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Where Are The Working-Class Women Novelists?

Howdy again, Fellow Workers:

This is a response to "Where Are The Working Class Women Novelists?" (March *IW*, page 8). If FW William Hastings is looking for a great example of a proletarian feminist novel, may I suggest "The Girl" by Meridel Le Sueur? Originally written during the 1930s, this book was suppressed from publication until 1978, when it was finally issued by the Marxist publisher West End Press.

Meridel Le Sueur was the stepdaughter of Arthur Le Sueur, former Socialist mayor of Minot, N.D. When the family moved to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the Le Sueur home became a sanctuary for radicals of every persuasion—including our own Joe Hill! As a young woman, Meridel Le Sueur wrote for *New Masses* and *The American Mercury*, amongst other publications. She wrote about such topics as unemployment, migrant workers, Native American rights and feminism. Due to her prominence as a voice in anti-war and other left wing causes (and her membership in the Communist Party), she was

blacklisted throughout the 1950s.

"The Girl" traces the young adult life of a naive farm girl during the Depression period of the 1930s and witnesses her plummeting deeper and deeper into the economic servitude of the corrupt capitalist system. "The Girl" was written while Le Sueur was living at the Workers Alliance warehouse; and, while portions of the novel appeared in leftist publications throughout the late 1930s, it remained unpublished as a whole, due to its bleakness and its outright radical nature.

After its publication and rediscovery in 1978, "The Girl" was hailed by at least one critic as the "portal" to contemporary 20th century proletarian feminist writing, and Le Sueur is now regarded as one of America's most significant proto-feminist writers.

I just checked a couple online sites and "The Girl" is once again in print. While at times too overly dramatic in style, it still packs a punch to the capitalist gut. Check it out for yourself!

- FW D. Kingsley Hahn, X365465

No Need To Shamelessly Lash Out At Comrades

Fellow Workers,

I read FW Martin Comack's letter ("Democracy And 'Moral Right,'" March *IW*, page 2) attacking FWs Don M. and Brendan Carrell's excellent piece on the Oakland strike with great dismay. It's a shame that FW Comack feels the need to so shamelessly lash out at his comrades over nothing. His stale diatribe about "Marxism" and "vanguards" doesn't have the slightest thing to do with the content of the article in question, and is only divisiveness for its own sake.

The absurdity is compounded by the fact that he concludes the letter by agreeing with the article's final conclusions! Comack's letter never should have been written, and hopefully its poisonous, non-comradely non-criticisms will sink out of the IWW's collective consciousness just as they came in.

In solidarity,
C.A. Parks
Omaha, Nebraska

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Sports

The Working Class & The Exploiting Class Have Nothing In Common

By Neil Parthun and David Johnson

Shahid Khan is a very wealthy man. He owns a \$112 million yacht. He is the chairman of Flightstar Aircraft Management. He is the owner of Flex-N-Gate, a \$3 billion car bumper manufacturing company with a worldwide presence, which employs over 12,000 people. Khan is also a major figure in east central Illinois. As a graduate of the University of Illinois, he has donated millions of dollars towards research scholarships, the building of an outdoor tennis court and an annex for the College of Applied Health Science. Sports fans may recognize the name as he purchased the Jacksonville Jaguars football team for \$760 million in December 2011.

Despite his prominent status, especially in the community, Flex-N-Gate workers have come forward to blow the whistle on the conditions in Flex-N-Gate plants. As Khan finalized the purchase of the Jaguars, workers filed complaints against Flex-N-Gate, alleging over 30 violations of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. The employees allege that:

- The company has not provided sufficient training and communication on what chemicals workers are exposed to and the potential adverse health effects.
- The company does not give workers access to proper personal protection.
- The company's practices and procedures subject workers to unsafe conditions.

Most of the workers' complaints are centered on exposure to a known carcinogen, hexavalent chromium. Helavalent chromium was made infamous in the film "Erin Brockovich." The chemical can also cause allergic reactions and breathing problems. These unsafe conditions also include a number of fires that have occurred at the Urbana, Ill. plant from 2004 to 2011.

For dealing with these unsafe conditions, the workers are paid at near-poverty

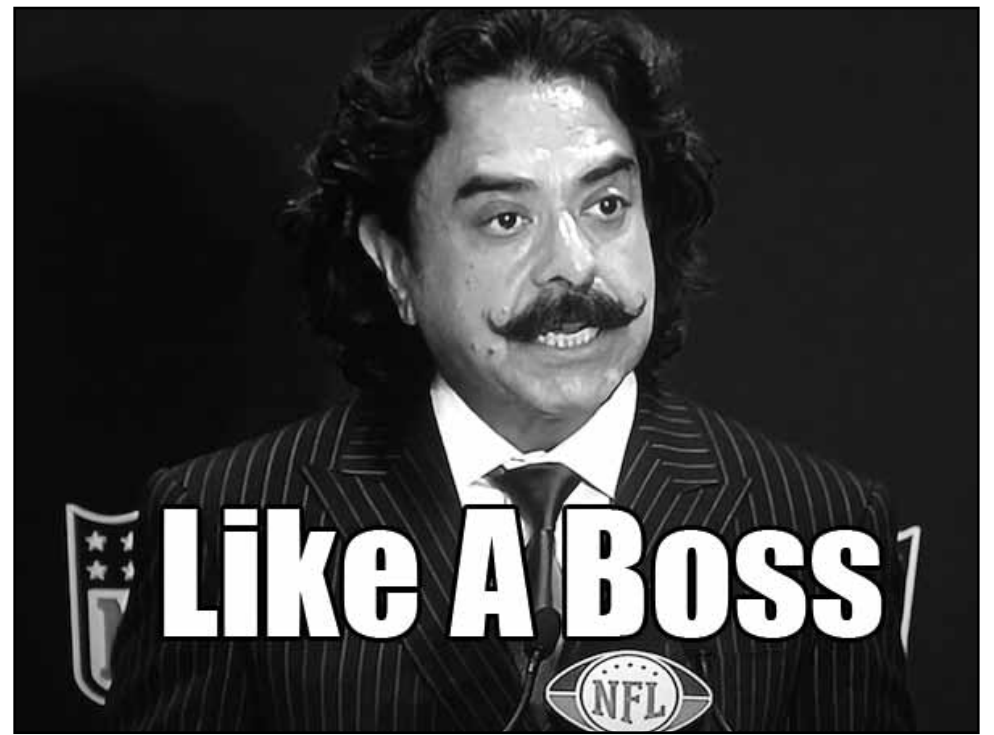
levels. To prevent organizing or planned protest, the bosses have been pitting the workers against each other. The bosses have attempted to use privileges and work conditions to try to break unity between the white, African-American, Congolese and Latino workers.

Workers who have made their complaints public have faced retaliation inside the plant, such as having their work hours changed. They also face retaliation outside the plant. On the weekend of Feb. 11, many of the Congolese Flex-N-Gate workers and their families received notices from their landlords that they would not renew the leases. The letter stated the workers had been "less than satisfactory," despite having never being late with rent and never receiving warnings about noise problems or proper maintenance of their apartment. After quick mobilization by local community activists, the company's chief operating officer spent Valentine's Day evening hand delivering letters to the families giving them the opportunity to renew their leases.

Local activists held a rally in support of the Flex-N-Gate workers at the Guardian West plant in Urbana, Ill. Supporters discussed Khan's opulence as compared to the pitiful wages and working conditions suffered by his employees. Activists also noted that Khan avoided paying approximately \$85 million in taxes by using tax havens. Khan can certainly afford to pay his fair share in taxes, provide safety equipment, safe working conditions and a living wage to his employees, but he chooses not to.

While it appears that Khan has a battle on his hands with workers alleging OSHA violations at the Flex-N-Gate work facilities, he is also facing some problems as the owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Soon after buying the team, Khan defined what he thought a fan was during the introduction of the team's new head coach. "For me, a fan is somebody who is a season ticket holder for the Jaguars,"



Shahid Khan doesn't care about working people.

Photo: ridethepine.com

Khan said. "So, that is a key definition we need to get out."

Meanwhile, Jacksonville residents spent hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes on refurbishing the stadium, the city did not receive 25 percent of the money guaranteed for the naming rights of the stadium, and fans were expected to pay an increased average ticket price of \$92.74 (per game) in 2011-2012, as well as for parking and overpriced food and merchandise. Simply put, many fans have been priced out of the stadium that their tax money helped to build.

After the public rightfully attacked these ridiculous comments, Khan later walked the statement back and noted, "All it takes to be a Jaguars fan is to love the Jaguars."

Working people have faced an assault from Khan and the Jaguars. Khan chose not to invest in the proper and necessary safety equipment for his workers while he

chose to spend \$760 million to purchase the Jacksonville National Football League (NFL) franchise. In the days after he purchased the team, he even cut the wages of some of his Flex-N-Gate employees.

Meanwhile, Florida's working families have seen cuts to social services and education as millions are spent funding stadiums—socializing the cost but privatizing the profit for the NFL team. The owner of their favorite team then tells them that unless they spend thousands of dollars on tickets, they are not true fans. Such comments are an affront to sports fans and working people.

For charging such high prices to attend games that many working sports fans are priced out of and for receiving so much corporate welfare from Florida taxpayers, Khan would be best served to work for the interests of regular working people—be they Flex-N-Gate employees or Jaguars fans.

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.

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Towards An Organizational Theory?

By Colin Bossen,
Workers Power Editor

I have been a member of the IWW since 1999, virtually my entire adult life. During my time as a member the union has grown in both numbers and in vibrancy. When I joined the IWW, only a handful of members had any significant organizing experience. Most people joined the union not because they learned about it from a coworker on the job but because they encountered it in a history book or through labor folk music. Often it seemed like the organization functioned more as a historical reenactment society than a revolutionary union. The first branch meetings I attended could be described as meetings of the Society of Creative Anachronism for anarchists. The discussions focused more on the 1921 Kronstadt uprising and leftist soap-boxing in 1910s San Francisco than the plight of contemporary workers.

When Wobblies did try to organize, they generally followed the pattern of the big AFL-CIO unions. Attempts were made to hold National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)-sanctioned elections and negotiate contracts. The majority of these efforts did not result in contracts and failed to build the union in any substantive way. Most of the workers who participated in them quickly became disillusioned with the IWW when the union election was lost.

I did not know it at the time, but the IWW was already changing when I joined. The branches in Portland and Philadelphia started organizing campaigns that did not focus on winning union elections. Instead, they tried to use direct action to make gains on the shop floor. In the *Industrial Worker*, then General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss ran a series of articles on "Minority Unionism" advocating this approach. Through the work of Alexis and a handful of others, members of the union became aware of Staughton Lynd's theory of solidarity unionism. Gradually, it became the union's dominant organizing theory.

As it did, people began to have more success organizing with the IWW. The Starbucks campaign was launched. In Chicago, a couriers union was built that inspired couriers in other cities to organize, and in several North American cities workers began to win small but substantive victories under the Wobbly banner. The evidence of this increased success can be seen in the pages of the *Industrial Worker* itself. The paper used to be largely about organizing by other labor unions. Today, much of its coverage is about Wobbly organizing.

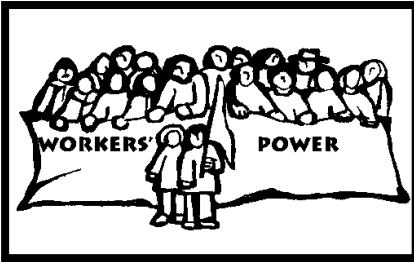
The shift that has taken place within the organization can also be seen the structure of the union itself. In 1999, there was no organizer training program and no organizing department. The coordination that took place between workers organizing in the same industry but in different cities was sporadic at best, and there were few real Wobbly veterans. Sure, there were people who had been members for a long time. But only a handful of them had any experience organizing as Wobblies and trying to build a fighting organization.

That has all changed in the last decade

and a half. In that time-span, the IWW has moved from largely being a labor history and solidarity club to a small vibrant union. The question now: Do we Wobblies have what it takes move our organization from being small and vibrant to large and powerful?

If we want to answer that question in the affirmative, then there are clear things we as a union, and as individual members, need to do. The first, and most important, is to commit to the union for the long haul. The strength of the union is in its members. The more committed we are to building the union, the stronger we will build it. When members with organizing experience stay with the union over the course of years, the collective knowledge of Wobbly organizing grows and becomes something that can be passed on to new members.

Second, we need to focus on developing our infrastructure as an organization. From the 1910s to today, the IWW has been vastly under-resourced for the

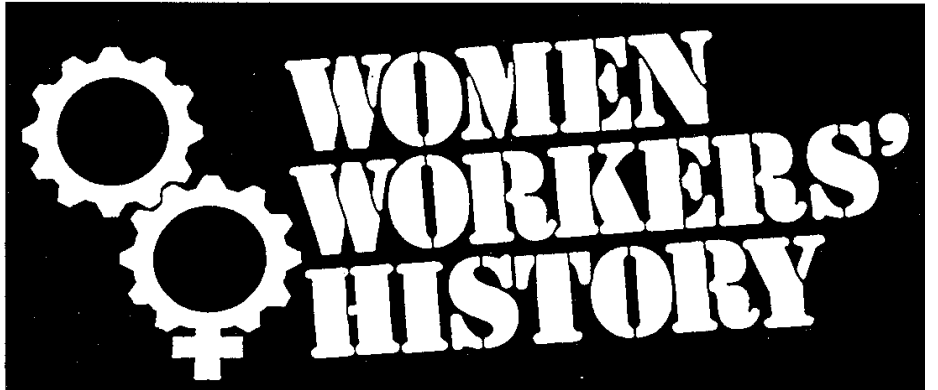


revolutionary hopes we have for it. We have a tiny treasury and cannot effectively support large-scale campaigns. The Unitarian Universalist theologian James Luther Adams used to say that if good is going to win, it has be

formed into institutions. If the IWW is going to succeed, we need to figure out how to systematically develop leaders within the union and on the shop floor. We need to figure out how to aggressively build campaigns that encompass not dozens or hundreds, but thousands of workers.

Over the past five years that I have edited the Workers Power column, I have become convinced that we have a solid, and evolving, organizing theory. What we need to develop more clearly is a theory of organization. Organizational theory has not always been a strong suit of the left. This is one reason why I am so pleased to see "Weakening the Dam," a pamphlet put out by the Twin Cities branch. "Weakening the Dam" collects a half dozen Workers Power columns, some of which start to develop an IWW organizational theory. The columns are not enough, but they are a good starting place. It is my hope that over the next five years, Workers Power can be a place for not only writing about IWW organizing theory but also IWW organizational theory.

I don't know what such an organizational theory will ultimately look like. I would suggest that to develop it we might want to look for help outside the usual radical and historical sources. In my work as a minister I have found that business journals and religious think tanks, including evangelical ones, have excellent resources on how to develop leaders, and create powerful volunteer-run organizations. In the next few years, I will be drawing from these sources and from my own experiences with the IWW, and work for contemporary and historical radicalism to write occasional pieces for Workers Power that offer some suggestions about organizational theory. I hope that some of you will join with me in this effort and contribute your own writings to Workers Power. Send your submissions to forworkerspower@gmail.com.

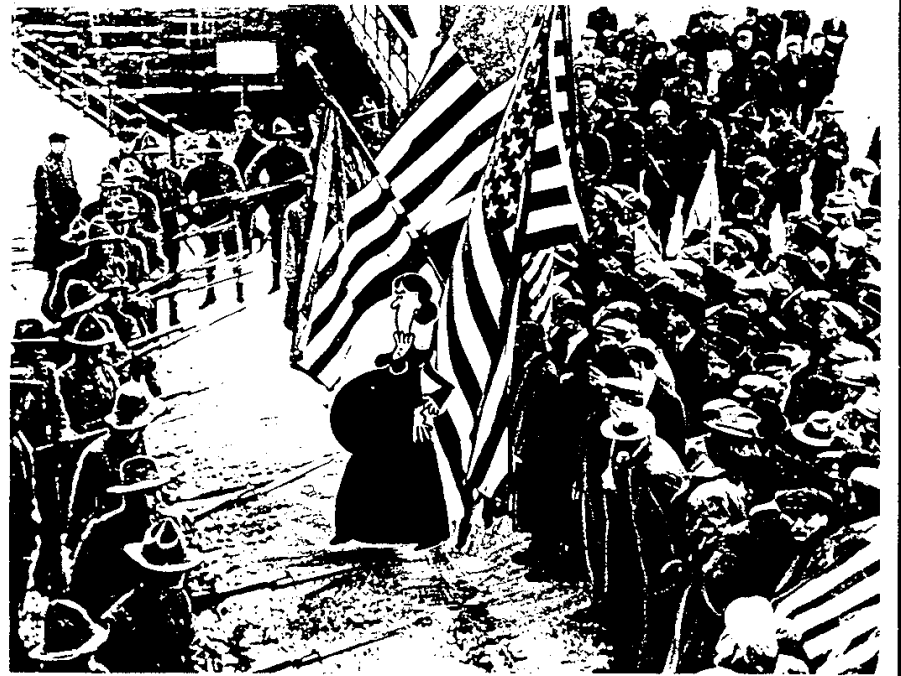


CHAPTER 53 Lawrence: Women at the Front

The American Woolen Co. had the governor call out the National Guard. Lawrence was now filled with soldiers, many of them Harvard students given time off to "have a fling at those people." Rich kids armed with guns joined police in combatting immigrant women, men and children.

The bosses' gunmen found a victim on Jan. 29. Anna LoPezza, a 34-year-old Italian immigrant, was shot through the heart by a soldier as she passed through a demonstration to meet with friends. The authorities arrested the two IWW organizers, Joe Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, and charged them with inciting the mob to riot, thus causing the young striker's death.

Women continued to risk their lives to win the strike. A pregnant Italian woman and a friend, also pregnant, volunteered to lead a march. She told a rally that because of their condition, "policemen no beat us." It was a tragic error. The troops attacked the strikers, beating women indiscriminately. Both women lost their babies, and nearly their lives.



IWW leaders in Lawrence counseled non-violence, reasoning that reliance on the 20,000 strikers' collective strength was their greatest protection. The IWW helped the Lawrence strikers develop tactics never before seen in the U.S. labor movement, like mass picketing.

The IWW made special efforts to ensure that women could take an active role in the strike, often struggling against the Old World attitudes of husbands and priests. Said Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "The IWW has been accused of putting the women in the back. The truth is, the IWW doesn't keep them in the back, and they go to the front."

(This is the second in a three-part series)

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

ALBUQUERQUE IWW
BOWLING OVER THE RULING CLASS
twitter.com/burque_IWW

ALBUQUERQUE IWW
EN ROUTE TO THE ONE BIG UNION
twitter.com/burque_IWW

Wobbly & North American News Immigrant Truckers Shut Down Seattle Port

By John Kalwaic

Immigrant truck drivers walked off their jobs and joined in a two-week strike, beginning on Feb. 2. The strikers, who were labeled by their employers as “independent contractors” to deny them their rights, shut down the Port of Seattle and other local ports. They stopped shipments from coming in and out of the ports just months after the Occupy movement’s shutdown of the West Coast ports on Dec. 12, 2011. The port truckers, who are primarily immigrants from Africa and South Asia, are forced to pay for equipment and utilities because of their classification as “independent contractors.” This classification also presents problems for unionization because independent contractors are not covered under the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The Teamsters are attempting to organize these truckers. For now, they have formed the Seattle Port Truckers Association to cover for the non-



Truck drivers picket in Seattle.

Photo: oag.org

union truckers. The IWW also launched a campaign of independent truckers in 2005 in Stockton, Calif., called the Freight Truckers Organizing Committee (FTOC). Occupy Seattle and the Seattle Solidarity Network are supporting the Seattle truckers in their struggle as well.

With files from In These Times, <http://www.kplu.org>, <http://www.workers.org> and <http://www.occupyseattle.org>.

Former Republic Windows And Doors Plant Reoccupied

By John Kalwaic

On Feb. 23, 65 employees of Serious Energy at the Goose Island plant in Chicago—formerly Republic Windows and Doors—continued the sitdown strike they started in 2008. On Dec. 3, 2008, 200 workers held a sitdown strike when they learned the company was going bankrupt and were going to close the plant, thus laying off the workers without proper notice. This strike inspired the labor movement and workers across the country. The workers are represented



Serious Materials worker and president of UE Local 1110 Armando Robles occupies the factory.

Photo: Aaron Cynic

by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 1110.

The workers, who heard from Serious Energy in February that once again the plant was to close at once with no notice and no severance, are also attempting to buy the plant from the company and run it as a worker cooperative. Since the sitdown strike began in February, Occupy Chicago and a number of local groups have been supportive of the efforts of the employees.

Thousands March To Reclaim Wisconsin



Photo: Matt Brusky, Citizen Action of Wisconsin

By John Kalwaic

On March 10, an estimated 35,000 to 65,000 workers and other protesters took the streets in Madison, Wis. for the Reclaim Wisconsin march to demand the recall of Governor Scott Walker. Walker was famous for stripping public sector workers of collective bargaining rights and placing heavy austerity measures on the public at large. Hundreds of thousands of people came out to protest these measures in February and March 2011. The

AFL-CIO played a role in gearing up people to oppose Walker’s plans, bringing out thousands of people to protest, most of whom were rank-and-file workers. However the AFL-CIO stood in the way of a general strike proposed by different groups, including the IWW, and instead advocated for a voter recall of Walker.

The rally on March 10 brought a smattering of union flags, American flags, and flags that read “Don’t Tread On Me.” There were also people who brought red and black flags, as well flags with peace signs. The rally occurred just one month before portions of Walker’s collective bargaining law—the ACT 10 bill—was struck down by a federal court.

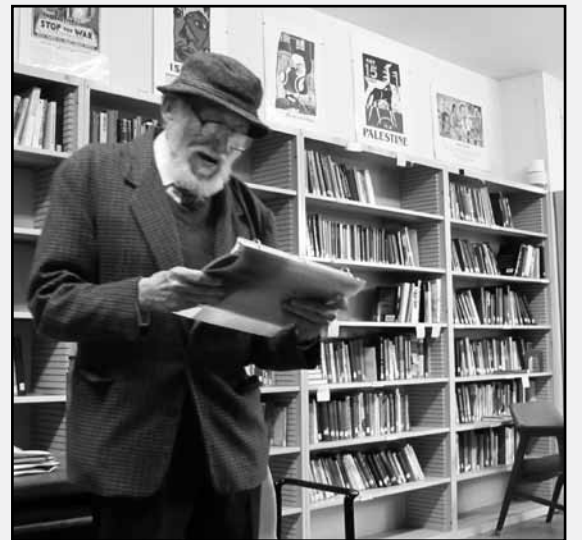
Editor’s note: The opinions expressed in this piece are solely those of the author.

With files from <http://www.scottwalkerwatch.com>, <http://www.occupyriverwest.com>, and <http://www.gazettextra.com>.

SF Bay Area Wobbly Performs As “Marx In Soho”

Fellow Worker Harry Siitonen performed in a dramatized reading of the full-length one-person play, Howard Zinn’s “Marx in Soho” on March 24 in the San Francisco Bay Area.

FW Siitonen wrote: “The space seated about 50 people though about 60 packed in on a rainy afternoon. I guess it must have gone well as I concluded with a prolonged standing ovation. I do want to do it again as it’s a very timely play for our own perilous times. Thanks everybody, all my fellow workers and all others who helped bring this show about which was a benefit for the Bay Area IWW.”



FW Harry Siitonen performs.

Photo: Jane Eiseley

Steadfast Ranks And Solidarity Win ILWU Jobs In Longview—But The Fight’s Not Over

By Linda Averill,
Freedom Socialist

The tumultuous face-off between multinational consortium Export Grain Terminal (EGT) and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 will go down in labor history as one of the great battles between the bosses and workers. But it’s unlikely the last chapter is written in this war over who will control the West Coast waterfront.

That ILWU won jurisdiction at EGT’s new \$200 million terminal in Longview, Wash., is a big victory. From the get-go, it was clear the corporate Goliath wanted a union-free facility, especially free of the historically militant ILWU.

In the course of the battle, EGT hired an army of private thugs and had the U.S. Coast Guard, police, courts, politicians and mainstream media on its side. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) pursued fines against the ILWU, and county prosecutors filed charges against members and supporters who allegedly stopped trains going into EGT’s terminal.

What was decisive in the union’s ability to beat back this unholy alliance was months of sacrifices by members, including 24/7 picketing and community support, especially from the Occupy movement.

Dan Coffman, president of ILWU Local 21, credited a planned mass convergence on Longview in late February with getting EGT to the bargaining table. “It played a huge role...as far as EGT wanting to get something done,” he said.

Yet the outlook for a lasting truce between EGT and the union is dubious.

The union faces criminal charges and is saddled with a contract that gives EGT tyrannical management powers. Most likely, more battles loom. For starters, although the union is not officially requesting community support, it needs the public to pressure county prosecutors and the NLRB to back off.

Local 21 faces big guns

According to Coffman, the NLRB is still pursuing legal action against the ILWU, despite an agreement from EGT and the port to drop related charges. County prosecutors are pursuing numerous charges against members and supporters for actions taken last year to stop trains loaded with grain from coming into EGT’s facility. This includes felony charges against Coffman and ILWU International President Robert McEllrath.

Meanwhile, President Obama set a precedent of calling in armed Coast Guard and Homeland Security vessels to protect EGT’s ship-loading operations against protests by ILWU and its supporters. It’s been 40 years since the military was called in during a labor dispute.

Then there’s the contract itself. Several clauses outline severe penalties, including termination, for any member who engages in or promotes a work-stoppage. A range of other union actions are also forbidden, including picketing. If union members protest conditions, they could be out the door. If Local 21 stands up for them, it could face stiff penalties or lose the contract and union shop. This goes against the ILWU’s tradition of being able to shut down the docks, whether to protest a war or a union-busting outfit like EGT—and it’s

a blow to the entire labor movement.

Gabriel Prawl, a member of ILWU Local 52, which includes clerks, sees “no strengths in the contract,” and points out its exclusion of clerks from ILWU representation at EGT. Control room personnel are also excluded.

Prawl, a Pacific Northwest co-convenor of the Million Worker March, said, “we had [EGT] on the run and we were sold out.” His criticism, which is directed at the ILWU leadership, includes their failure to “come to the membership before a decision was made.” While members voted on broad terms of the settlement they didn’t vote on the final contract. Whether they would have approved it will never be known, but it should have been their decision to settle or continue to fight, Prawl believes. Instead, bosses, the NLRB and ILWU union officials decided the workers’ fate. Prawl was among the vocal rank-and-file leaders who pushed for bottom-up democracy throughout the struggle.

Labor and Occupy unite!

A related weakness in the Longview fight was the ILWU’s determination to keep tight control over its own ranks and the larger movement. This included casting the Occupy movement as an outside entity meddling in internal union affairs,



A grain ship in Washington.

Photo: Kristine Gardner, Labor Notes

rather than a welcome ally. In truth, ILWU rank and filers, building solidarity and working with Occupy activists up and down the coast, were key to making the port shutdowns effective. This was despite sabotage from AFL-CIO leaders and ILWU International officials.

To win upcoming battles, whether on the waterfront or a landlocked worksite, labor will have to confront both bosses and the anti-union government offensive that is criminalizing workers’ self-defense. In these coming struggles, solidarity with the Occupy movement and the community will be essential. And if the leadership of unions won’t forge those links, it is up to the ranks to continue to carry the ball forward. Drop all charges and fines against ILWU!

This piece originally appeared in Freedom Socialist newspaper, Vol. 33, No. 2, February-March 2012. It was reprinted with permission from the publication.

May Day Some Objections To Occupy May 1st

By Juan Conatz

By now you've probably heard about how in various cities Occupy has called for a general strike on May 1. The call seemed to originate from a number of different circles, although the most influential circle seems to have been a group of people involved in several anarchist organizations and/or the IWW. Their influence can be seen in how widely the call was circulated, in the websites set up for Occupy May 1st, and in the decent looking posters and images they put out.

Regardless of the source of the call, it has been taken up in a variety of ways by Occupy groups in New York, Los Angeles, Oakland, Minneapolis, Boston, Seattle, Denver, Long Beach, Detroit, and Oklahoma City, among other places. The media has been reporting on it and it's probably fair to say that this could be the biggest May Day since the immigration protests of 2006.

As the call has spread around and become something inseparable from Occupy as a movement, there have been a number of objections or concerns about a May 1st general strike. Some of them even come from people in the IWW or those in the radical left who we would presume would be on board. Here is my attempt to quickly address some of the most common ones.

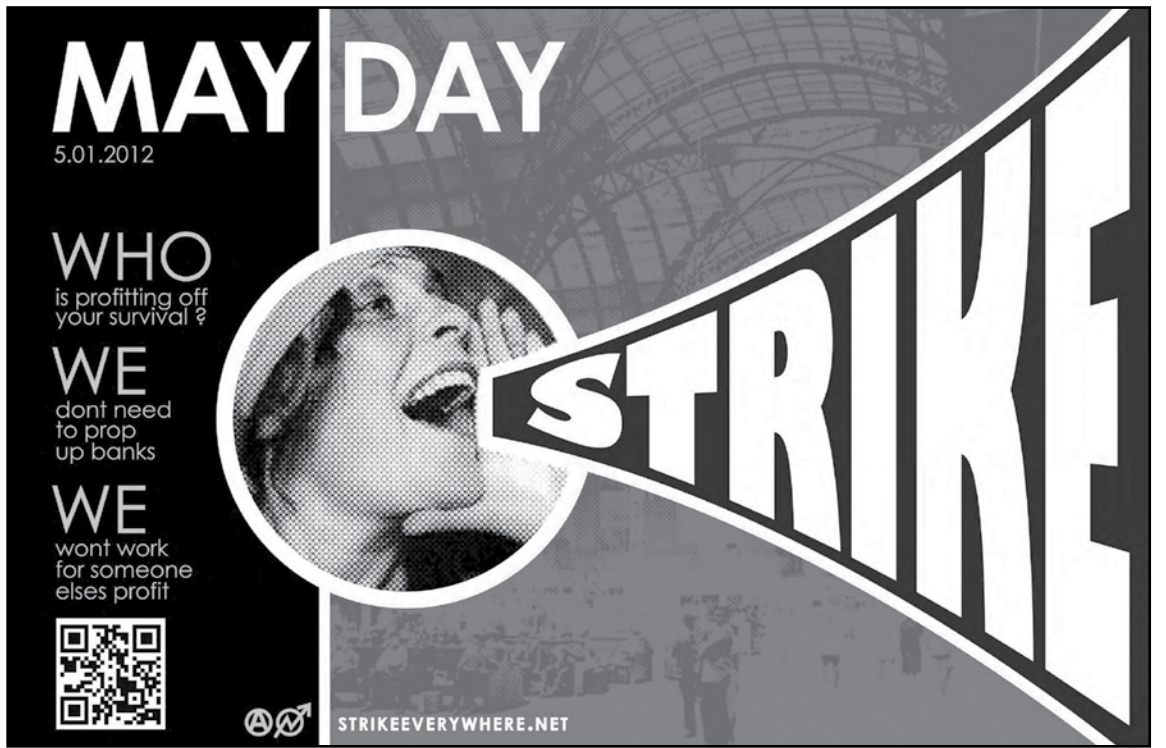
"A general strike is irresponsible and will make people lose sympathy with Occupy."

This comes more from the perspective that movements are about garnering publicity and are a battle of positions, waged primarily through the mainstream media. I don't want to lessen the role that

media plays in affecting our movements and efforts, but this shouldn't be a main consideration of what we do or how we do it. The media is composed of mostly large businesses that are tied to innumerable other large businesses and rely on them for their existence. They are largely a reflection of the interests of the rich or politicians, and it very rarely will be in favor of groups or actions which undermine this. Look at much of the coverage of Occupy—a lot of it is neutral or even positive up to a point where Occupy calls into question the pillars of our society, then the typical associations with violence, "Communism" or "hippies" are trotted out to delegitimize what the movement says. Let us also not forget how they ignored us until the police viciously attacked us at Occupy Wall Street in New York.

"Organized labor was not/is not being consulted."

In a number of cities our friends in Occupy are talking with the larger mainstream unions and there is some level of participation, even if unofficial, between the two. But let's not forget that the mainstream unions are tied up in labor law and contracts that were specifically developed to prevent such a linking between them



Graphic: occupymay1st.org

and social movements and dish out major consequences (including massive fines and jail time) for exceeding the restrictions put upon them.

Unions also are on the decline and have been for a while. Only a small amount of the American workforce are in unions, and many workers (especially younger ones) have had almost no experiences with them. This makes ties to the rank and file much more difficult and can result in only having ties with staff and officers, who are not necessarily the people you want to be in contact with when it comes to mobilizing the membership to take part in such a thing as a May 1st general strike.

"It's not going to be a 'real' general strike"

Some like to say or imply that a "real" general strike is something which unions call for, and then people strike, in the formal definition of the word. Sometimes, general strikes do happen this way. Other times they start with unofficial wildcat strikes that spread. On May Day 2006, for instance, millions of people just called in sick. Those who say May 1st won't be a "real" general strike are probably right. What will happen will most likely resemble what occurred in Oakland on Nov. 2, 2011 (mass action and port shutdown). Personally, I don't think what it's called matters much.

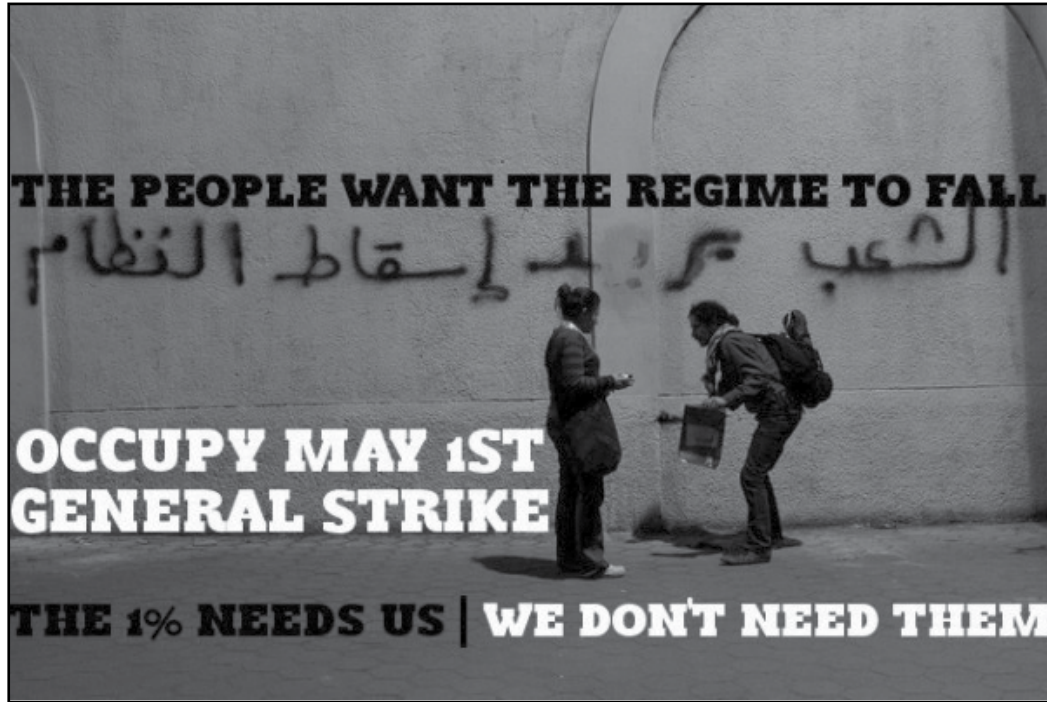
Remember that the reason that the term "general strike" is even in the vocabulary of U.S. social movements again is because of the IWW's

efforts in Wisconsin. It was an important concept and we did a lot of admirable work towards it, but as someone who was there, I don't think the strategy we engaged in (working through official union decision-making structures) was a realistic way to push for a general strike. However, I think that if we succeeded, that it would have been a "real" general strike and that the possibility did exist.

We also don't really know what a U.S. general strike in 2012 will look like. The last time an official general strike happened here was in 1946. The workforce and society in general have changed drastically since then. Our workplaces are more fragmented. Solidarity and worker combativeness aren't something that can be assumed as a given anymore.

"What about May 2nd?"

This is a good point. What about the day after? The week after? The month after? It is up to the participants of Occupy May 1st to make sure this May Day is something much more than a mere mobilization of people to protest, but the opening shot in a new era of Occupy where we take on issues relevant to our daily life. Work, unemployment, immigration, and housing aren't just some vague issues that are mentioned within the context of the upcoming elections, but are very real experiences that make up, for better or worse, who we are. They are also things we have the most power to change or even (if we wish) to eliminate as problems. As people who wish for a new world, we should welcome the opportunity to place organizing back into the context of our lived experiences.



Graphic: occupymay1st.org

May Day greetings from
the Lancaster Wobs!



The world's bosses are in cahoots.
Isn't it time the workers were too?



Happy May Day! from the Lane OR. branch IWW

May Day May Day Activities In Colorado

By X333295

The Denver-Boulder branch of the IWW and its Denver General Strike Coordinating Committee have created and joined in an ongoing series of activities leading up to May Day.

In March, IWW members and associated activists fanned out to area post offices to flier in solidarity with a New York City action against post office closings and layoffs. Postal workers have been seething for months as cutbacks have left them short-handed enough to require letter carriers to work long past nightfall. The leaflets emphasized the ability of the workers to take matters into their own hands, as they did in 1970 when they won an “illegal” strike.

In April, in response to a request by the local transit union, IWW members and Occupy Denver activists took a message to the public that the transport workers would not accept impending cuts passively. Again, this resulted in a mass leafleting action and further lead up to May 1.

The branch might focus on the plight of the workers at Chicago’s Serious Energy (formerly Republic Windows and Doors) plant on May 1. Whether the workers—who again occupied their workplace in re-



Graphic: Provided by X362140

sponse to a threat of a shutdown—successfully buy the operation to run it themselves or engage in further struggle to save their jobs, the local IWW will stand in solidarity.

The branch is also working with Occupy Denver to bring together a mass march and rally at noon on May 1, followed by a people’s goods and information exchange fair, speeches, and music at Denver’s Civic Center.

Additionally, a number of committee members are planning meetings in neighborhood parks on or around May 1 to begin laying the ground work for community self-governance. Generally, while the Occupy Denver activists were on board early with May Day actions, their appeal has been mainly to organized groups. Meanwhile the IWW’s emphasis has been mainly on appealing to unorganized working-class folks and creating a platform for their rebellion.

May Day Greetings From The Uganda IWW

Fellow workers and supporters of the workers’ movement,

We in the Regional Organizational Committee of Kabale, Uganda, send our message of solidarity and fraternity to fellow workers of the IWW in particular, and to all the workers of the world in general.

As we celebrate May Day, we must remember our fellow workers who have died and those who are maimed in their quest for survival against the tyranny of exploitation and oppression. It is not uncommon for workers to be seriously injured or killed, due to harsh conditions such as working without protective gear like helmets, gloves, overall clothes, and nose and mouth masks.

We must not only struggle to be paid the so-called living wage but also struggle to get what belongs to us as the world’s majority of people on earth. We must unite under one banner against the wage system.

If, as a worker, you have reason as to why you can’t join the IWW tell us why. If not, join us in the One Big Union!



Graphic: iww.org

Solidarity,
Weijagye Justus
jkweijagye[at]yahoo.com

Pittsburgh IWW Celebrates 10 Years



Photo: Pittsburgh GMB

Founding meeting of the Pittsburgh General Membership Branch at the historical Pump House located in Homestead, Pa., in the spring of 2002.

From the Pittsburgh IWW

The Pittsburgh General Membership Branch (GMB) of the IWW was chartered on May Day in 2002. We held our founding meeting at the Pump House in Homestead, Pa. The Pump House marks the location where striking steelworkers clashed with Pinkertons hired by Carnegie Steel during the 1892 Battle of Homestead and it holds incredible significance in American labor history. Wobblies in Pittsburgh are making preparations to celebrate our anniversary while coordinating with groups throughout the city to participate in May Day events. Along with residents all over the city, members of the Pittsburgh IWW have been fighting cuts to public transit. Many Pittsburghers are joining in efforts for a general strike, declaring: “No work - No school - No shopping - No banking.” The Pittsburgh IWW has also lent its support and encouragement to the National Garment Workers Federation (NGFW) of Bangladesh in their campaign for fair wages and safe workplaces. Additionally, we are investigating and preparing for prospective campaigns to organize workers in several different areas.

“Remember that you are fighting more than your own fight. You are fighting for the entire working class and you must stand together.” — William Dudley “Big Bill” Haywood, to the striking mill workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1912

REEL WORK LABOR FILM FESTIVAL



April 12 ~ May 11
2012

*Tenth Anniversary
Season*

Celebrating
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Workers Day

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www.reelwork.org

Santa Cruz

Watsonville

Seaside

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San Jose



MAYDAY

Greetings from the
**Workers
Solidarity
Alliance**

**For Direct Action and
Self-Management,**

ORGANIZE!
www.workersolidarity.org

M31 Day Of Action in Europe European Day Of Action Against Capitalism

From occupy-wallst.org

On March 31, just days after a general strike against austerity in Spain, protesters took to the streets throughout Europe. In a press release prior to the event, organizers said, "There will be simultaneous demonstrations,



Occupify Piazza Affari protesters in Milan. Photo: occupywallst.org

rallies and assemblies in many European cities. Protests have been organized by anti-capitalist groups and libertarian grassroots unions from all over Europe. The initiative was called M31 – European Day of Action against Capitalism. Members of M31 want to send a clear signal against current austerity policies and authoritarian labor reforms by national governments and the Troika (European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) on the backs of wageworkers, migrants and the unemployed."

Occupiers from Union Square in New York to Business Square in Milan and elsewhere in Europe joined the initiative toward our shared goal of challenging economic inequality and fighting for real democracy.

Here is an excerpt from the March31.net website, written prior to the day of action:

"Events are planned in Portugal, Spain, France, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia, and Greece. In solidarity with

M31, anti-capitalist groups within Occupy Wall Street will hold a rally in New York City. Parallel to M31, anti-capitalist groups in Moscow and in many cities of the United Kingdom will take to the streets against neoliberal labor reform.

"This is only a start—as we said in our Call for Action: 'Simultaneous demonstrations in many European countries are more than just a signal of solidarity. They're already sparking transnational discussion and cooperation. We invite all emancipatory initiatives to join this process. We strive to grow independent of official institutions, and are prepared for a persistent struggle. The crisis may manifest in varying ways in different countries, but we all share a common goal: We don't want to save capitalism, we want to overcome it. We oppose nationalism. It is crucial to fight against the continued erosion of social standards, but we need to aim higher. We want to get rid of the fatal constraints of capitalism and its political institutions. That's the only way the widespread demand for real democracy can be fulfilled.'"

General Strike, Mass Protests Engulf Europe 6,000 In Frankfurt Protest As Part Of International Day Of Action Following General Strike In Spain

Continued from 1

Some militant actions were directed at office and commercial buildings, including the Frankfurt town hall and the employment agency.

Wobblies from several cities took part in the rally. Fellow workers from Cologne and Rostock gathered in a joint block where we kept on meeting Wobblies from around the world, attracted by the IWW banner. Unfortunately, the IWW in Europe is not part of the M31 network. As this network is planning future alliances and actions there will still be plenty of chances for the IWW to join.



Thousands protest in Frankfurt. Photo: Meir Israelowitz

Note: Large parts of this article were taken from a press release of the M31 network. For further information, see <http://www.march31.net>.

Picket Against Unpaid Labor In Glasgow

Continued from 1

her way in to start her shift. She said that one of her coworkers had such unpaid temporary work experience at the store, but that she had a permanent job. We explained how H&B had not given permanent contracts to 80 percent of people on work experience, how the company plans to introduce a 1,000 more people on work experience in the coming year, and how that could affect the hours of the permanent staff. The manager tried to tell us to move away from the entrance, but we just ignored her. In a final pathetic attempt to show us who was boss, she told us that

the police were on their way, even though there was nothing remotely illegal about what we were doing.

There were more than 20 actions against workfare throughout the weekend of March 31-April 1 around Britain, as part of an ongoing campaign. These actions were part of a national day of action called by the Solidarity Federation. The actions tied in with the international days of action against austerity called by the International Workers Association that included the general strike in Spain on March 29, and the M31 European Day of Action Against Capitalism.

Revolutionary Greetings
to the
Workers of the World
on
May Day
From
The Reno, Nevada GMB



The Reno General Membership Branch is proud to carry on the great tradition of the IWW in the state of Nevada at Goldfield and at the Boulder Dam construction site.
We're back!

HAPPY MAY DAY

from the PATRIARCHY RESISTANCE COMMITTEE

Portland, Oregon

Our mission

The IWW is concerned with building a new society in the shell of the old, and the effects of the subordination and domination of trans, gender variant, and / or female-identified people within society must be specifically addressed.

The Patriarchy Resistance Committee works to realize the equality of all genders' standing and involvement within the Portland branch and the greater IWW.

Our work

What a busy year! We have confronted gender discrimination in our workplaces and beyond, hosted study groups, developed and presented a workshop on gender-inclusive organizing, and published a zine.

To learn more about our work, discuss forming a similar committee in your branch, or order a copy of our zine, *Dismantling Capitalism, Dismantling Patriarchy*, please e-mail prc@portlandiww.org.



M29 General Strike in Spain CNT Call For A General Strike On March 29

From cnt.es

Against the Labor Reform, the cuts, and the assaults on the working class—the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) rejects any kind of negotiation over the rights conquered by the working class and demands the repeal of the Labor Reform (Reform of Labor Laws in Spain in 2010). The CNT's confederal committee has decided to call a 24-hour general strike for March 29, which will extend the call that has already been made for Galicia and the Basque Country.

The CNT rejects any kind of negotiation over the rights conquered by the working class through years of struggle. We call for this strike with the primary objective of immediately repealing the labor reform that was approved by the Parliament, which we consider a head-on assault against the working class. This reform continues the measures started by the previous government, such as the labor reform of 2010 and the cuts to public employee salaries, to pensions, and to public services, cuts which are being deepened by the current government.

The CNT demands the end of the current economic policy designed to make the workers pay for the crisis of the banks and the employers. This policy has led to an unacceptable number of unemployed workers, a number which does not stop growing, as well as to an impoverishment and worsening of the working class's living conditions.

The CNT also calls this strike against the cuts. The strike will happen the day before the setting of the General State Budget which will incorporate a brutal attack against public services and social rights.

The CNT rejects the agreement reached in February between the CCOO (Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras) and UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores) unions and the employers' confederation, the CEOE (Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales), as well as the amendments that those unions have presented to the parliamentary process of the labor reform. The CNT rejects these amendments as a valid alternative, since they share the spirit of the reform and assume the logic of the employers and the government, who suppose that the only escape from their crisis must come through the workers surrendering

their rights, placing the working class into a position of weakness from the start. The same logic has already led these unions to accept the raising of the retirement age to 67, even after the general strike of Sept. 29, 2010.

For the CNT, the strike on March 29 must be only the beginning of a growing and sustained process of mobilization, one which includes the entire working class and the sectors that are most disadvantaged and affected by the capitalist crisis. This mobilization must put the brakes on the dynamic of constant assaults on our rights, while laying the bases for the recovery and conquest of new social rights with the goal of a deep social transformation.

All of these reasons have led the CNT to make this call for March 29 on its own account. With this call the CNT wants to give coverage to everyone who is taking up positions for a real and continued confrontation that will pay back the assaults on the working class with the same force with which we are receiving them, together with all workers' organizations that share these objectives and reject the policies of agreement and social peace.

For the CNT, a confrontational rejection of the policies and the bureaucratic union model of the CCOO and the UGT, and their discredit among broad groups of workers, must not become excuses not to take action or struggle. Instead, this rejection must spur us on to reinforce our struggle through a different form of unionism—one based on direct action, on autonomy, and on mutual aid. Against assaults of the magnitude that we are fac-



Graphic: cnt.es

General Strike In Spain: Report From Barcelona



Photos: libcom.org

M29 general strike in Barcelona.

Continued from 1

of protesters in Plaça Catalunya, who spent much of the afternoon being shot at by police.

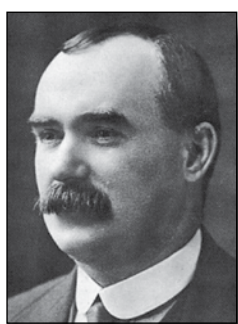
There was also, according to media reports, a large number of plain clothes cops identifying individuals in the crowd for arrest, which is a common trend now.

Overall, it is likely that much of the information about the effectiveness of the strike (in purely economic terms) will be coming out at a later date, but at first glance it seems that the strike was not aimed around the stoppage of work, as the figures seem to indicate, but instead was a means to a symbolic mass mobilization. This was progress, certainly, but surely the real challenge is to organize prolonged industrial action against the government, rather than a somewhat token national demonstration that can be passed off as a flash in the pan.

This is just some food for thought, perhaps.

I would like to extend May Day greetings to all Fellow Workers, and in particular to Wobblies in Central Illinois and Chicago, as well as fellow Irish Republican Socialist Wobblies.

**In the spirit of Connolly, for the OBU,
Colm Mitchell, X371360**



**Let's Occupy May Day
All Over the World
With Banners Aloft!**

**-- Harry Siitonen,
SF Bay Area GMB**

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD OF AUSTRALIA EXTEND OUR GREETINGS AND SOLIDARITY TO WOBBS AND ALL OTHER WORKERS, CLASS-CONSCIOUS AND OTHERWISE, EVERYWHERE ON THE OCCASION OF

MAY DAY 2012

WE STAND SIDE BY SIDE WITH YOU IN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO DEFEND OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER FROM THE ATTACKS ON OUR FREEDOM, OUR LIVELIHOODS, OUR HEALTH AND SENSE OF WELLBEING, OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND ULTIMATELY OUR FUTURES BY THOSE WHOSE ONLY APPARENT CONCERNS ARE PROFIT AND SOCIAL CONTROL.

WE VOW TO CONTINUE TO ASSERT OUR RIGHT TO DETERMINE THE COURSE OF OUR OWN DESTINIES THROUGH COLLECTIVE SELF-MANAGEMENT AND TO ERADICATE DISCRIMINATION, VICTIMISATION AND SCAPEGOATING FOUNDED ON CLASS, GENDER, ETHNICITY OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

WE VOW TO CONTINUE TO BUILD SOLIDARITY IN THE NAME OF CREATING A NEW SOCIETY WITHIN THE SHELL OF THE OLD; A SOCIETY WITHOUT BOSSES OR WAGE-SLAVES, A SOCIETY WHERE THE 4-HOUR DAY ENABLES US TO WORK TO LIVE NOT LIVE TO WORK, A SOCIETY WHERE ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ARE MUTUALLY COMPLEMENTARY FACETS OF A BASICALLY SAME AND JUST WORLD.

IN THE NAME OF EVERYTHING LIFE-AFFIRMING, WE SAY:

UNEMPLOYMENT FOR ALL, NOT JUST THE RICH!

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

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MATE, I SHIT YOU NOT, IT'S A LITTLE BLOODY RIPPER

Review

Who Bombed Judi Bari?

Producers: Darryl Cherney and Mary Liz Thompson. Who Bombed Judi Bari? Produced by Hokey Pokey Productions, 2011. 93 minutes.

By Fellow Worker X344543

"I knew it was a bomb the second it exploded. I felt it rip through me with a force more powerful and terrible than anything I could imagine. It blew right through my car seat, shattering my pelvis, crushing my lower backbone, and leaving me instantly paralyzed. Slumped over in my seat, unable to move, I couldn't feel my legs, but desperate pain filled my body. I didn't know such pain existed. I could feel the life force draining from me, and I knew I was dying. I tried to think of my children's faces to find a reason to stay alive, but the pain was too great, and I couldn't picture them. I wanted to die. I begged the paramedics to put me out." — Judi Bari, 1994

Darryl Cherney's and Mary Liz Thompson's new documentary, "Who Bombed Judi Bari?" takes a thorough look at the deposition of the late Judi Bari as she testified, under oath, about the car bomb that nearly killed her and fellow organizer Darryl Cherney on May 24, 1990.

Bari was both a radical environmentalist (having been a major figure in the Earth First! movement from 1988 until her death from cancer in 1997) and a class-struggle unionist, having been a rank-and-file dissident in the Retail Clerks and Postal Workers Union in the 1970s. She was also a delegate and organizer in the IWW, having joined the One Big Union just after becoming active in Earth First!

Bari introduced the concept of class analysis and class struggle to the Earth First! movement in a whole new way, making it a point to focus efforts to preserve old-growth redwood forests in northwestern California at the point of production.



Judi Bari.

Photo: judibari.org

Her reasoning—rightfully so—was that the capitalist system that exploits the earth is the very same which threatens the livelihoods of timber workers. (It is also the same system that perpetuates racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, a point that Bari made frequently.)

Thanks to Bari's efforts, Earth First! (and the IWW) in Humboldt and Mendocino Counties were able to somewhat effectively counteract the efforts by timber corporations like Georgia-Pacific, Louisiana-Pacific, and Maxxam to drive wedges between timber workers and environmentalists.

At one point, Bari and fellow IWW organizer Anna Marie Stenberg even represented G-P Mill workers in an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) case against the company when their business union, International Woodworkers of America (IWA) Local #3-469, collaborated with management against the workers. She also represented the widow of an L-P mill worker, Fortunado Reyes, who was killed in an accident in the non-union L-P mill in Ukiah.

Judi Bari worked with dissident Pacific-Lumber workers in raising awareness about Maxxam's takeover of that company and why the new regime was bad for both the forest and the workers. Due to her relations with timber workers, she convinced Earth First! in northern California and southern Oregon to renounce the tactic of tree spiking, which was of dubious effectiveness at saving forests and certainly hazardous to mill workers. She even convinced contract logger Ernie Pardini to conduct the very first tree sit by a logger in 1993.

As fellow IWW and Earth First! member Darryl Cherney states in the film, "If there was one thing that corporate timber feared more than anything else, it was that radical environmentalists would unite with rank-and-file timber workers, and because of her effectiveness in doing that, Judi Bari was targeted. She did something nobody else [in Earth First!] did, and that was organize rank-and-file mill workers into the IWW."

The bombing took place in Oakland on May 24, 1990. The Oakland Police Department (OPD) and the FBI named Bari and Cherney as the only suspects in the bombing that nearly took their own lives, arguing instead that the two knew they were carrying the bomb and were planning to use it in an act of "eco-terrorism." The evidence for such a plot is nonexistent, however, and in fact suggests that the FBI not only knew that these charges were false, but in fact deliberately lied about them to frame Bari and Cherney in order to discredit them. Further evidence suggests that the FBI and the timber industry may have collaborated in a COINTELPRO-style

operation to manufacture the whole incident from the beginning.

The film follows the final deposition of Bari against the FBI and OPD, taken one month before her death on March 3, 1997, by one of her lawyers, Dennis Cunningham. It clearly and concisely lays out Bari's and Cherney's case against the powers that be (including the employing class), using archival footage of the deposition intermixed with footage taken by Earth First! activists of various rallies, concerts, and direct actions during the period from 1988 to 1996. It provides a good overview of all of the issues with useful background on the subject. At roughly 93 minutes, the pace is quick and the archival footage draws the viewer in most effectively.

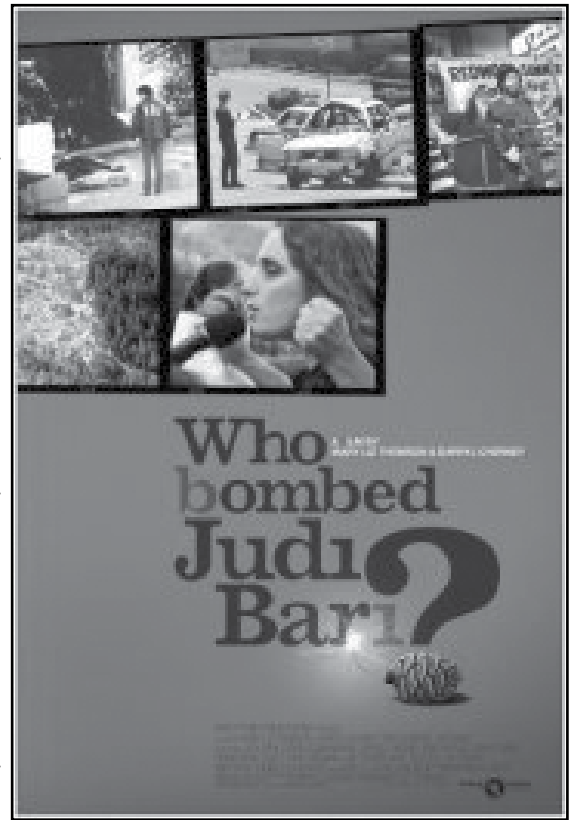
The soundtrack includes music provided by Earth First! activists relevant to the scenes being shown, including a generous portion of songs by Darryl Cherney (who is a prolific songwriter and songsmith) and Judi Bari. Earth First! took much inspiration from the IWW. One of the most notable inspirations is the fact that as much as the IWW was (and is) "the singing union," Earth First! should be known as "the singing environmental movement." Earth First! even has a "Little Green Songbook."

My only criticism of the film is that it leaves out one piece of very important background information: One year before the bombing of Bari and Cherney, the FBI completed a two-plus-year sting operation against two other Earth First!ers and three fellow travelers in Arizona, including co-founder Dave Foreman. This was known as "Operation THERM CON" (short for "Thermite Conspiracy"), as described by Judi Bari:

"The FBI claimed that the Arizona EF! case had nothing to do with us. We claim that the case is key to ours, because it shows that, at the time of the bombing, Earth First! was an active target of an FBI COINTELPRO operation designed [in the classic words of J. Edgar Hoover] to misdirect, discredit, and neutralize us.

"Even more important, the FBI's plan in Arizona was to misdirect and discredit EF! by associating us with explosives. The FBI's code name for the Arizona EF! case was 'THERMCON,' an acronym for Thermite Conspiracy. This name is very revealing of the FBI's motives, since there was no thermite, or any other explosive, used in any EF! action, ever. But, as shown in the file, the two provocateurs spent years telling the EF!ers they could get them thermite, and trying to convince them to use thermite.

"Eventually the FBI had to settle for



Graphic: whobombedjudibari.com

getting the activists to cut down the power pole with an acetylene torch, as they were unable to convince them to use explosives. But it is important to note that Operation THERMCON did not consist of the FBI infiltrating EF! to break up a thermite conspiracy. It consisted of the FBI using provocateurs to infiltrate EF! and try to create a thermite conspiracy for them to bust. It is in the context of this ongoing COINTELPRO operation against EF!—this attempt to discredit us by linking us with explosives—that the FBI terrorist squad moved in after I was bombed in Oakland and declared Darryl and me to be the bombers."

I assume the reason for leaving this out had to do with the fact that the film is packed with information and the case is complex. The producers may have felt that any additional information might have confused or overwhelmed the viewers or slowed the pacing too much. Perhaps. Still, there is a brief shot of me in the film, and although it is not spoken footage and very short (no more than about 15 seconds), I would gladly trade my 15 seconds of fame for the background information on this case to be included instead. Still, it's a small quibble. Bravo to the filmmakers, and I do hope the IWW will support and promote this film.

The producers have indicated that they would welcome the IWW organizing showings of it—and we should, as it promotes the IWW and one of our members and tackles many important issues that are indeed class-struggle oriented.

Details on the film can be found here: <http://www.whobombedjudibari.com>. Viva Judi Bari!

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RECOMPOSITION BLOG

NOTES FOR A NEW WORKERISM

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



May Day Greetings from Recomposition!

★ ★ ★

An unofficial publication
by and for wobblies.
<http://recomposition.info>

Industrial Worker Book Review

Amazon.com Is As Useless As A Wart

By William Hastings,
IW Book Review Editor

Beirut has as many bookstores as it does bullet holes in its concrete walls. There's an old saying around the Middle East that goes, "The Egyptians write, the Lebanese publish, and the Iraqis read." Knowing this and seeing all of those bookstores scattered around the city, I knew my time in Beirut was also a time to stock up.

I went to Beirut under a variety of guises: A journalist wanting to see how people live, a photographer wanting to capture a city molded from French and Arab influences and as a pilgrim venturing into the Northern Lebanese Mountains to visit (artist, poet, and writer) Khalil Gibran's grave. The bars on Hamra Street helped me to answer the first part of my trip, the side streets the second. B'sharri, where Gibran's grave is, came towards the end of the trip, the Israeli fighter jets that broke international law overhead that day were the only things that marred an ice blue sky. As I wandered and looked in Beirut I saw bookstores everywhere. Small ones, without signs, tucked into alleys lit only from the inside. Large independents and large Arab chains thrust themselves out into the foot traffic. Shoe-shine boys dragged their boxes along behind them in front of the street displays. Outside of one, near Jalmeeze, a rose seller sat on top of a crate, her front tooth missing, and asked if I wanted a rose to take home to my Syrian wife.

"I'm not Syrian," I told her, "American."

"Does it matter?" she said.

The bookstores of Beirut are like the city's street signs: trilingual. They are written in Arabic, French and English. The bookstores and street signs are physical symbols of the city's history, the scars of its colonial past, its signpost towards an

unknown future.

In between barroom discoveries, military checkpoints and near dawn dancing to Umm Kalthoum covers, I dug through the stacks in the bookstores. I bought all the out-of-print Arab writers translated into English that I could find and discovered some new ones for myself. I spent a rainy afternoon drinking Almaza lager beneath a green awning on Hamra while I read Tayeb Saleh and wondered where his Nobel was. I knew that Beirut took risks and published books banned in other Arab countries. I scoured used bookstores for Abdelrahman Munif, banned across the entire Arabian Gulf, and tracked down copies of Alhem Mosteghanemi. Each store I entered deepened the sense I had that good bookstores held a window into understanding a city. The trilingual nature of Beirut's bookstores told me much about Beirut's citizens, the large poetry sections told me much about the Lebanese. And these bookstores were deep. Books everywhere, piled on top of each other on the floors, windowsills and chairs. All of the available shelf space was used up. Deep stocks for the demand, a demand I saw at night, on rooftop cafes with sheesha in hand while kids, adults and couples read over dinner or with a beer. Bars had quotes from books written on the walls, a cab driver recited Taha Hussein to me.

Two days before I left I wandered the back streets shooting pictures in the dying light of the afternoon. I followed an old lady up a long sloping hill of a nameless street, shooting the flowerpots. I crested the hill and looked towards the bottom of the street. It ended at an intersection. Why not? Just before I hit the intersection I noticed a small bookstore across the street. Small isn't right. Tiny. It was a box stuffed to the gills with books. Home.

I descended by a half dozen steps and

pushed the door open and knocked over a stack of books in the process. "*Te Kalaf*," a voice said. "*Wa ya te kalafeeyah*," I answered and restacked the books. The aisles, all three of them were as wide as I was, my shoulders brushed the walls of books on either side of me. French was against the far wall, English to the left and Arabic to the right. I went towards the Arabic section.

It was all there. All that I wanted.

The books were stacked three deep on the shelves. I pulled books out to see how they were arranged. As I did so I saw how thoroughly the store was stocked. I knew then that they would have to have a copy of Al-Ma'ari in Arabic, the blind Syrian poet from the 1100s. I wanted in Arabic his writings: "But truth still hides her face in hood and veil. / Is there no ship or shore my outstretched hands / May grasp, to save me from this malicious sea?"

Blue cloth. Gold lettering on the spine: Al-Ma'ari. I grabbed it.

"The Arab Socrates, no?"

I turned to see a small man, his face narrow and intelligent, standing behind me.

"Yes," I replied in Arabic.

"Ayad," he said. He extended his hand.

"Is mi William," I said.

He tilted his head to one side, "my accent."

"Anna Amerikiya," I told him.

"Ah. I wondered. Your accent is almost Palestinian," he said.

"My tutor."

"And you can read Al-Ma'ari?"

"A little. It's tough, it's old Arabic as you know, but I want to have it."

"And you should. Have you read Rabih Alameddine?"

"No."

"But you must," Ayad said. He turned

and disappeared. I went back to the stacks and tried not to turn around too often in fear of knocking something off the shelves. I looked for a copy of Ibn Tarafa's "Mu'Allaqat" where he says, "Come off it! You who tell me not to fight &/ not to fuck, if ever I did quit,/ could you offer me immortality?" These are beautiful words which were written far before 570 A.D.

Ayad returned, offered me a cigarette and handed me a copy of Alameddine's "Kooloids," a book he described as being "incredibly important." I opened it and read aloud.

We spent the next hour going back and forth between the Arabic and English sections, smoking cigarettes and drinking tea, reciting our favorites, swapping recommendations. As we read, the stacks felt like they were closing in, each book demanding my attention. But the enclosure felt comforting, as if each new discovery could take me to the place I was looking for.

He asked what I was doing in Beirut. I told him I was a journalist. He smiled and said he was a poet. He went to a corner shelf, near the Arabic section and pulled down a book of his poems. He read to me. His lines were clipped and rang like ejected shotgun shells hitting glass floors. He spoke of the loss and the woman, that sharp corner of the night. He spoke of cheating and knowing and of the thing just beyond the fingertips.

He finished, smiled, lit another cigarette and inscribed the book to me. He shook his head when I asked him to add it to the stack of books going on the register.

Later, he slid a business card into his book and packed my purchase up. We shook hands and I walked up his stairs, past a stack of books and out into the falling rain, leaving the magic behind me just this one time. None of that happens with Amazon.com.

Industrial Strength

A Night Of The Longknives

Davenport, Steve. Uncontainable Noise. Columbus, Ohio: Pavement Saw Press, 2006. Paperback, 69 pages, \$12.00.

By Eric Miles Williamson

What I've been hearing from literary types is a lot of whining. Literary authors published by small presses piss and moan about being under-published as though they are victims of some vast corporate conspiracy set on destroying the minds of consumerist capitalist victims. Over the years a goodly number of writers have used the pages of the *American Book Review* to sound off against the corporatization and commoditization of American letters. We hear how the New York publishing houses have abandoned literature because, hey, why not? Americans have been duped and spoon-fed mass-market goop for so long that they prefer the goop. We hear the moan that literature is on its deathbed, twitching and pissing in its adult diapers. Charles Frazier gets an \$8 million advance on his new book, "Thirteen Moons," and the "literary" writers collectively scream in oppressed agony. Stephen King gets a lifetime achievement award from the National Book Award committee, and the moan becomes a porcine squeal, academic piglets chasing their tails in terror, some folks too sad to even care or comment. A professor at a university at which I used to teach anxiously awaits the publication of the next "Hunger Games" book and the other professors declare the end-times of literature.

What do I say? "Who cares," that's what. "Who gives a rat's ass," is what. Let the Potter Professors sit alongside their children and "Hunger Games" themselves into oblivion for all it affects me. If New York publishing houses get together and enforce a "No Literature on Our Presses" embargo, if Stephen King gets the Nobel Prize, if a loopy professor lets someone write a Master's thesis on Danielle Steele,

it's not going to change the work a great writer writes. There are just too many examples of our great writers being ignored, under-published, and even unpublished: Walt Whitman self-publishing "Leaves of Grass," Thoreau self-publishing "Walden" and selling a dozen copies, Dickinson's dresser-drawer stash, Melville's commercial failure, and on and on and on. To think that Capitalism Gone Wild is going to stop our best minds from writing and producing great literature is wrong.

Gilbert Sorrentino, Toby Olson, and Stephen Dixon have spent most of their careers publishing on small presses, and it hasn't stopped them from writing, nor has it stopped intelligent people from noticing their work. The difficult thing these days is locating that great literature. That, of course, is what the Industrial Worker Book Review is for.

This said, I introduce Steve Davenport's first book, the splendid collection of poetry, "Uncontainable Noise." The shit-not-shit ratio of the books I receive in the mail is about 500-1, and it was not without my accustomed suspicion, even dread, that I cracked open Davenport's "Uncontainable Noise," published on some little press in Ohio—Pavement Saw Press—that I'd never heard of. The book's title is typically a "poet" title, not as pretentious or oblique as most, but clumsy in the mouth and unlikely to be remembered even ten minutes after reading the book. Small nowhere press, weak title: My shit-detector was on high alert status.

That's not what's inside the book. I chaired the Poetry Committee of the National Book Critics Circle for two of the past five years, and I've read hundreds, perhaps more than 2,000 books of poetry in those years, and Steve Davenport's "Uncontainable Noise" is one of the best three or four books of poetry I've come across during that time. It is a great book.

Some things Davenport doesn't write

about include: Household plants; paintings he's seen in European museums; homosexual love affairs; politics (Republicans bad, corporations bad, white people bad, etc.); furniture; foreign dishes we've never heard of and don't want to eat; grandparents' digits; clouds like (insert lame metaphor), sunlight like (insert lame metaphor); moonscapes like (insert lame metaphor); Europe; flowers (with or without lame metaphor); dark skinned people like (insert lame and condescending, trying to appear compassionate, metaphor).

What Davenport writes about is a world which poets neglect, a world in which people don't spend their summers abroad or at writers' colonies, a world in which pain isn't alleviated by fine wine and a Guggenheim, but by a bottle of whiskey and a night with your head hanging between your knees and a revolver in your hand. "Uncontainable Noise," unlike most books of poetry, isn't a collection of whatever the poet has happened to write during a given time: it's a book that is a whole unto itself. It reads a like a 60-page sestina, lines and phrases recurring in the poems throughout the book in what is most likely a deliberate pattern I haven't set on down to decode. Each poem punches, bare-knuckled and purposeful. Steve Davenport writes like Charles Bukowski might have written if he'd had more talent or been able to hold his liquor better. The blurb-jobs on the back cover are by the established poets Alice Fulton and Bob Hicok, and they read like blurb-jobs always do on the back covers of books of poetry—like prose poems in which the blurb-er is trying to show how well he or she can give a blurb. Poetry blurb-jobs are nearly interchangeable, and to read them gives no sense of the books of poetry for which they're testifying.

You want a sense of the book? Here's a blurb-job for you:

Steve Davenport's "Uncontainable

Noise" is a book I'd recommend for the National Book Critics Circle Award if I were still on the Board, and it's also a book I'd have given to my gas-station-attendant father. It's a book poets will either be jealous of or admire, and it's a book any barfly worth his sour mash will enjoy and who will hopefully pass out while reading.

My copy, FYI, is stained by a melted glass of Jim Beam I couldn't finish, though I tried valiantly to do so. I read it in my garage so my cigarette smoke wouldn't choke my family to death. I think Davenport would approve. Play some Hank Williams, crack a bottle of Jack or Jim, read Mr. Davenport, and read poetry the way it's supposed to be read—during a night of the longknives, eyes drooped and lip curled.

Literature isn't dead. Steve Davenport and Pavement Saw Press—among many writers and presses—prove this. The *American Book Review*, for example, has a circulation of 8,000, and if half of its readers bought half of the books we review, many small presses would actually turn a profit. Hey, whiney, insecure, desperate, please-review-my-book-or-else-I'll-be-dead-forever-please-oh-please-writers: *Je t'accuse*. Stop whining and buy some goddamn books instead of waiting for your free review copies or buying used books online. One of the reasons literature is having a hard time is because its readers—you—are cheapskates. Instead of buying a Big Mac, buy a fucking book.

I hope I'm the first person to have reviewed the work of Steve Davenport, because this is a poet we'll be reading into the future. I want to be the smart son-of-a-bitch who first in print noted how wonderful Davenport's work is and is likely to remain. When I review for the papers, it's usually in disgust. But with Davenport, even if I'm a sloppy second, I feel privileged.

Read the full version of this piece at: <http://www.iwbookreview.com>.

Wobbly Arts Recession/Depression Blues

By Ken Lawless

When we suffer from recession/depression blues,
we're tempted to drown our sorrows in rotgut booze.
We've got holes in the soles of our shoes
from pounding the pavement to job interviews
where we're rejected as unskilled, too old, or overqualified.

One homeless woman, she broke down and cried.
Her home was foreclosed, her belongings auctioned off,
even her pink plastic flamingoes.

That's the way this recession/depression thing goes.
Nothing you own is safe from corporate seizure.
The richest one percent bask in luxury and leisure
while too many of us sink deeper into quagmires of debt
with the economy in the doldrums, no recovery yet.

Corporations turn us against one another to ensure their global conquest.
Given their wealth and power, it will be no contest
until we open our eyes and realize
that ninety-nine can defeat one if the ninety-nine organize

Resource wars, political corruption, and industrial pollution make things worse than ever.

We need One Big Union, it may be now or never.
One Big Union with indivisible ideals.
One Big Union--no bosses, no wage slaves, no insider deals.
Working hard together we can create peace and prosperity,
one human family with organized solidarity.

One Big Union--the world's workers unified.
People of every sort working side by side.
One Big Union with every culture's strength and pride
leaving recession and depression by the wayside.

Problems at work?



Graphic: Benjamin Standing

Working 7 Days A Week!

By Mark R. Wolff

I used the lyrics for this "worker's song" based on a children's song, composer unknown.

Tune: "She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain"

We work seven days in a week.
Working seven days all week.
We work Sunday, Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,
Saturday, makes seven Days a Week!
Today We wash floors!

Now what day is it? Monday!
It Must be Monday!
[Unison: Monday!]
So it's Tuesday, Wed, Th, Fri, Sat, Sun -
Working 7 Days a Week!

On Tuesday what do we do?
We load trucks! So what day is it?
[Unison: Tuesday!]
So there's Wed, Th, Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon,
Working Seven Days a Week!

Chorus

Now today must be Wednesday, because
We deliver the newspapers.
So what day is it?
[Unison: Wednesday!]
There is Th, Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon, Tues,
Working Seven Days A Week!

Chorus

What do we do the day after Wednesday?
We must wash dishes. So What day is it?
[Unison: Thursday!]
That's Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon, Tues, Wed,
Working Seven Days A Week!

Chorus

On Friday we stand in line to work construction.
So today must be Friday.
[Unison: Friday!]
That leaves us- Sat, Sun, Mon, Tues, Wed, Thur,
Working Seven Days a Week!

Chorus

Well, I have to get up and mow lawns.
So what day is it? Must be Saturday.
[Unison: Saturday!]
There is Sun, Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri,
Working Seven Days a Week!

Chorus

Now you think we'd rest on number 7
Just like the message from heaven,
But today we drive a cab,
So what day is Lucky 7?
[Unison: Sunday!]

Chorus

NEVER MIND THE BOSSES

HERE'S THE

Wobblies



Graphic: Melbourne Wobblies

Spring Meme-ing

By Ronald Mulero

We shall overthrow,
We shall overthrow,
We shall overthrow today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand
How to overthrow today.

We walk hand in hand,
We walk hand in hand,
We walk hand in hand today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand:
We walk hand in hand today.

We shall live in peace,
We shall live in peace,
We shall live in peace today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand:
We shall live in peace today.

We shall all be free,
We shall all be free,
We shall all be free today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand:
We shall all be free today.

We are not afraid,
We are not afraid,
We are not afraid today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand:
We are not afraid today.

We are not alone,
We are not alone,
We are not alone today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand:
We are not alone today.

The whole wide world around,
The whole wide world around,
The whole wide world around today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand:
The whole wide world around today

We shall overthrow,
We shall overthrow,
We shall overthrow today.
Oh, all through the land,
We understand
How to overthrow today.

Wobbly Arts The Worker's Words

By John Kaniecki

I am the man of machine and tool
I do the work that allows us to live
They laugh at me and call me a fool
Because I am generous and that I give

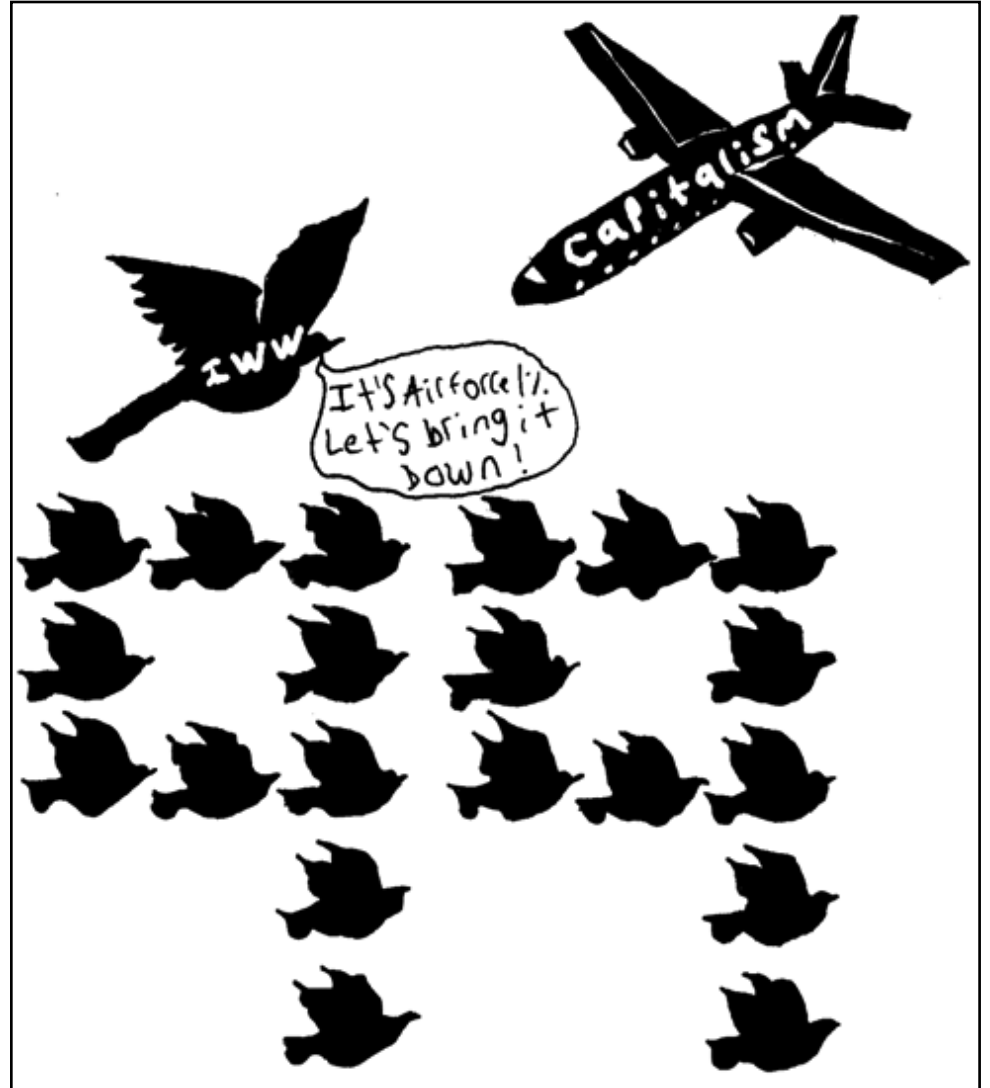
It is not for nothing that I labor away
I need the scant money the owner will pay
If I do not work, then I will not eat
And instead of a home I'll be on the street

The owner his position affords liberty
To walk the high circles of society
The managers profess he is wonderful and kind
The managers must think I am stupid and blind

If the owner cared he'd say hello and shake my hand
He'd stop to listen to my woes, try to understand
As it is the owner is never to be found
Except when he arrogantly stalks the ground

Is he better than me because of all of his stuff?
If money makes one happy why do they never have enough?
The owner can come; the tyrant can scream and yell
To get retribution whom can I tell?

Alas all the worker has in one another
And a few who care who gladly call us brother
One day we shall rise and the victory will be won
And the position of owner will be done



Bring on the May Day Strike!

Graphic: Sean Carleton, X364748

Mr. Block.
He Opines on May Day



Concept: Committee for Industrial Laughification.

Graphic: V. Rese

Your Nursing Heart

By Anne Feehey

©music by Hank Williams, words by Julie McCall

Your nursing heart cannot be free 'cause health care's just an industry
Care for the sick, tend to the ill – see that they survive to pay their bill
They say behave in a professional way, when will we get professional pay?
When I double out, the arrhythmia starts – defibrillate my nursing heart.

Angels of mercy must forego those extra 'perks' we used to know
Like eating lunch, sleeping at night. When you're a nurse you have no rights
Each new demand just makes things worse. I'm a person, not 'just a nurse.'
Each time I consider the indignities my nursing heart throws PVCs

I think my boss is going to be surprised when he finds out we've organized
The contract we win will be our guide and our nursing hearts will beat
with pride

(the melody on the two line verse is the same as the melody of the last two lines of the other verses)



Graphic: Melbourne Wobblies

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Jacob Flom | <http://jacobanikulapo.wordpress.com>

Workplace Organizing

Sex Work: Solidarity Not Salvation

By an Australian Wobbly Sex Worker

An ongoing debate is taking place in anarchist and feminist circles on the legitimacy of sex work and the rights of sex workers. The two main schools of thought are almost at polar opposites of each other. On the one side you have the abolitionist approach led by feminists, such as Melissa Farley who maintains that sex work is a form of violence against women. Farley has said that “If we view prostitution as violence against women, it makes no sense to legalize or decriminalize prostitution.” On the other side you have sex worker rights activists who view sex work as being much closer to work in general than most realize, who believe that the best way forward for sex workers is in the fight for workers’ rights and social acceptance and for activists to listen to what sex workers have to say. In this article I will discuss why the abolitionist approach discriminates against sex workers and takes advantage of their marginalized status, while the rights approach offer the opportunity to make solid differences in the labor rights and human rights of sex workers.

An example of the kind of arguments put forward by advocates of abolitionism runs as follows:

“The concept of women’s ‘choice’ to sell sex is constructed in line with neoliberal and free-market thinking; the same school of thinking that purports that workers have real ‘choices’ and control over their work. It suggests that women choose to sell sex and we should therefore focus on issues to do with sex workers’ safety, ability to earn money, and persecution by the state. Whilst women’s safety and women’s rights are paramount, the argument for state-regulated brothels and unionization is reformist at best, naive and regressive at worst. Even the proposal for ‘collective brothels’ ignores the gendered nature of prostitution, and its function in supporting male domination.

“An anarchist response should demand the eradication of all exploitative practices and not suggest they can be made safer or better.” (Taken from a leaflet handed out by abolitionists at the sex work workshop at the 2011 London Anarchist Bookfair.)

A Wobbly approach does call for the eradication of all exploitative practices, not just those that benefit the one advocating for change or that one finds particularly distasteful. Work under capitalism is exploitive, you are either exploited or live off the exploitation of others—most of us do both. Sex under capitalism and patriarchy is all too often commodified and used as a means of exploitation. Work and sex in and of themselves are none of these things. Fighting sex work instead of fighting capitalism and patriarchy does not address the exploitation in its entirety. To focus on the gendered nature of sex work will not change the gendered society we live in; if anything it reinforces the myth that the gender divide is a natural part of life that must be worked around. It also silences the sex workers who do not fit the gendered notions of the female sex worker, a group who are all too conveniently ignored whenever they challenge the abolitionist discourse on sex work.

Abolitionists have accused any approach other than theirs’ as being fundamentally reformist and thus not in line with the principles of anarchism. However, isn’t trying to end an industry because the overarching capitalist, patriarchal system of our times feeds into it, rather than fighting for the emancipation of all workers, in itself reformist?

The anthropologist Laura Agustin contends that the abolitionist movement took up strength at a time when the theories of welfarism were gaining popularity among the middle class who felt they had a duty to better the working class (without addressing the legitimacy of the class system as a whole). Middle-class women, in particular, found an outlet from their own gender op-



Photo: Direct Action

pression, by positioning themselves as the “benevolent saviors” of the “fallen,” thus gaining positions and recognition in the male-dominated public sphere that they never previously could have attained.

There are more than a few remnants of the middle class, almost missionary, desire to “save” by implanting one’s own moral outlook on the “fallen” in today’s abolitionist movement. Not only does it give people a way to feel as if they are rescuing those most in need, but it does so without requiring them (in most instances) to question their own actions and privileges. The sight of someone dressed in sweatshop-manufactured garments with an iPhone, iPad and countless other gadgets made in appalling conditions calling for the abolition of the sex industry never ceases to confound me. It must be one of the few industries that people are calling for the destruction of because of the worst elements within it. They may recognize that the treatment of workers in Apple factories amounts to slavery, and that the instances of rape and sexual assault of garment makers in some factories amount to sexual slavery, but they contend that abolition of either industry is not desirable, that mass-produced clothing and technology, unlike sex, are essentials to our modern lives. Essential to whom I may ask? To the workers making such products? They do not use the products that they slave away producing, they do not benefit from their employment anymore than a sex worker in their country does theirs. It seems the essentiality of a product is judged through the lens of the consumer, not the worker, despite this being something the abolitionist accuses only opponents of abolition of doing. Calling for the abolition of sex work remains, largely, a way for people to position themselves in a seemingly selfless role without having to do the hard work of questioning their own social privilege. This is a fundamentally welfarist and reformist position to take.

Is sex (or the ability to engage in it if you so wish) not as essential to life or at least to happiness and health as any of the above are? Sex is a big part of life, a part that people should be free to take pleasure in and engage in, not a part that is viewed as being bad and dirty and shameful. I am not saying that anyone should be obligated to provide sex for someone else unless they want to, but pointing out that trying to justify abolishing the sex industry with the argument that sex isn’t essential when there are so many industries that produce things we don’t need is incredibly weak. It also, again, focuses more on the consumer than the worker. Instead of focusing on what the sex worker thinks about their work, how important it is, how it makes them feel, we are told to focus on the fact that they consumer doesn’t really need it. The worker is reduced to no more than an object, an object that needs saving whether they want it or not.

Can no worker take pleasure in aspects of their work despite capitalism? Can no woman take pleasure in sex despite pa-

triarchy? If the answer is that they can, then why is it so hard to believe that there are sex workers who choose and/or take pleasure in their work despite capitalism and patriarchy, not because of them? I have been told by abolitionists that this is not possible within the sex industry, that any worker who enjoys their job, or even those who do not enjoy but see it as a better opportunity than anything else available to them, only does so out of internalized misogyny. That if they were freed from this, by adopting an abolitionist mindset (any other stance is accused of being founded on internalized misogyny and therefore invalid) they would see the truth. It sounds an awful lot like religious dogma and is often treated with as much zeal. The abolitionist approach refuses to value or even acknowledge the intelligence, agency, experiences and knowledge of sex workers. This is discrimination posing as feminism. If you want equality for women then you need to listen to all women, not just the ones who say what you want to hear.

Abolitionists seem to view sex workers who do not agree with them as being too brainwashed by patriarchy to advocate for themselves, or that these specific sex workers are not representative of the experiences of the majority of sex workers. As an anarchist I view all work under capitalism to be exploitative, and that sex work is no exception. I do not believe however that work that involves sex is necessarily more exploitative or damaging than other forms of wage slavery. This is not to say that there are not terrible violations of workers’ rights within the sex industry; there are and they are violations I want to fight to overcome. (By acknowledging these violations I am not saying that there are not wonderful experiences between workers and between workers and clients as well.)

If one is serious about respecting and advocating for the rights of sex workers then we have to look at what methods work. We do not live in some anarchist utopia where no one is forced to work in jobs they wouldn’t otherwise do in order to get by, so I do not see the point in spending energy debating whether sex work would exist in an anarchist society and what it would look like, if it starts to cut in to energy that could be spent advocating for the rights of sex workers in the here and now.

Abolitionists have often complained of rights activists using language to legitimize the industry by using terms like “client” instead of “john” and “worker” instead of “prostitute.” Sex workers and rights activists have moved away from the old terms as they are terms that have often been used to disempower and discriminate against workers, whereas “client” and “sex worker” are much more value neutral. Abolitionists are not innocent of using language to further their agenda. Often the term “prostitute” is used to describe sex workers. This positions the worker as an agency-less victim. Once you have positioned someone as being without agency it becomes easier to ignore their

voice, to believe that you know what is in their best interest and that you are doing, or advocating, for them.

Another accusation made against rights activists is that they put the client’s wants before the needs and safety of the worker, or that they attempt to legitimize commercial sexual exchanges (something that is not considered a legitimate service by abolitionists). I have not found this to be the case—the majority of rights activists are or have been sex workers, or have close ties to sex workers, and their primary focus is on the rights, needs and safety of sex workers. For instance, Scarlet Alliance, the national sex worker advocacy body, is made up of current and former sex workers. People who would have an interest in worker exploitation, such as employers, are not eligible to join.

That they do not focus on labeling clients (the clientele are too diverse to paint with the one label anyway) is no reflection on how important the needs and safety of sex workers are. In fact it is because they are paramount to the rights movement that the focus is not on making moral judgments on the clients and is instead on labor organizing and worker advocacy. To ignore the vast amounts of change that can be made by workers organizing and advocating together in favor of moralizing over the reasons why the industry exists and whether it is an essential service is to sacrifice the rights and well-being of workers for theoretical gains.

At the end of the day the abolitionist is using their power and social privilege to take advantage of sex workers’ marginalized position, something that they accuse clients of doing. The difference is that they are not seeking sexual but moral gratification. The abolitionist approach does not help sex workers, nor does it empower them. Rather, this approach gives them a role, and penalizes them if they refuse to play it. The sex worker rights approach works in the same way that all workers rights and anti-discrimination movements have worked by empowerment, support and solidarity.

There is no anti-capitalist blueprint as to how to best eradicate exploitation, but rather several schools of thought, often their own internal schools, as to how to reach a free society. I believe that when it comes to eradicating exploitation in the workplace, syndicalism is the approach that best suits the fight at hand. When the workplace is that of a brothel, strip club, street corner, motel room, etc., the fundamentals of the fight are no different from that of other wage slaves. Sex workers need to be able to unionize, as yet there is no sex workers union. While I would love for there to be a sex workers union, I also think the belief that all workers are equal, that we are all wage slaves, that we are all in this fight together and that it is the bosses who are the enemy, make the IWW an ideal union for the marginalized workers who fall through the cracks of the existing trade unions. That said it really is the ideal union for all workers. Actions such as joining the IWW and using the strength of a union, rather than just one’s lone voice, to advocate for change is one way in which sex workers can fight their battle. Another is joining Scarlet Alliance, the national, peak sex worker organization in Australia. Like the IWW, bosses are not able to join, meaning that the interests of Scarlet Alliance are solely the interests of the workers, not those of the bosses or the abolitionists. It is actions like this, actions that empower sex workers, that we need to fight the discrimination and marginalization that exists.

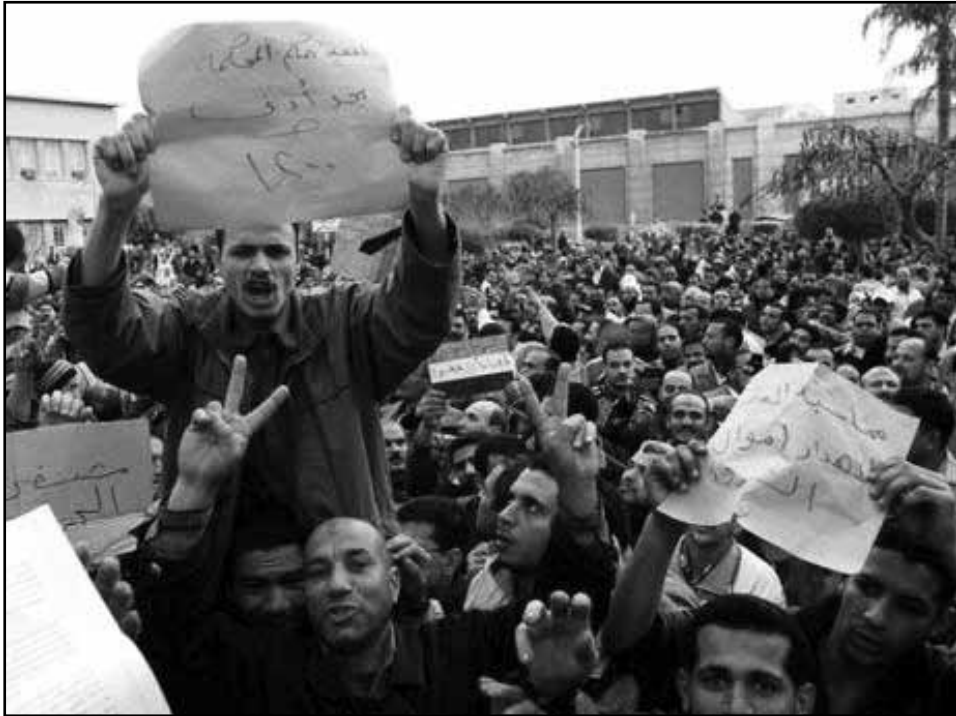
If activists are truly serious about the rights of sex workers they will listen to us even if what we have to say is difficult to hear and they will support us even if they don’t like what we do. It is only when all workers join together that we have the power to fight capitalism and the bosses. We do not ask for salvation but for solidarity.

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

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

Spotlight On Egypt



Textile workers strike in Mahalla al-Kubra, Egypt, on Feb 17, 2011. Photo: libcom.org

By the ISC

Egypt's labor movement has seen some of its most significant developments in decades in the last year. This includes major changes to labor and union law; cross-country workers' direct actions including sit-ins, strikes and general strikes; involvement in the ousting of the country's former dictator, Hosni Mubarak; and the formation of an independent union federation.

Since 1957, Egypt's only union federation was a government-controlled entity called the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) which acted as an umbrella organization for 23 affiliated trade unions. The ETUF's mandate was to prevent, disrupt, and repress its membership's dissent in the workplace and in the streets, and bust organizing of unions that were outside the grasp of the Egyptian state. The ETUF was resolutely pro-Mubarak during the 2011 uprisings and attempted to set up the illusion that workers were lending their support to the dictator.

Fast-forward to February 2011. Eighteen days after the Egyptian uprisings began, a general strike called for by political and labor groups dealt the final blow to Hosni Mubarak's rule. In March, after years of hard work on the part of workers and labor activists, Egypt's Minister of Labour and Immigration removed legal restrictions on the formation and joining of independent unions and their right to engage in collective bargaining with employers.

In the same month, the ETUF's 2006 elections came under scrutiny by the same Minister, and its board of directors was dissolved. In less than six weeks, the ETUF lost seven of its affiliated unions. In another blow to Mubarak-era labor practices, a year later in March 2012, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that labor laws that legitimized the state-controlled ETUF were unconstitutional, and ordered the dismantlement of the federation in the

coming months.

The 2011 changes in law allowed a popular and rapidly growing independent federation to be legitimate in its operations. The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) was in the making since 2009, and in the streets during the uprising it gained further popularity. It was founded by public service, retired, and health care workers' unions, and the Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services (CTUWS). The CTUWS is a non-governmental organization that has been fighting for workers' and union organizing rights for over two decades, often facing state repression.

By January 2011, the EFITU had been joined by independent unions from a plethora of industries, including garment and textiles, metal, pharmaceutical and chemical, automotive, and many others. In a press release by the EFITU in November 2011, workers and peasants were called on to participate in the revolution in all workplaces and in all "Tahrir Squares" across the country. In the same document, the EFITU proclaimed to be composed of 139 trade unions with a membership of 1,670,000.

In October 2011, the CTUWS was joined in its fight for a stronger union movement and workers' rights by the newly-formed Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress (EDLC), representing 149 independent unions. In the EDLC's founding statement, it announced that its mandate will be to help in the coordination and strengthening of new unions by providing training as well as legal, technical, and logistical support.

Egypt's working class is gaining strength and arming themselves with solidarity and organization. Their movement has seen some major developments in the last year that are going to play significant roles in their daily struggles for social and labor justice. For the workers of Egypt, a status quo is as far away as the horizon.

Polish Ironworkers Walk Out In Wildcat Strike

From libcom.org

On April 2, about 350-400 workers at Huta Batory ironworks factory in Chorzow, Poland, started a wildcat strike against planned reductions in staff and the use of temporary workers. The ironworks factory embarked on mass layoffs, as 50 people were dismissed during the week prior to the strike. At the same time, the management of the ironworks announced that the company had decided to replace staff with tem-



Wildcat strikers defend themselves. Photo: zsp.net.pl

porary agency workers and that the goal would be to have 80 percent agency workers. The permanent workers described that the temporary workers will be earning half their salaries—1,400 zlotys netto (around \$450). The workers say they consider this type of salary to be obscene for the work they do and are demanding the reinstatement of the dismissed workers and that the existing collective bargaining agreement is respected.

The workers, who were tired of the union negotiations, went on a wildcat occupation strike and refused to let the trucks with the production (metal pipes) leave the factory. The company decided to hire security squadrons from Bydgoszcz to come and break the strike. Hundreds, some say thousands, of people came out to defend the strikers. When the buses of security arrived and saw the aggressive crowd, they turned around and went back to Bydgoszcz.

The representatives of Alchemia, the company which controls the ironworks, started to threaten the strikers. On April

6, the Warsaw Związek Syndykalistów Polski (ZSP), the Polish anarcho-syndicalist union, went to confront Alchemia but found that the office was closed. Later in the day, the company announced that it would close the ironworks and that the workers would lose their jobs. They announced that 110 workers who were considered to be the main "troublemakers" and would be fired immediately for disciplinary reasons.

The ZSP is asking that the workers' demands are met, that the dismissals are immediately stopped, and that the company stop using trash contracts and hire all the workers directly.

If you would like to support the workers of Huta Batory, the ZSP is asking that you "send a nasty email to those involved: biuro@alchemiasa.pl and sekretariat@hutabatory.com.pl. Use your imagination as to the text. But something like you support the workers of Huta Batory would be good for a start."

With files from the Związek Syndykalistów Polski (ZSP).

Successful Auto Worker Strike In Russia



Auto workers strike in Russia. Photo: libcom.org

From libcom.org

Auto workers at the Benteler factory in the city of Kaluga, located southwest of Moscow, have ended a strike over a number of issues, including demands for an increase in wages from the 18,000 roubles (\$600) per month that they are currently paid.

Workers say that the wages are below

comparable pay in the region, which is an industrial hub.

While an official end to the dispute has not been reached (at press time), the strike was put on hold after management agreed to raise wages, begin drafting up a new collective bargaining agreement, and recognize negotiators from the Inter-regional Trade Union of Autoworkers (ITUA).

Management had used

strikebreakers to attempt to win the dispute, including university students, office staff, construction workers and "several" auto workers from Volkswagen who are the recipients of parts supplied from the Benteler factory, according to reports. During the strike, workers blockaded traffic and prevented scab labor from entering the factory grounds.

DWP Contractors Strike In The United Kingdom

From libcom.org

Office staff at various work sites of Balfour Beatty—a private contracting company employed by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in the United Kingdom—went on strike on April 10 over redundancies.

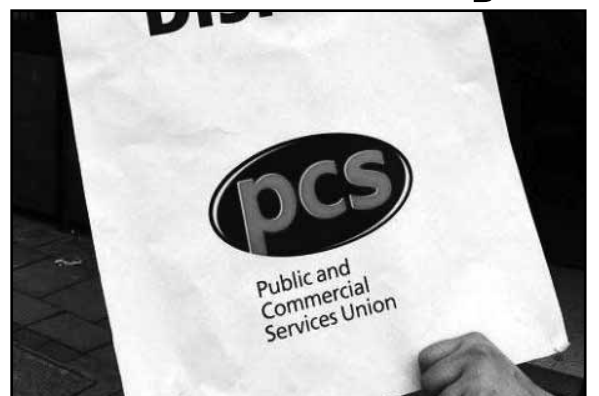
The two-hour strike took place among messengers, typists and telephone staff who provide the privatized work to the DWP.

This strike came after Balfour Beatty sought to make 300 staff redundant (essentially meaning they would be laid off) under the lowest possible terms allowed by the law.

In the past, workers at Balfour Beatty have gone on strike due to contract struggles. This is the first strike for many of the employees involved.

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) which called the strike, said:

"This dispute is a result of privatiza-



Strike by DWP contractors. Photo: libcom.org

tion creating a two tier workforce. Balfour Beatty staff work alongside civil servants but are treated much worse. There has been no attempt to redeploy people facing redundancy and the terms on offer are the lowest the company can get away with and stay within the law. It is also ridiculous to cut staff in job centers and DWP call centers when unemployment is rising and more people need help to find work or to claim benefits."

Support international solidarity!

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

