell May and Richard Myers, seeks to connect massacres of the past, in the great state of Colorado, with those of its troubled present. It doesn’t mention Sand Creek and the mass murder of Native Americans, although it could, but sets out to recall a successful though tragic 1927 coal strike led by the Industrial Workers of The World. The varied historical essays range over the northern field mines, scattered around Boulder and Weld Counties, some controlled by the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, to operations hundreds of miles to the south, in Huerfano and Las Animas Counties, dominated by the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, and the lesser-known Victor American.

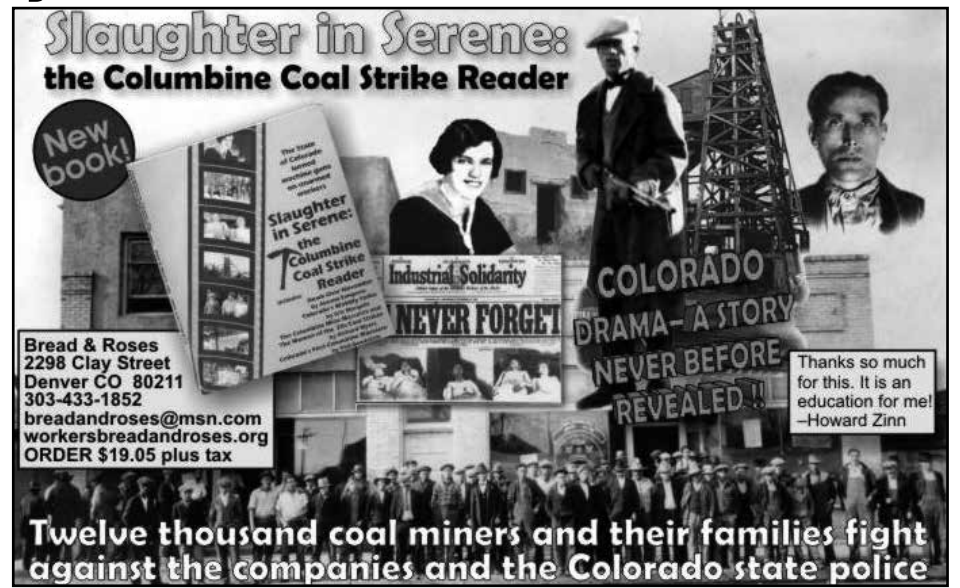
Many Colorado mining towns were made up of generations of immigrants who had become “naturalized citizens” during World War I. In the 1920s, the state’s Mexican population shot up, particularly in the northern fields, as un-mechanized coal and the sugar beet industry demanded labor. At the same time, the so-called “True Americans” of the Ku Klux Klan “gained a major hold” at all levels of state politics. It was not uncommon for the mostly Catholic mining towns to experience “cross burnings and nighttime Klan parades.” (This past paroxysm of “xenophobia and know-nothingism” is reminiscent of the poisonous Tea Party of today and the many current assaults on U.S. communities, including the re-establishment of Jim Crow law through the War on Drugs and mass incarceration). At the beginning of the decade, the Jacksonville Agreement, formalized through a nationwide coal strike led by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), helped improve wages in non-union districts such as Colorado. According to Eric Margolis, the lead historian of “Slaughter in Serene,” it was the undermining of even the indirect protection of this agreement, by the prospering 1 percent of Colorado coal, which led “to one last bloody strike.”

Joanna Sampson, another “Slaughter in Serene” contributor, writes that all the way up until the middle of the 20th Century, Colorado coal fields were very dangerous places to work in, as they experienced “fatality rates double any others in the world.” Add to this ever-present prospect of death, which never seemed to get dealt with, and wages that were being cut, or made worthless by company-town pay deductions, and it’s understandable that the miners would resist. The IWW cam-

paigned began in 1925. In September 1927, a strike convention was finally held in the town of Aguilar in Las Animas County. During Labor Day festivities that year, the UMWA and the Colorado State Federation of Labor roundly condemned the IWW and talk of a strike. The leadership of the UMWA “actively opposed” the effort and many of its members sadly “scabbed” on the miners. Incredibly, the research of Eric Margolis reveals that Mike Livoda, an organizer with direct experience of the Ludlow Massacre in 1914, “[was] hired out to spy on the Wobblies and [even] provided the governor of Colorado with advice on strike breaking tactics.” The convention decided that the strike would go off on Oct. 18, and state and corporate authorities were given notice in accordance with the law.

The IWW did many things right in preparation for the strike. They encouraged the miners to run things themselves and gave all groups a say on the strike committee, much like they did in Lawrence, Mass., in 1912. As the distance between the northern and southern fields could be as much as 250 miles, with mining communities in between, in Freemont County, among other locations, grand “motor caravans” were used to keep hopes up, communicate and advance the effort. The union preached nonviolence throughout, going so far as to search miners for alcohol and firearms before stepping off. The local town vigilance committees, on the other hand, raided union offices and the homes of miners; destroyed property; and detained, abused and violated the rights of strikers, often abandoning them in the middle of nowhere. The practice of abandoning union supporters in isolated border areas was called “white capping.” Prohibition laws were often abused to these ends, and the governor used this pretext to reincarnate the hated Colorado state police. In the state, picketing was illegal, but, if the struggle was to be successful, this law needed to be sidestepped. Over and over again the miners and organizers “pushed aside local law enforcement” to gain access to “company property.” Without doing this, the mines could have been kept open using scabs and the effort might have floundered. There were many marches, some led by the wives and daughters of miners, which moved against the jails and coal operations in the towns of Berwind Canyon, in the south where Ludlow was situated, and these never shied away from contact with the authorities. Joanna Sampson writes that the mines began to close, and to everyone’s surprise “the infamous IWW was now conducting the most successful coal strike in Colorado history.”

Richard Myers, in an essay titled “The Women Of The ‘Twenties Coal Strikes,” writes that workers rarely found the time to record their own history, and that this is especially true of the “militant and ag-



Graphic: rebelgraphics.org

gressive actions of women.” Throughout the period, women were often “among the most militant” activists in coal mining struggles, because these efforts were “strikes of the people,” of “entire...communities.” (If you read descriptions of company towns like Serene, you get a picture of a prison camp, complete with hired gunmen, barbed wire and roving searchlights. Women did not toil in coal in significant numbers until the 1970s, so when they broke onto the scene in earlier decades, the struggle became about so much more). The media of the day derided these women strikers as “Amazonian rioters,” but their deadly serious intent was to close the mines, and thereby force a favorable resolution. The names of women began to appear in local papers. This included Santa Benash and Amelia Sablich, the children of Croatian miners with childhood experiences as far back as the UMWA strike of 1914, and Ruby Arellano and her indigenous mother Boz Bachaco, all of whom were leading pickets to close the mines and marches to empty the jails. As one was arrested another would always step forward. The *Denver Morning Post*, on day 15 of the strike, reported that only “12 mines were still operating, while 113... had been closed.” Losses at the time were estimated to be well over \$1 million.

Phil Goodstein, in his contribution, writes about how the Columbine Mine, in Serene, was 100 percent out, but the bosses managed to keep it running with scab labor. The IWW made this Weld County mine a focal point of the effort, and many realized that the union’s success there would determine the fate of the strike. On Nov. 21, 1927, a march like many others commenced early against the mine, but this time Louis N. Scherf of the newly-constituted state police (or Law Enforcement Department) lay in wait. Scherf had the ignoble distinction of having participated, with the U.S. National Guard, in the Ludlow Massacre of 1914. Many local editors did not shy away from inciting violence against the strikers, and on Nov. 16, the *Denver Morning Post* proclaimed in a headline: “Machine Gun And Ammunition Taken To Columbine Mine.” IWW organizer Adam Bell and the mother of 16 children, Elizabeth Beranek, led the march. As they sought to push past obstacles both were beaten down, after having been warned. In the confusion that ensued, the miners and their families were fired upon, hemmed in by gates and barbed wire in a space they called “Death Alley.” Scores were wounded and, eventually, six miners would die: John Eastenes, Nick Spanudakhis, J.R. Davies, George Kosvich, E.R. Jacques and Mike Vidovitch.

One contributor writes: “That the strike was about to become successful was bad enough. That success could be claimed by the radical IWW was intolerable.”

With the killings at the mine, the U.S. National Guard was called into play, and military detention facilities were set up. According to Richard Myers, the state police “arrested and jailed the strike leaders, charging them with responsibility for the deaths in the incident.” On Nov. 22 and

23, a “coroner’s inquest” was held on the deaths of just two miners, and this restricted affair declared that these “deaths [were] not felonious,” and also “decreed invalid” the murder warrants taken out by the families of the victims. Goodstein claims that hard decisions like this led to more violence, and, in the first month of 1928, as the strike dragged on, two Mexican miners were murdered at the IWW hall after a parade through Walsenburg. The final investigation by the state was concluded by the Colorado Industrial Commission in March 1928. The Commission found that the “main cause” of the troubles was that the miners could not bargain with their employers. The logic of this exercise in denial leads inexorably to Josephine Roche. Roche inherited the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, went to Vassar and Columbia University, studying with Frances Perkins. She worked with George Creel and the Committee on Public Information (CPI), and later founded an English-only type private effort called the Foreign Language Information Service which sought to make immigrants less threatening. The CPI, a government-sponsored propaganda effort, “fanned the flames of hysteria against all who questioned” World War I, and undertook “100 percent American” campaigns against “subversives” fit only for imprisonment, death or deportation. Roche, a reformist inheritor, picked John Lawson, a “UMWA organizer of the Ludlow days” to help manage her company, and, in this way, a boss came to write the first UMWA contract for some Colorado miners.

Klemente Chavez and Celestino Martinez are the two names of the Mexican miners who were murdered in Walsenburg after the heartless decision of the state.

The massacre of moviegoers in Aurora, Colo., and of the Lonmin platinum miners in South Africa were bookends for this review as it was being written. For all the differences of context between centuries and continents, the one constant seems to be a deep, almost invisible, culture of violence. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, in Afghanistan, walks off his post and goes on a murderous rampage, wanders back and turns himself in. James Holmes leaves his apartment for a midnight showing of a blockbuster film, kills in the dark, and then surrenders in a parking lot. Total war in foreign policy seeps back into the domestic culture, brutalizing everyone; films mine violence, tearing at the mind, just like the corporations that tear at people and the earth. In Colorado, in the late 19th Century, the power of the state had been given over to private interests, and law and order came to mean the destruction of the Western Federation of Miners. In the beginning, it was the region’s indigenous people who were dehumanized and removed. At some point, there needs to be a turning away from violence; perhaps the words of IWW organizer Paul Siedler, from the first week of the struggle, suggest another path: “You are not to abuse anyone. You are not to strike anyone. Tell them that they are hurting themselves as well as the rest of us...If anyone is going to get killed, let it be one of our men first.”

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Wobbly Arts

Union Pretend

By John Kaniecki

The CEO said to Union Pretend
How's it going my good old friend?
Mighty fine, mighty fine
How are the workers my sweet dear?
Keeping em in line, keeping em in line
Create an atmosphere of constant fear
The CEO grumbled "They get too much pay"
Ain't there a scheme to take it away?
Hmmm said Union Pretend let me think
I'll consult the sell outs and my fink
I believe we could create another war
It's an old trick but it worked well before
We'll scream patriotism and have the flag wave
Tell em we all gotta sacrifice and be brave
Then of course the profits will soar
We'll pay them less and work em more

In his heart the CEO hated Union Pretend
In fact he wanted all thoughts of Unions to end
But for now he needed to put on a show
A few more years maybe it wouldn't be so
So Big Bucks poured the expensive French wine
A toast was made to the ruling elite
Thing are going just mighty fine
The drink was poison but tasted oh so sweet

River Road

By Hal Ridley, Jr.

Here are the lyrics to one of my songs. I lived on the River Road south of New Orleans in St. Barnard for awhile.

Where I am bound I don't know where
Should I arrive I guess I will be there
When I am gone who will even care
This road is long and hard and steep
And the valley beyond is wide and deep
And the river that flows there down to the sea
It only goes where it can be free
The ways are many the journeys few
The endings all the same the beginning's always new
And everything that is is bought and sold
It all passes down by the River Road
And all who've come and all who've gone
They've all stood on those banks at dawn
And all that's taught or ever been told
I slipped away when we got caught
We all went down by the River Road.
So when we could and when we would
We whispered of things like freedom or brotherhood
Well maybe it is or it ain't to be
But it's up to us we all said to set us free
So let it go and grab a hold
It's up to you to come with me
I'm headed down the River Road

Give Me

By William P. Meyers

This poem originally appeared in the Summer 2012 issue of the Redwood Coast Review, edited by Stephen Kessler. It was reprinted with permission from the author.

Give me your tired, your hungry, your poor.
I will hoe them in the cotton fields,
Spin away their lives in mills,
Reduce them to patterns in sweatshops.

Give me your brawny brave men,
I will smelt them in steel mills,
Lay them out alongside rails,
Machine them into automatons.

Give me your farmers eager for soil.
On lands fertile with Indian graves
I will plow their hearts into
Amber waves of grain.

I will grind them in the flour mills
Cut them up in the meatpacking plants,
Flatten them in tin mills
Bury them in mines.

I will batten on them in company stores,
Pave them into roads for my commerce,
Make them the bricks and mortar of my banks,
Rivet their attention into skyscrapers and bridges.

Tell them, across the oceans,
They will be fortunate; over the last centuries my kindness has grown.
For they will not arrive in chains from Africa,
Or indentured from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland,
To be worked to death before our contract requires
My granting them freedom and a suit of clothes.



Graphic: Melbourne IWW

Capitalism

By John Kaniecki

Ain't no salvation
Found in a corporation
Just slavery
And misery
The pays too little
And the stress too great
Always in the middle
Of a dishonest debate
Constantly trying to ensure
Profits will soar
No matter what
Morals are forgot
Let alone the Love inside
That is constantly denied



Graphic: radicalgraphics.org

In The Rocket's Red Glare

By Álvaro Galván

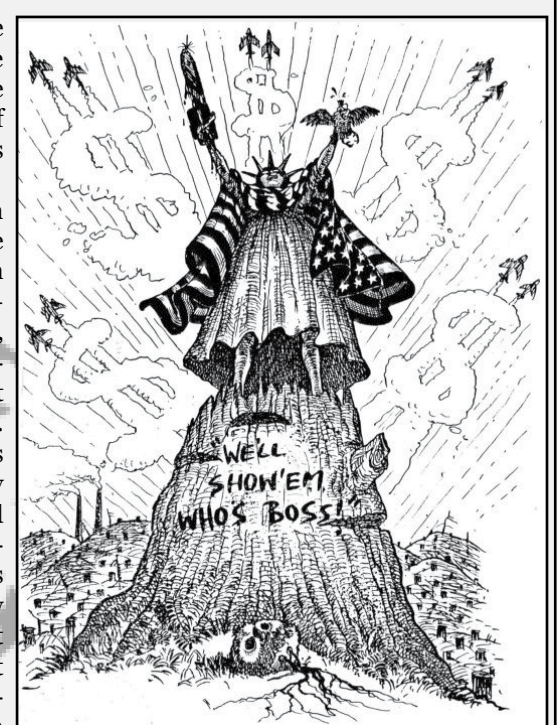
When midnight hit on this year's Fourth of July, it clocked in day four of indefinite general strike in Cajamarca. The Peruvian city sits next to the largest gold mine in the world—a pit that drains the region of water, and leaks mercury into what little is left. The American company running it, Newmont, has been fighting to expand it into the remaining wetlands around the city. Some hoped the plan would be foiled last year, when Peru elected Ollanta Humala on an anti-mine expansion platform. However, today he openly supports the mine—and police in Cajamarca, currently under a “state of emergency,” have been shooting at protesters with live ammunition. It is an old story in Latin America: the people elect leftists, only to be governed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (which owns a quarter of the Cajamarca mine). Economic conquistadores march alongside armed ones: there are North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military “facilities,” programs, troops, or construction projects in Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, el Salvador, French Guiana, Gadeloupe, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and (of course) Puerto

Rico.

The Fourth of July, I have been told, is not about America over all others—it is about democracy, freedom, and independence. The flag is waved, I hear, to celebrate the revolutionary spirit that inspired those who, in colonial times, threw off the chains of foreign rule. I have also heard many easy rebuttals: that 1776 was a bourgeois revolt that left power in a fistful of hands (a handful of fists); or that today's United States only looks democratic, free, or independent through some pretty heavy squinting. To someone who grew up in the neo-colonies, however, those answers miss the point. There is something of a democracy in the United States: like classical Greece, an enfranchised few collectively rule the disenfranchised many. I can hear you thinking “the 1 percent,” and in many ways it is true that they have much of the real control. However, they are only the most privileged of the privileged: working-class Americans benefit from the United States' global dominance, and their compliance is bought partly with bribes (cheap inputs and captive markets) and partly with real agency (access to the offices of power, to minutes and records and public conversations in the mass media). It is a privilege to be American, any American, because no American law or policy will ever be overturned by the IMF or World Bank, and there is no foreign

army stationed in the country. The media are controlled from within the United States, and the rulers of the world think (if cynically) in terms of Americans' interests. Colonial times are not behind us.

When we have one-on-ones with our coworkers, we meet them where they are politically and work on bringing them into anti-capitalism—but also anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia. We understand that class today isn't about money alone (in fact, it never was). It is time we understood that it is also about nationality. The many self-governing nations of the world are a myth. We live in a global empire, where national sovereignty is reserved for a select few (notice how as we watch, Europe is being cut out of the imperial center—for the first time ever, the IMF has a role in European affairs). American patriotism is not equivalent to, say, Uruguayan patriotism: it cannot be dismissed as a harmless sentimental attachment. To celebrate the stars and stripes is to celebrate a dominant group, and to glorify it is to implicitly justify its dominance. We must engage with patriotic Americans as carefully as we engage with proud “real men,” or people who praise “western civilization.” If we do not, our solidarity will be limited, and



Graphic: radicalgraphics.org

weaker for it—no worker in Cajamarca will trust someone wearing an American flag pin. Even in our domestic work, the IWW will fail to resonate with immigrants if Wobblies cannot understand why we feel so threatened by all those explosives in the sky on your national holiday. The rocket's red glare is all too present in our minds.

Literature Department



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Analysis

Class, Struggle And The State

By Nate Hawthorne

“Politics begin where millions of men and women are; where there are not thousands, but millions.” Lenin wrote that. Whatever else there is to say about that quote and about Lenin, it’s true that larger and larger struggles pose new challenges for our activities and ideas. In my opinion the IWW today has largely been dealing with relatively small struggles. As we move into the future and get bigger, and as unrest spreads throughout the working class, we will confront new questions and aspects of capitalism that we haven’t had to deal with.

Capitalist employers hire waged workers to create goods or services which the capitalist owns. The capitalist sells these goods or services for more money than the cost of the materials and the wages of the people who used those materials to make the good or service. When workers work on something, we increase its value. We’re not paid the full value of that increase. The capitalist keeps some of it. The share that the capitalist keeps is called surplus value. This is what capitalist employers live on. (This very brief account of capitalism is paraphrased from Karl Marx’s pamphlet, “Value, Price, and Profit,” which our Preamble quotes. I recommend reading that pamphlet online at <http://recomposition.info/?p=524>).

We in the IWW have primarily dealt with individual employers or small groups of employers. At this level, capitalists have a good sense of their interests. They understand that their employees produce surplus value, and the rest of the economy helps make sure that capitalists act appropriately. All things being equal, a capitalist who pays higher wages than other capitalists who sell similar goods and services will fall behind and eventually go out of business if they don’t cut wages. If capitalist employers don’t get enough surplus value from employees, they face penalties, which help ensure that employers are aware of their interests as employers.

An employer’s awareness of their interests in relation to their employees is not the same thing as being a class-conscious capitalist, however. Every capitalist is a capitalist in relation to his or her employees, but not every capitalist acts in ways that are favorable to the capitalist class as a whole or the long-term life of the capital-

ist system. Similarly, anyone who works for a living is in some way aware of the power relationships involved in being an employee—but not all employees are class-conscious workers. Workers sometimes act in ways that are bad for other workers, or the working class as a whole. Similar things can happen with capitalists. Being a worker doesn’t automatically provide working-class consciousness. Likewise, being a capitalist doesn’t automatically make someone a class-conscious capitalist. This is part of why capitalists need the State. The State helps identify needs for the current capitalist system and needs of the long-term health of the capitalist system, and it tries to get capitalists to act in line with those perceived systemic needs.

The historian Eugene Genovese wrote, “The great object of social reform is to prevent a fundamental change in class relations.” This means that reformers “must fight against those reactionaries who cannot understand the need for secondary, although not necessarily trivial, change in order to prevent deeper change...reactionaries will insist that any change, no matter how slight, will set in motion forces of dissolution.” Sometimes capitalists oppose reform because they’re ideologically reactionary; sometimes they do so because they believe that they will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage in the new version of capitalism that will exist after the reform. The actions of the State help create capitalist class consciousness or at least to discipline capitalists to act in ways that planners believe are good for capitalism. In some cases this can result in long-term benefits to capitalists, but in other cases it involves some companies being put out of business and, eventually, some of them or their descendants being ejected out of the capitalist class. This is part of why capitalists hesitate in the face of State-introduced changes: they know that some capitalists are willing to throw other capitalists under the bus. No capitalist wants to lose, because ultimately they or their children might have to actually work for a living.

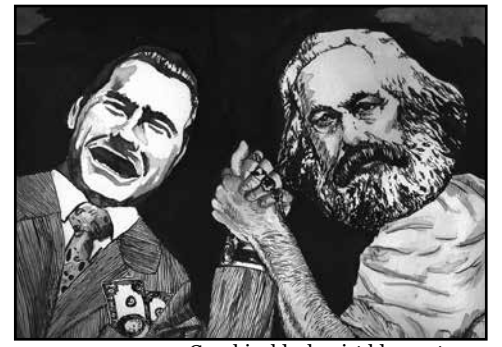
The State helps identify problems tied to the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. Visionary capitalists and their functionaries in foundations and think tanks use the State to put forward proposals and communicate them to others to try

to convince them of this view. If that fails, with enough political support from other capitalists (and some workers, in many cases), particular parts of the capitalist class can get the State to discipline individual capitalists who aren’t acting in line with what is believed to be the capitalist class’ overall interests. To quote Genovese again, those capitalists “who most clearly perceived interest and needs of the class as a whole—steadily worked to make their class more conscious.” This requires the capitalist class moving from just reacting to circumstance to “consciously striving to shape the world in its own image.” The government is how these visionary capitalist leaders discipline their class and through it, the working class as well. This means that the government, including the court system is “an instrument by which the advanced section of the ruling class imposes its viewpoint upon the class as a whole and the wider society. The law must discipline the ruling class.” Capitalists use State power to organize and discipline their class.

All of this sheds light on State enforcement of labor law. In 1935, the U.S. Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in an attempt to answer some problems within actually existing capitalism, but to do so on capitalism’s own terms. Supporters of the NLRA argued that State backing of workers organizing would result in more money in the pockets of more workers, making workers more able to buy goods, thus encouraging economic activity. Another argument that supporters made was that the NLRA would prevent conflicts that would disrupt the economy by channeling and shaping workers’ struggles in a direction that posed less of a problem than other forms of struggle. The NLRA brought the power of the State to bear on U.S. employers to make them act more in line with what policymakers and economic planners thought the capitalist system needed. The politicians who created the NLRA had to overcome the opposition of many capitalists, and yet the changes were made in order to preserve the long-term health of capitalism in the United States. In the article “A Debate On Collective Bargaining And The IWW,” which appeared on page 7 of the December 2011 *Industrial Worker*, I used these points to argue against the IWW pursuing collective bargaining. I think this is a good argument against collective bargaining, but it poses questions beyond that. Here’s Genovese again: “The collective judgment of the ruling class, coherently organized in the common interest, cannot be expected to coincide with the sum total of the individual interests and judgments of its members...because the law tends to reflect the will of the most politically coherent and determined fraction.” What’s best for the capitalist class as a whole may involve most of the capitalists throwing a few capitalists under the bus.

Some of us have discussed workplace organizing outside the legal framework of collective bargaining, sometimes called “solidarity unionism,” “minority unionism” or “direct unionism.” These approaches still fall somewhat within the bounds of the law, because the NLRA included language stating that “Employees shall have the right of self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.” While collective bargaining was what economic planners preferred, legal support for workers’ “self-organization...for the purpose of...mutual aid” means that direct unionism can be just as legally protected as contract unionism.

This legal protection is curious. It might be in order to encourage or channel workers’ struggles into some forms over others. It might be that by allowing some measure of redress, labor law helps



Graphic: blackwrist.blogspot.com

make workers’ grievances something that can potentially be addressed within the capitalist system and under capitalist governments. This is something for us to think about in our use of State resources and enforcement provisions, such as Wobblies in the United States filing Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges with the National Labor Relations Board. There is much to be said about problems that can result from this. Filing ULP charges doesn’t necessarily reinforce capitalism or bad ideas among workers, but we might inadvertently encourage the view, or the reality, that the current system can accommodate workers’ grievances. We should discuss better and worse ways to make use of this aspect of State power against employers.

More fundamentally, I think legal protection for concerted activity exists for the same reason the United States protects collective bargaining: sometimes workers’ struggles can help advanced class conscious capitalists and the State preserve capitalism. When it backs workers’ struggles some of the time, the State bets on those struggles to help capitalism in the long term. Workers’ struggles can help discipline capitalists into acting in ways that support capitalism, and help identify problems that create greater friction between classes. (For an excellent discussion of this dynamic, see chapter 10 of Marx’s “Capital” on the working day, online at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch10.htm>. This chapter is worth reading whether or not you have read the rest of the book).

I am not saying struggle always reinforces capitalism, but I think this does pose questions for us as people who struggle for both short-term improvements and the end of capitalism altogether. Workers’ struggles can sometimes be temporarily used by some capitalists to get an advantage over others and can sometimes be used to strengthen the system and boost profits by creating innovations within capitalist institutions. This can happen even when struggles are strongly opposed by actually existing capitalists because the capitalists don’t always act in the interests of their class as a whole. The fact that capitalists fight hard against a reform can sometimes make it seem like a struggle or victory is more radical than it is. None of this means we should not struggle; it means that we should pay attention to how our current short-term struggles fit within the larger set of conflicts and changes within capitalism.

Finally, State protection of concerted activity is something that we should reflect on as we engage in conversations like the discussion about direct unionism. We want more than just unions that go outside the contractual collective bargaining. This is one failing of “Direct Unionism: A Discussion Paper” (see <http://libcom.org/library/debate-direct-unionism>). It’s easy to read this discussion paper as saying that using direct action to get the goods is automatically radical. It’s not. Direct unionism doesn’t matter much unless it’s revolutionary unionism. While struggle over immediate conditions and the struggle to end capitalism are clearly connected, it’s not the case that victory in any particular struggle over the terms of life and work under capitalism is also a victory that brings us closer to the end of capitalism. That’s why we not only believe in direct action, we also call for the abolition of the wage system.

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The Greek Crisis And You: Lessons Of A Political Sea Change

Note: The regular International Solidarity Commission column will not be appearing this month, and will resume in the November Industrial Worker.

By Megan Cornish,
Freedom Socialist

Greece is several hours ahead of the United States on world clocks. But midnight will strike in Washington as surely as it does in Athens. Draconian austerity plans already begun in Greece will ripple to the United States. And the June national election in Greece has a U.S. counterpart in November and beyond.

Working people in both countries face a plummeting standard of living, with no end in sight. Capitalist rulers rely on the usual lies to justify their class warfare. They insist that Greek workers created the crisis by living above their means. U.S. suf-

ferers of the mortgage and foreclosure crisis can easily recognize this whopper. In reality, working people everywhere live below their means, because the wealth of banks and corporations comes from defrauding them and devaluing their labor.

Greek workers and youth are resisting the attacks. The lessons of their unfolding struggle apply directly to U.S. labor. Indeed, solidarity between the two is a key to victory on both sides of the Atlantic.

Austerity — and rebellion

The world economic crisis that began with the collapse of the U.S. housing market hit Greece hard. The government was already deep in debt because of scandalously low corporate taxes and massive business subsidies. Goldman Sachs and other banksters helped the corrupt government hide its debts, and then speculated against them, driving interest rates on the loans to ruinous heights. This put Greek banks in crisis, and the government propped them up too. Now the powers that be insist on making the working class pay. The “troika” of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund renegotiated loans, at the price of deep cuts in social services, wages and pensions, and privatization of state enterprises.

Much has been slashed, but the blood suckers want more. Corporations and the wealthy thumb their noses at the notion of paying taxes.

Greek workers and youth have fought back valiantly. Labor has held 17 one-day and two-day general strikes since 2009, and other strikes abound. In 2011, youth started the “struggle in the squares” encampment movement (much like Occupy Wall Street). An outraged populace surrounded parliament three times last year.

Cracking the two-party shell game

The attack on Greek workers has been a bipartisan affair by the nominally socialist Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the openly conservative New Democracy Party. This is like the good cop/bad cop ploy played in the United States by Democrats and Republicans. In this economic crisis, Democrats move to the right, becoming nearly indistinguishable from conservatives in their social service cutbacks and support for imperial war.

Likewise, PASOK had been in power, leading the austerity drive. In Greece’s national election on June 16, PASOK took a big hit, dropping to just 12.6 percent of the vote. It is part of the European tradition of “social democratic” parties which give lip service to workers’ rights, but betray them by carrying out the agenda of the banks and bosses.

New Democracy (ND) is proudly pro-capitalist and pro-austerity. It narrowly

won the June vote, polling 29.7 percent due to a fierce fear campaign by the ruling class. But its position is tenuous. It needs PASOK and the even smaller Democratic Left to carry out its policies.

The anti-austerity left-wing coalition party, Syriza, came in a close second, with 26.9 percent. Its dramatic rise from a blip on the radar screen to a major political force left no doubt that Greek work-

ers are rejecting the old parties that have run—and ruined—their lives.

But Syriza, which gained voter support by steadfastly opposing austerity, is falling short in providing the bold anti-capitalist leadership the resistance needs to win.

Syriza’s contradictory program calls for nationalizing banks, privatized companies and raising tax rates on the rich. Yet it also calls for postponing the punishing loan payments until the Greek economy “recovers.” This pushes the illusion that capitalism can recover without impoverishing workers.

The danger of fascism

In Greece, fascists are taking advantage of rising insecurity due to the crisis. The anti-immigrant and homophobic Golden Dawn party made slim, but real gains in the elections. Its thugs roamed the streets, attacking immigrants and leftists, while police supporters gave cover. Big capitalists historically back these anti-labor bigots, unleashing them if they feel sufficiently threatened by workers’ resistance.

Anti-immigrant militias and fascists are also on the move in the United States. They foster every backward ideology from racism to homophobia to misogyny. A left-wing alternative that mobilizes workers and defends the targeted is essential to prevent the rise of fascism.

The road ahead

In these times of world economic crisis, new perils and new opportunities abound. For the global laboring class, a favorable outcome depends on its ability to develop solidarity and anti-capitalist political independence.

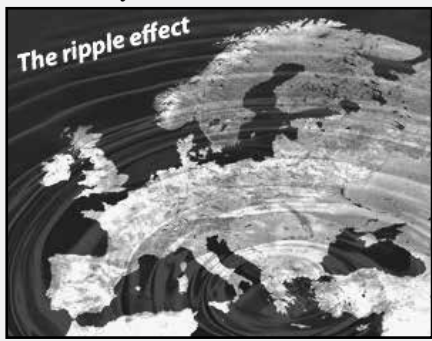
Many in Greece and the United States are in denial, but society under capitalism is at a dead end. It is not just having a few bad years. It is in long-term decline, with boom times getting shorter, and busts prolonged. In every country, the rulers offer nothing but increasing poverty, with underpay and overwork for some, unemployment for the rest.

Luckily, workers are the overwhelming majority, and their interests are those of society as a whole. They have the power to take over private enterprises, hold the wealth collectively, and run things truly democratically. This is the only humane solution. Greek labor and youth are starting to break politically with the pro-capitalist parties that would lead them to ruin.

U.S. workers have farther to go to break with misleaders. They haven’t yet built mass movements that can withstand liberal lies and increasing repression. But they are resourceful and unbroken. As the crisis deepens, fighting back will bring confidence and political savvy.

So, just as the hour on Greece’s clocks will soon be the hour in the United States, so do the current Greek political and social battles show U.S. workers what lies ahead.

This piece appeared in its original format in Freedom Socialist newspaper, Vol. 33, No. 4, August-September 2012.



Graphic: socialism.com

Striking Miners Killed In South Africa

From libcom.org

On Aug. 16, seven striking miners were gunned down and killed by security forces at a South African platinum mine. (Editor’s note: This number has gone up to more than 30 miners killed at press time). The killings are the latest in a long line of deaths during a strike that is complicated by a bitter and violent inter-union dispute over membership numbers.

Just prior to the killings, South African police ordered thousands of striking miners to leave the vicinity of the Lonmin Marikana platinum mine, or face being forcibly removed. Up to 3,000 police officers, an elite paramilitary unit, supported by horses and helicopters, confronted the miners and delivered their ultimatum.

Just before the police attacked the strikers, a spokesman said, “Today is unfortunately D-day. It is an illegal gathering. We’ve tried to negotiate and we’ll try again but if that fails, we’ll obviously have to go to a tactical phase.”

The president of the Association of

Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) responded by saying, “There will be bloodshed if the police move in. We are going nowhere. If need be, we are prepared to die here.”

In August alone, at least 10 people, including two policemen, have been killed in a violent turf war between two “rival” trade unions which is running alongside the strike.

The dispute is over membership, and is between the AMCU and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and has been ongoing for around eight months.

The NUM is viewed as “moderate” and no longer looking after its members’ needs, whereas AMCU are supposedly more militant and ready to confront the bosses. AMCU are alleged to be using “strong arm” tactics in order to get members to change affiliation.

Apart from the temporary inconvenience of lost production, the bosses must be absolutely delighted that working people prefer to fight each other rather than the real enemy.



Photo: libcom.org

What Is Obama’s Role In North Korea?

By an anarchist

Claiming that North Korea had broken previous agreements made with the United States, the Obama administration announced in late March that it would be canceling plans to supply North Korean children and pregnant mothers with food aid. Mercy Corps’ North Korean Program Director David Austin lamented the announcement and told Al Jazeera that orphans at their centers were currently receiving as little as 60 percent of their normal food rations. The United Nations currently estimates that around 3 million people in North Korea could go hungry due to inadequate food supplies.

The decision to cancel the shipment of 240,000 metric tons of food aid centered around the controversy caused by North Korea’s launch of a rocket. North Korea claimed the rocket was a satellite, however *Wired* reports that this is possibly not the case. The Obama administration, without supplying any evidence, insisted that this rocket launch was, in fact, a test of a ballistic missile. Therefore, Obama claimed, this left the administration with no other option but to cut off the food aid. Contrary to the Obama administration’s claims, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) political analyst Jim Walsh told *Al Jazeera* in an interview, “Frankly, this missile test, technically, in terms of military capability, means nothing.”

On April 14, the rocket was launched. It was soon discovered that the rocket had in fact disintegrated mid-flight and that the launch was a complete failure. However, the Obama administration was unperturbed, thus confirming that the United States was still going through with its decision to cut off food aid. Considering that Obama’s decision will deprive thousands of North Korean children of desperately-needed food aid, it seems highly inappropriate that Obama would comment that North Korea, “has been trying to launch missiles like this for over a decade now and they don’t seem to be real good at it.”

Unsurprisingly, it was universally accepted as fact in the corporate media that this had been the failed test of a ballistic missile. I have seen no evidence provided by any news source that this is actually the case. Furthermore, nowhere in the corporate media is the history of U.S. provocations against North Korea discussed. Just two years earlier, on July 25, 2010, the United States and South Korea launched Operation Invaluable Spirit—a massive military training exercise involving 8,000 U.S. and South

Korean troops, 200 aircraft and 20 ships. Invaluable Spirit took place right in the Sea of Japan. This is comparable to Cuba launching massive military training exercises in conjunction with the Venezuelan military in the Gulf of Mexico. To claim that the failed test of some rocket that disintegrated in mid-flight constitutes enough of a provocation to threaten what U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton calls “appropriate action,” and the cutting off of food aid to starving children should raise at least a few eyebrows.

Also missing from this narrative is the fact that the United States is partially to blame for some of the economic woes in North Korea. The United States has implemented full sanctions against the country for 60 years, forcing the international community to partially implement similar sanctions by the 1990s. It is likely that North Korea was never even fully able to rebuild their agricultural sector following the absolute devastation wrought upon it by the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Of course the tyrannical rule of Kim Jung-Il and now Kim Jung-Un bears the majority of the blame for the current food crisis in North Korea, but depriving orphans and pregnant mothers of food aid will not destabilize the North Korean government. Furthermore, this whole episode bears an eerie resemblance to the U.S.-led sanctions regime imposed on Iraq in the 1990s. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates that those sanctions led to the deaths of 500,000 children. Not only did the sanctions regime kill 500,000 children, but also strengthened the grip of Saddam Hussein.

The UNICEF sanctions were implemented under liberal politician Bill Clinton. If there was truly justice in this world Bill Clinton would be arrested and tried for murdering hundreds of thousands of children much like Obama would be called to court for his drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan. Or he would be tried for his unflinching support of Israel in its quest to ethnically cleanse the West Bank and Gaza. Or for continuing to send arms shipments to the Bahraini and Egyptian governments so that they can use the arms to slaughter protesters. And what is sad is that Obama is the more humane of the two candidates that our corporate masters force us to choose between. The IWW believes in a world where people are not governed by mass murderers, and a world where we are not forced to choose between two sides of the same horrid coin.