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Victory! IWW Cleaners In London Win Pay Rise

By the IWW Cleaners' Branch

The IWW Cleaners' Branch in London is proud to announce victory in the latest John Lewis cleaners' campaign. On Friday, Nov. 16, 2012, the IWW-unionized John Lewis cleaning staff won a significant pay rise as a result of their campaign.

Outsourced John Lewis cleaners have won an immediate and backdated 9 percent pay rise following their pledge of industrial action. The increase, backdated five months, takes their pay to £6.72 per hour at three central London sites, and £6.50 at one outer London site. Supervisors will now get £8.00 per hour and £7.84, respectively.

The cleaners work at four different John Lewis sites in London and are employed by cleaning contractor Integrated Cleaning Management (ICM).

United in the IWW, the cleaners notified ICM in the beginning of November of

the trade dispute and impending ballot for industrial action. This ballot could have seen visible and noisy industrial action by cleaners at four John Lewis sites in London in the lead up to Christmas.

By December 2012, John Lewis's profits were much higher than in 2011. The company is proud of their partnership structure, where all staff are "partners" who share in the company's profits.

John Lewis' cleaning contract, however, is outsourced to Maintenance Management Limited (MML), who outsourced it again to ICM. The cleaners have seen their hours reduced and workload increased, while being paid the minimum wage of £6.19—and they don't have a share in the profits.

This 9 percent increase will make a real difference to members' lives. ICM further pledged to look at the potential to pay a

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John Lewis cleaners on strike in July 2012.

Photo: libcom.org

IWW Dishwasher Wins Against The Boss

By FW Tony Brittain & FW David Van Dam

On Dec. 1, 2012, Fellow Worker David Van Dam and eight supporters received the second and last payment for over \$1,260 in unpaid wages. This victory was the conclusion to a campaign organized by members of the Greater Kansas City General Membership Branch and supporters.

David began working as a dishwasher for the Great Panda Buffet & Grill in Lenexa, Kan., in late June. He was quickly given greater responsibilities and was working around 60 hours a week for \$7.50 per hour. The work environment was always hostile. His two bosses often yelled at each other and would sometimes close the restaurant without notice. David would receive checks from his employers but was told not to cash them until a later date due to a lack of bank funds.

After attempts to organize, David decided to quit his job due to the high turnover rate and intolerable work conditions. At that time he had one check from the previous pay period that he had been unable to cash. He was given another



Wobblies celebrate victory over the boss.

Photo: FW Tony Brittain

when trying to get his back pay for the first time on Oct. 21. After trying to recover his pay for almost three weeks, David and supporters decided to organize. A letter was delivered to his former bosses demanding that he receive his full pay in cash before Nov. 24. After his bosses called and said they were unable to pay, David and his supporters organized a phone zap for Nov. 20. The phone zap was successful. David received over \$750 that day and his remaining back pay a week later.

This action was inspired by the Seattle Solidarity Network model of organizing.

The Right-To-Work For Less In Michigan

By Brent Fisher

The evening of Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2012, was somber for many protesters returning home from a day of action at the Michigan State Capitol building in Lansing. Thousands came together in an attempt to prevent the passing of two bills which would make Michigan the 24th right-to-work state. Unfortunately, their voices were not heard and Governor Rick Snyder signed the legislation. Why is this so controversial, what does it mean for unions in and outside of Michigan, and what can we do next?

Protesting had been going on at the Capitol and all around Michigan since the legislation was announced, less than a week before Dec. 12. An estimated 12,000 to 13,000 union members and grassroots activists came together for a day of action to show their disapproval for this attack on Michigan unions. Debates were heated at times, but apart from the destruction of a couple of conservative and pro-right-to-work tents, some tear gas and a few punches, the large demonstration was very peaceful, though it had a sense of urgency.

Michigan is a state rich in union history and is the birthplace and stronghold of the United Auto Workers (UAW). It was hard to imagine that any kind of union-weakening legislation could pass here. But in an about-face by Governor Rick Snyder and his administration, right-to-work went from "not on the agenda" to being rushed through a lame-duck legislature. Other than the indiscreet and undemocratic way this bill was pushed through the lame-duck session, what is controversial about right-to-work? First, know that right-to-work is just a political name that, at first glance, everyone wants to agree with. The choice not to be in a union is already a right. Even in union shops employees can opt out of the union and pay less in dues.

Right-to-work is an attempt to weaken unions because it allows someone to opt out and pay no dues at all, even in unionized shops. People who are not union members will not be participants in strikes and disputes but will be entitled to every



Protesting right-to-work.

Photo: Scott Bell

wage and benefit increase that the union earns. With this happening more workers will wonder why they should even pay to be union members. Freeloading will eventually drain the union financially. These scabs will cause more workers to decline membership and the union will grow weaker. Additionally, in an attempt to be "competitive," nothing would stop the bosses from renegotiating contracts, cutting wages and benefits, or just hiring all non-union workers. Only the remaining dues-paying members would be able to fight the bosses. But how many union members will be left?

All of this is in an attempt to make Michigan more competitive and attract more businesses to the state. Companies that wouldn't consider operating in states without right-to-work laws are now starting to look towards Michigan, but at what cost? Has history taught us that we can trust the bosses to provide us with a fair wage and benefits without being union members? No. If a company only wants to bring business to a state that has legislation specifically designed to weaken unions, then that company only wants to do business in a state where employees aren't able to stand up and fight for a fair shake.

The fact that this happened in Michigan is significant. The fact that these bills passed in such a strong union state is unsettling and should wake up the rest of the 26 states who haven't yet passed similar

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Have A Wobbly New Year!

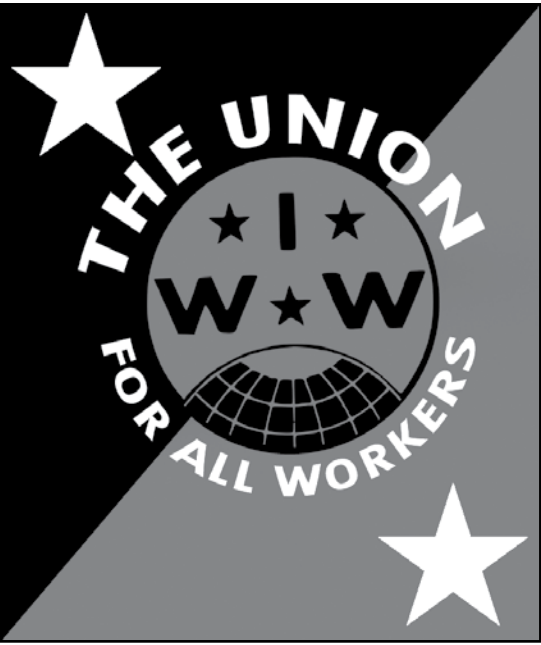
As Wobblies, we need to step
 back and pat ourselves on the back
 this New Year.

Our ideas of class warfare, col-
 lectives and the leaderless model
 are becoming a part of mainstream
 consciousness even if we’re not being
 credited with promoting them. Of
 course, many of these ideas predated
 the IWW and are independently
 shared by millions worldwide.

Once taboo, particularly in the
 United States, is that people are
 finally starting to talk about class as
 the defining issue and that the major-
 ity of humanity and the planet’s ills
 result from the relentless acquisition
 of money.

The United Nations (yeah, I know
 it’s manipulated by the superpowers)
 declared 2012 “The International
 Year of the Cooperative.” Personally,
 I don’t think it goes far enough, but Spain’s
 Mondragon Corporation has gained inter-
 national attention as a cooperative.

The Occupy movement has grown or-
 ganically around the world. It has adopted
 the leaderless model and in the majority of
 countries involved has not been co-opted



Graphic: deviantart.com

by political parties or processes. IWW
 branches are popping up around the globe,
 in places I would have never of dreamed of
 in my 17 years as a Wob. Here’s to an even
 better year in 2013!

**Scott Fife,
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Wobbly Organizing

Planks For A Platform And A Few Words About Organizing

By Staughton Lynd

This is the last in a series of reflections on the IWW approach to workers whom it hopes to “organize.”

The first point is that history offers inadequate formulations of what the IWW is all about.

The formulation embodied in the name and in the Preamble to the 1905 IWW Constitution is that the IWW is an association of “industrial” rather than “craft” unionists. As I have argued, the 1930s proved the inadequacy of this perspective. John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers (UMW), was an autocratic president of an industrial union and passionately repressed radicals. As principal founder of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), Lewis sponsored the creation of a series of top-down unions in the rubber, automobile, steel, meatpacking and other industries. The Lewis model for CIO unions insisted that one union represent all the workers in a particular industry, and that the employer deduct union dues from their paychecks.

Within and without the UMW, Lewis also pushed a particular sort of union contract that included two clauses much desired by management: a clause prohibiting strikes and other disruptions of production during the life of the contract and a “management prerogatives” clause giving the employer the legal right to make all the big decisions about a workplace. Such a contract put in the hands of the employer sole authority to decide what the enterprise should produce, how many workers it needed and, above all, whether, over time, the enterprise should receive new capital investment and expand, or be shut down.

A contract that gives the boss the authority to make the big decisions and prevents workers from doing anything about those decisions by stopping work is not a contract to which any worker should ever consent. Almost every CIO contract contained (and contains today) both a

no-strike and a management prerogatives clause. Wobblies were critical of such contracts and obtained the reputation of opposing all written agreements.

The point, however, was not that it is always wrong to write down an agreement, but, rather, that the agreements typical of unionism in the United States routinely contain curtailments of vital workers’ rights. It is the substance of these contracts, not the fact of a written contract, which the IWW and its members have rightly protested.

So, when a fellow worker asks, “What are you guys for, anyhow?” neither the idea of industrial unionism nor a critique of “workplace contractualism” really answers the question. The imaginary dialogue might go like this:

A fellow worker asks a Wob, “So what are you people all about?”

The Wob pulls out a copy of the paper and points to the Preamble on page 3.

His colleague says, “Yeah, I like the spirit of the thing, but we got an industrial union, and it stinks.”

Frustrated, the Wob responds: “Well, we don’t sign contracts.”

Fellow worker says: “In the first place, I heard about an IWW local across town that did sign a contract. And in the second place, isn’t it really a question of what’s in the contract, not whether you write stuff down?”

I am not a member of the IWW and am only a single voice. Obviously, it should be you, not I, who answer these critical and legitimate questions. An important beginning that I notice in the December 2012 *Industrial Worker* is that, in place of the Preamble written 107 years ago, you have set forth a new statement of principles. It is well-drafted and persuasive. Congratulations!

But I think it might also assist that inquisitive fellow worker if there were a set of specific practices and contract clauses that Wobblies could be expected to support. Here are some possible “planks”

for such a “platform.” (I rather like this figure of speech. One takes one’s stand on a platform. It is solid, supportive. Planks are required to give it substance):

1. Above all, every individual worker and every group of workers must retain **the right to stop work at any time**. Nothing in the Wagner Act, the law that applies to an ordinary private sector workplace, requires a no-strike clause. Beginning with the first CIO contracts in 1937, unions have voluntarily surrendered this essential right for the life of the contract.

2. Contract clauses that prohibit strikes have also been interpreted to prohibit slowing work down. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) does not protect slowdowns. However, **slowdowns are essential** and workers must struggle to promote and protect this critical practice.

3. **Working to rule** (for instance, doing everything directed by the company safety manual in a dumb-bunny manner) is an important tool. The late Jerry Tucker made a valuable contribution with his in-plant efforts at the Staley corn processing plant in the early 1990s and elsewhere. Remember, however, that Staley also proved that working to rule can be checkmated by a lockout.

4. Wobs need to develop **an egalitarian approach to layoffs** that protects what Stan Weir called “the family at work,” or more simply, solidarity. We should abandon a mechanical application of seniority in layoff situations that may have the result that older workers (often white and male) not only continue to work full time but may even work overtime, while newer hires (often minority and/or female) are put on the street with nothing.

5. **Internationalism is a very serious matter**. The Farmworkers under César Chávez informed the federal government of undocumented immigrants from Mexico so as to protect the jobs of Mexican Americans already in the United

States. Teamsters and Steelworkers were in Seattle in 1999 so that Teamsters could oppose letting Mexican truck drivers across the Rio Grande, and Steelworkers could advocate, as they always do, a protective tariff on steel imports. We must work toward coordinated strike action that protects workers everywhere.

6. The American ruling class will export to other countries any form of work that is not, by its nature, tied to a particular location. The reason is simple: lower wages can be paid elsewhere. **We need to re-conceptualize the centrality of “service” industries** such as public employment, work in hospitals and retirement facilities, home nursing, and trucking. Such work is the heartbeat of a community, and includes the things that people voluntarily do for each other in moments of crisis like Hurricane Sandy.

7. In general, immigrants from Latin America and other “underdeveloped” parts of the world bring with them to the United States a more sophisticated and deep-seated practice of solidarity than that which exists among Anglos. **All Wobs should learn Spanish**.

8. There can never be a justification of two- and three-tier wage scales for the same work. We must champion the old, old principle of **equal pay for equal work**.

9. When a worker is summoned to the office of a supervisor, every effort must be made to **make sure that one or more fellow workers accompany him or her**. The NLRB has gone back and forth as to whether non-union workers possess this right as a matter of law. We must try to assert it in practice, regardless.

10. Self-evidently, everything said in the foregoing specific suggestions finds its ultimate rationale in the **idea of solidarity**. In my experience, this idea is enormously attractive for many workers. The workplace, where we are legally vulnerable and must abandon the rights of citizenship when we punch in, may paradoxically become the place and time where we most fully experience that another world is possible.

I will very briefly conclude by proposing that Wobs, individually and collectively, address the question: What does it mean to organize, to “be an organizer”? Yes, I know that Joe Hill wrote to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Don’t mourn for me; organize.” But what did this wandering songwriter and casual laborer mean by the word “organize”? Not, I think, what the organizer who works for a modern trade union means. The organizer for a mainstream union checks in at the motel, convenes an underground meeting of informal shop-floor leaders, decides how best to recruit potential voters, stages a “going public” day when union supporters display buttons and pass out cards...and then, the day after the election, checks out of the motel and leaves town. If the election has been lost, the organizer leaves behind rank-and-file workers whose union sympathies have been made known to the employer and who are therefore vulnerable to retaliation.

This is not what we should mean by “organizing.” In fact, I believe it would be helpful to leave the word “organizing” to others, and to describe what we try to do with a word first used by Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador: “accompanying.” Accompanying means walking beside another person, each learning from the other.

It also means staying for a while. My wife and I have found that staying in one place for more than 35 years gives us an ability to be heard and to be useful. It helps, too, to come to a community with a skill to offer that other people feel that they need.

I won’t say any more about this here because it appears in a new book called “Accompanying,” published by PM Press in Oakland, Calif.

Solidarity forever!

IWW Constitution Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

Join the IWW Today

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.

☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.

☐ I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Post Code, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

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



Average Wobbly Time

By John O'Reilly

Sometimes organizers behave like jerks towards members with bad ideas, which is counterproductive. Just as often, people hesitate and look the other way in response to bad ideas. This response is a mistake. It misses the importance of what I like to call “Average Wobbly Time.”

Every Wobbly decides somewhere along the line to commit to the IWW. For many of us, our commitment started with an organizer inviting us to a one-on-one meeting before we even knew anything about the union. Making a commitment to follow through and sit down with an organizer is the beginning of a long process of making further commitments to the organization. Actions such as taking out a union card, attending meetings, taking on responsibilities in our campaign and branch, talking with other workers and encouraging them to get more committed—all of these tasks come from and build on our commitment to the IWW. It's this intense attachment to the union, its members, and its ideas that makes IWW members so remarkable and so exciting.

At some point, we become committed to such a degree that we put time into the union on a regular basis. Early on, that may be one hour every two weeks, about the time it takes to have a one-on-one or go to an organizing committee meeting. At some point, and it's hard to tell exactly when, many members absorb the union into their lives. It becomes a given that they will regularly allocate a certain amount of time to thinking about and doing work for the union. If we stop and think about it, and we may not realize it explicitly, each of us has a certain average that we tend towards. That average may go up when we get excited about a struggle or project or it may go down when we're feeling burned out. As long as we're committed to the union, there is some kind of average. That's Average Wobbly Time.

Sometimes, there are members who are committed to the union but are unable to find projects to work on. To put it another way, what happens when a passionate, committed Wobbly wants to do work for the union but doesn't have any good ideas about what to do? In some cases, it means that the member in question seeks out their fellow workers and asks them for suggestions on how to participate more. Sometimes it means that the member gets less excited about the union and allocates less time to it. Sometimes the result is that the member in question starts spending a chunk of Average Wobbly Time pursuing bad ideas.

So how do we deal with this dilemma?

Entering The Majority

By Zac Smith

Oklahoma and France are obviously at opposite ends of many spectrums. In Oklahoma, to be a socialist is to be regarded with curiosity and a little hostility, like a follower of an obscure, cultish religion. In France, it is no more eyebrow-raising to say, “I'm a socialist!” than it is in Oklahoma to say, “I'm a conservative!” Among the French, one never expects someone to say, “Then why don't you move to Russia?” as a response.

Arriving in Paris last May, I was struck for the first time since reading “Das Kapital” with the sensation of being not entirely outside the political mainstream. Descending into the Métro, I saw an anti-police graffito signed with a hammer and sickle. On a subway car, I noticed a man reading Lenin's “The State and Revolution.” He did not look like a student intellectual or a bohemian. On a train to Lille, my neighbor finding that I was American, delivered a long and complicated lecture on the principles of socialism, mostly designed to dispel the impression that socialism was synonymous with Stalinism, to which I listened patiently. This was all within the first few weeks following my arrival, and soon these things no longer

Committed members are going to spend a certain amount of time on union work every week. If no one gives them good ideas, they may go off and pursue bad ideas. Our task is to provide leadership. It may be as simple as suggesting good ideas to someone who hungers for more, such as saying: “Fellow Worker, I notice that you have a lot of energy and have been coming to all these meetings recently. Some of us have been talking about starting a new organizing campaign, would you like to sit down and talk about that?” By directing their attention toward a task that's clearly focused on organizing, we can simultaneously fulfill that member's desire to spend more time on the union and build up the forces dedicated to an organizing goal. By building a culture of good, organizing-directed tasks, we provide leadership and make it easy for excited members to plug into them.

As stated above, many Wobblies often look the other way when some of our fellow workers pursue bad ideas. Often, experienced Wobbly organizers do not want to crowd newer, inexperienced (but enthusiastic) members by telling them how to spend their time. It's intimidating to be honest with people. As a result, Wobblies often stand by and watch other people go off in a direction that does not make any sense and is likely to fail. Telling someone that their energy is being misspent is difficult, but ignoring the conversation disrespects our fellow workers. True respect means being honest with someone about their ideas and not just standing by while they pursue what we think is an obvious failure. This hesitation to step in sometimes results in individuals or groups spending hours working on a project when they clearly had other options that could have been much more useful.

This is a call for organizers to actively provide perspectives and build relationships with members so that the conditions that allow time and resources to be wasted on bad projects do not develop. If we push for what we think are good ideas and are honest about bad ideas, we treat our fellow workers with respect. This will also get people to work on better projects, resulting in less wasted time and resources. It's intimidating to be honest, but it's the right thing to do. We need to do what's right, not simply what's easy or comfortable. Understanding how Average Wobbly Time works is one small part of the larger struggle towards an organizing-based culture that fosters democratic and revolutionary unionism. And that is a kind of unionism that respects each member by being truthful and supportive.

seemed remarkable.

The moderate socialists I met in France had something in common with our conservatives. They displayed a casual openness about their beliefs. Even members of the Parti Communiste—a small group relative to the far more conservative Parti Socialiste—explained themselves in this easy, frank way.

Even the most confident and well-read American socialists have to declare their beliefs knowing that, likely as not, they'll be met with a stream of wildly misinformed objections. In this environment it becomes common practice to express one's views in a way that anticipates these objections and attempts to head them off. It is a rare person who can, having grown up in the United States, publicly express a belief in socialism without some degree of defensiveness.

However, in France the *chaussure*



Unions & socialist groups at a gay rights march in Lille. Photo: Zac Smith

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 60 Electric Valley Confrontation

Strikes for the eight-hour day took place in the Pittsburgh area in 1916. After two days in April, 13,000 of the 18,000 workers employed by Westinghouse Electric, Westinghouse Air Brake and Union Switch and Signal were on strike for eight hours of work at the same nine and half hours pay. Three thousand of the strikers were women employed in the production of shrapnel shells and airplane engines for the war in Europe.

Several women quickly emerged as strike leaders, among them Irish-born Anna Katherine Bell, 21 years of age. Turned out of her home for taking part in the strike, Anna Bell was arrested for speaking at an open-air meeting. Another women's leader, Anna Goldenberg, was arrested for holding a mass meeting without a permit.

On May 1 several thousand strikers marched to U.S. Steel's Edgar Thompson Works in Braddock, to gain the steelworkers' support. They were met by armed company guards; three strikers were killed and dozens wounded. The headline in a Pittsburgh newspaper roared: “Four Girls Lead Frenzied Mob of Strikers in Fatal Charge Against the Company.” Blaming the violence on foreign-born workers, the newspaper also stressed: “Their women folk backed them up. When the men began to fall, the women rushed to the front and dragged the men away.”

With the National Guard quartered in its East Pittsburgh plant, Westinghouse refused all further negotiations. The strike was finished. Twenty-three strike leaders were arrested and charged with inciting to riot, among them four women. All the women were acquitted except for Anna Goldenberg, who spent a year in the county workhouse.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

is on the other foot. One of the very few French Protestants I met, a very neatly-groomed student with whom I had lunch in a Vichy café, explained his views to me in the same defensive, uncomfortable manner common to American left-

ists. He was a supporter of the Front National, a major right-wing party whose platform revolves around blaming Muslim immigrants for all of society's problems. He hastened to explain to me that Muslims make up the majority of France's prison population and that the Front National had achieved a strong 20 percent in the last presidential election. Of course, in Oklahoma, no Republican would feel the need to follow up “I'm a Republican!” with

“also, a conservative Republican candidate got 48 percent in the last election!”

It's clear which attitude conveys a more appealing impression. Maybe then, as difficult as it may be to listen to the same ridiculous objections unfold over and over without interrupting, it is necessary to establish a relationship that is not adversarial.

Those of us who were not born into a radical household must remember the mistaken ideas we had before we discovered socialism. Just a few years ago, I believed that communism meant totalitarianism and, for some reason, that Marx and Lenin were contemporaries. In order to reach out to members of the mainstream we must engage them patiently, remembering that even though we may have heard their objections with monotonous regularity, it may be the first time they have had a chance to voice them.

We who wish to grow to a majority could benefit from carrying ourselves as if we already had.

Wobbly & North American News

Hershey's Workers Win 200K In Back Pay

By John Kalwaic

Three hundred student guest workers from many different countries recently won a lawsuit against the Hershey Company due to unfair labor practices. Most of the students were 18 and 19 years old.

In 2011, the students were on a J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program that promised them light work and a cultural exchange experience in the United States. Instead, they found themselves working day and night in a factory in Hershey, Pa. They were doing work previously done by locked-out union workers. The



Photo: news.infoshop.org
Student workers at Hershey.

students were exploited and exhausted and they eventually decided to walk out. Hershey had no comment as media attention grew. The students held demonstrations in Hershey and Philadelphia, and had the support of local unions and student groups such as the United Students Against Sweatshops. In 2012, the students settled with the U.S. Labor Department and have finally won \$213,000 in back wages and \$143,000 for safety and health violations at the packing facility. With files from Labor Notes and the Huffington Post.

Wobs March Against Racism In Glasgow



Photo: Glasgow Class War

From the Clydeside IWW

On Saturday, Nov. 24, 2012, a small contingent of IWW members and friends took part in the annual march against racism. Here the banner passes The Provands Lordship, the oldest dwelling in Glasgow built in 1471.

Walmart Protests Spark In Phoenix

By Jeff Moses, Modern Times Magazine

Protesters throughout the United States converged on Walmart locations on "Black Friday" (Nov. 23, 2012)—including some in the Phoenix metropolitan area—in solidarity with Walmart workers seeking better wages, benefits, and working conditions from the world's largest retailer.

Some cities attracted thousands of people, including actual Walmart employees. Walmart workers typically remain silent due to the company's notorious anti-union regulations, which have seen countless blue shirts served with pink slips.

But many broke their silence on Black Friday 2012. The IWW and Occupy Phoenix targeted Walmart's Buckeye distribution center in the morning, and then picketed at the Rural and Southern retail location in Tempe in the afternoon.

The IWW took the lead in organizing the distribution center demonstration, which according to IWW members Jakobe Illich and J. Pierce, seemed to attract more Buckeye police than protesters.

"There were about a dozen cop cars there, they were waiting for us when we got there," said Illich. As for the protester side, only 13 made the trip to Buckeye.

According to Pierce, the Buckeye police seemed inexperienced with protest situations and allowed the protesters to park and stand on the Walmart property until the manager told the police to remove the protesters.

"That was probably the first time Buckeye police had to call in their bike cops for a protest," said Pierce.

Even with the small crowd, the IWW members still felt they were successful in standing in solidarity with their fellow workers.

"There was a really good energy down there, we were getting really good waves and nods," said Illich.

"I think Walmart told their truck drivers not to honk at us, because we were getting way more waves and nods than honks," said Pierce.

The most aggressive resistance to their protest was found in one passerby who suggested the protesters "get a job," to which Occupy Phoenix member Tara



Photo: Ben Garcia
J. Pierce of the IWW outside a Walmart in Tempe.

The IWW members made their goals clear regarding this Walmart action: they are working toward organizing Walmart workers and helping them gain the power necessary to negotiate with management, Pierce said.

"The Walmart butchers tried to organize and they voted to unionize, so Walmart got rid of all the meat counters, so we want to make it so that can't happen again," said Pierce.

The IWW's goals may have been organization, but not every member wants to stop at unionized Walmarts.

"Obviously we would like to see the abolition of places like Walmart, or at least to see them worker-managed," said Illich.

Occupy's stated goals were not as cut and dry as the IWW, since their contingent came for their own reasons. The general message, though, was that Occupy stood in support of the workers and against consumerism.

In Tempe, the protesters spread out between the Southern Avenue and Rural Road sides of the Walmart and held signs. The protest chants were a little murky since not many knew the words.

The group was also joined by a small contingent of Unitarian Universalists, who came in their yellow "standing on the side of love" t-shirts to reinforce the IWW and Occupy people.

There was also an action at a Walmart near Christown Mall in the West Valley attended mostly by members of OUR Walmart, a group primarily comprised of Walmart workers.

This piece originally appeared on Nov. 25, 2012 in Modern Times Magazine. It was reprinted with permission from the publication.

Don't Just Vote, Organize!



Photo: Greater Kansas City GMB

By the Greater Kansas City GMB

On Saturday, Nov. 10, 2012, members of the Greater Kansas City General Membership Branch co-sponsored and participated in a "Don't Just Vote, Organize!"

community info exchange.

Members of participating organizations took turns standing on a wooden "soap box" made by a branch member and spoke about their respective groups. One fellow worker spoke briefly and answered questions about the union. Material was made available for participants, including various introductory pamphlets, buttons, and copies of the 2013 Labor History calendar published by the IWW Hungarian Literature Fund. One person signed up to become a member and another added their info to our contact list.

Indiana IWW Holds First All-State Meeting

By Michael White, X374679 and Hope Asya, X374671

On Nov. 17, 2012, 25 fellow workers from Indiana met in Indianapolis for a little over two hours. Workers from southern, central and northwest Indiana—including Bloomington, West Lafayette, Indianapolis and a few from Louisville—were in attendance. This being the first all-state meeting leading up to the formation of a general membership branch (GMB), we began by introducing ourselves and the IWW and had those in attendance do a round of general introductions. When doing the introductions we asked everyone to tell us their name, their occupation, if they were a student worker, if they had affiliation with any union and a general statement about themselves. Because this was the first in a series of meetings intended to form a GMB things were done somewhat informally, but we still followed the order of business, kept to a positive meeting structure and took minutes.

As delegates, we presented our report to the attendees after the call to order. We told them what we had been doing up until then to organize that meeting and the other meetings we had in West Lafayette, Indianapolis and Bloomington. We reported on fairly successful outreach done through our Facebook page. We told them of the many people, leftist groups and other Wobblies we have reached out to and had been working with. We informed them of our intention to raise money for the Work People's College (WPC) and how these efforts had been going up to that point. We also informed them of our regular contact with General Headquarters (GHQ) and that our purpose at that meeting and those in the future was to form a GMB.

We discussed whether people wanted to meet monthly to form a GMB, how people felt about forming a GMB and what some issues were that we could tackle in campaigns or events from the beginning. We decided to meet again on Dec. 15 (monthly every third Saturday), and to move in the direction of forming a GMB. There were many issues and possible campaigns we discussed including: conditions and organizing service and restaurant employees in Indianapolis, an all-Indiana University walkout/strike, organizing educational workers into Industrial Unions (IUs) on college campuses and different labor groups in Indiana that are not organized that we could organize with the IWW. We concluded that between meetings everyone would do some research into what things they want to achieve. Then at the next meeting we would begin to decide which campaigns to pursue first and how to coordinate our efforts across the state. So far the Indiana IWW has already agreed to help coordinate statewide action on the day planned for the Indiana University walkout by bringing together people from different campuses and working with not just students, but faculty and staff, in the best tradition of the Industrial Union model of organizing all workers into the One Big Union. After



Photo: Hope Asya
Celestial Panther Publishing show off their new red cards.

we adjourned we signed up many of the non-members who attended, with 16 new members altogether.

Since the meeting, and leading up to the second meeting, the two of us have been very busy staying in touch with members, continuing outreach, and utilizing social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Reddit. We have traveled to meet with people face-to-face on many different occasions and still find that meeting people in person is the best way to organize and motivate people to join and be part of the radical union for all workers. Face-to-face organizing has been an essential tool in organizing a GMB in Indiana.

On Nov. 25, we met a small cooperative publishing group, Celestial Panther Publishing, from Indianapolis in West Lafayette. We began helping them start the process of becoming an IWW Job Branch. We were able to sign up the entire staff and a few of their friends; six altogether. We have also planned a meeting in South Bend on Dec. 1 for interested members and non-members in northeastern Indiana who could not make the prior meetings.

We have treated our travels throughout Indiana as research trips and gained knowledge about the state that has already proven helpful in organizing labor here into the IWW. We continue to make note of regional/local businesses and industries, environmental conditions in different areas and any possible concerns thereof, and generally what we hear from the many fellow workers we voluntarily strike up conversations with.

Despite the general conservative leanings of the state of Indiana, the strong influence of conservative religious tendencies in the rural areas and the destructive right-wing laws set out by Governor Mitch Daniels' administration, the Hoosier state has been very receptive to our organizing efforts. The members already present in the state that have been on-board since the beginning have been indispensable. It was surprising to us that a radical union such as the IWW would be able to get such a good footing so quickly in one of the bastions of conservatism in the United States, but what was more surprising was that people were most receptive to the IWW's radicalism, and the fact that it is looking to the future and the end of the unending crisis that is capitalism. The Hoosier state is in fact a red state, but I think it will surprise people that it is becoming the red of revolutionary workers united against the owners of the means of production.

Special

Bravery And Creativity In The Crisis:

By an IWW organizer

Some reflections on the recent resurgence of the Wobblies, our current campaigns, and our role in radically renewing the labor movement and reviving the working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation.

The IWW currently has two priority campaigns in London. First, there is a major campaign at John Lewis, which has just landed a major victory. Workers have won an immediate and backdated pay rise of 9 percent following the threat of strikes.

John Lewis makes a lot of ethical capital out of the fact that it is a cooperative, with “partners” all sharing in the profits, and the running, of the business. But the cleaners are subcontracted and don’t share these rights. They earn the minimum wage, and even supervisors don’t receive a living wage.

Early in 2012, the IWW organized the first ever strike at John Lewis, with cleaners at Oxford Street walking out to fight for a living wage and against job cuts. They won an end to job cuts and a small wage increase to £6.72 per hour, though this is nowhere the living wage they need and deserve. One hundred percent of cleaners and supervisors at four other John Lewis sites, including their head office in Victoria and the Peter Jones store in Sloane Square, have now organized in the IWW. They really struggle at work because of serious increases in workload, they can’t afford time off when this makes them sick because they don’t get sick pay, and they struggle to survive on the minimum wage.

The second priority campaign is at the headquarters of the British Medical Association, the BMA House. The cleaners here are employed by a subcontractor called Interserve, a major multinational company, and are being paid the minimum wage of £6.19 per hour. Their campaign is to win a living wage.

There’s been a lot of talk in the media and political circles, as the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, recently announced the new London living wage rate of £8.55 per hour (£7.45 outside of London). In the same week it was announced that around 5 million workers (one in five) are not earning the “bare minimum necessary to live on” (i.e., the living wage).

BMA House cleaners have met with Interserve management and requested a meeting with BMA management (which was turned down), and have been holding awareness-raising demonstrations outside the BMA every week. There’s been a great reaction to this, including fantastic support from Britain’s General Union (GMB) who organize BMA employees, as well as from members of the BMA Council.

However, the cleaners are running out of patience. Life is really hard on such low wages, both practically in terms of living standards, but also emotionally and mor-

ally in terms of feeling undervalued, and the workers are determined to take whatever action is necessary to secure a living wage.

These are just two of our current campaigns; there are cleaners from across the capital joining the IWW, with various more embryonic campaigns at different stages. There has been a real upsurge of cleaners’ campaigns recently in many different unions, and IWW activists are supporting cleaners’ struggles through unions like Unison, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) and GMB as well. The IWW is also organizing in other sectors including retail, bars and restaurants.

There are many factors behind the current cleaners’ revolt. The living wage campaigns going back to 2005, from civil society organizations like Citizens UK and some unions, have created that kind of media-savvy campaign demand that’s pretty hard for anyone to disagree with. Even that kind of “it’s-good-for-business” argument, while definitely not my priority, makes living wage demands so hard to argue against on a social or moral basis. The living wage isn’t just a number; it’s more about an idea of dignity at work than a particular wage rate. So, in demanding a wage that allows for a decent life, rather than just scraping by, workers are saying “we have as much right to a decent life as anyone else.”

When it comes to organizing, the key is often to find demands that are specific, practical and winnable enough to campaign around, while also mobilizing around perhaps even more vague but more deeply-felt ideas of dignity and equality.

There have been a reasonable amount of victories. In the context of a political moment in which the employing class is on the rampage and the working-class movement is in total disarray, these victories are pretty inspiring. Workers don’t often need to be told that life sucks, or that the rich are screwing them; negativity has never been a great motivator. But they do need some hope, and that’s been a bit thin on the ground, so victorious cleaners’ campaigns can be very inspiring.

It’s not only inspiring to cleaners. I think the romantic “David versus Goliath” idea appeals to a lot of the left and elements of the student movement. There’s been wide support for these cleaners, and that always helps you to feel like you’re not alone.

Cleaners’ struggles are about turning capitalist logic on its head, the logic which says, “The economy is fucked, we’re in recession, we’re all in it together, figures



John Lewis cleaners picket.

Photo: london.indymedia.org

are down this year, blah blah.” But the vast majority knows that’s nonsense from a working-class perspective. The directors’ massive pay rises (39 percent in recent years in some cases!), the increasing gap between rich and poor and the tax avoidance are all well-known. So for example, at Interserve, the top dog’s pay increased 11 percent in 2012, up to £900,000, and yet the company is saying that it’s a tough time and we’re all in it together.

To see the people at the very bottom taking audacious actions, making big demands for their own 11 percent pay rise is a light in the tunnel. I also think the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements have contributed to a general climate of anger and a feeling that we can take big, bold, audacious action.

And that’s where the IWW comes in: audacity. I do think that IWW has been the perfect next step in this movement and a big part of this year’s upsurge. It’s inspiring to see an even smaller, more radical union, with no money and no paid officials, taking even more audacious action, and winning. I suspect that’s been a big inspiration to a lot of labor activists in much bigger, better resourced unions, even if only subconsciously.

The bravery and creativity of our campaigns are important lessons that can be generalized. Bravery is necessary both on the part of organizers and rank-and-file members (a blurred distinction in the IWW). Organizers need to be much braver in terms of how they approach workers. Proposing direct action isn’t something to be done hesitantly. How do you expect workers to be brave and take what is genuinely risky action if you look scared of it yourself? But it is something to propose. Too often we—organizers, activists, the left—treat workers with kid gloves. We propose all sorts of ineffec-

tive options mostly on the basis that “the workers aren’t up for it” or “everyone is scared,” or even “we aren’t sure we can win.” But I think half the time, when people don’t seem up for it, it’s because they aren’t stupid and they aren’t up for that ineffective action we’re proposing. Propose the truth. If it’ll take a six-month strike to win, say so. People won’t do half measures but if they think you’re upfront and proposing the action it’ll really take to win, they sometimes go for it.

The workers’ general mood right now is interesting. Millions of people are basically terrified of sticking their heads above the parapet in any way, but then huge numbers of others are throwing caution to the wind and saying “let’s have it.” Immigration maybe has a part to play. There have definitely been certain nationalities where we’ve noticed more militancy, less fear, often those where repression of trade unionists is most severe in their original country. A lot of our early organizing was linked with the Latin American Workers’ Association (and still is). But then recently some African cleaners said to me that they think the bosses now are worried of the Latin Americans, so they’re exploiting the Africans because they think the African’s won’t fight. So these girls and guys are going to show them that Africans will fight just as hard. We’ve also had English, Polish, Portuguese; lots of different nationalities get up and organize. So nationality has an impact, but, as I’ve experienced in my own workplaces before, it also has a lot to do with individual worker-leaders that inspire their colleagues to get on board. All unions now try to train their organizers and stewards to find these leaders; it’s vital.

Creativity is important too. Make actions fun, make them communal.

Continued on next page

Victory! IWW Cleaners In London Win Pay Rise

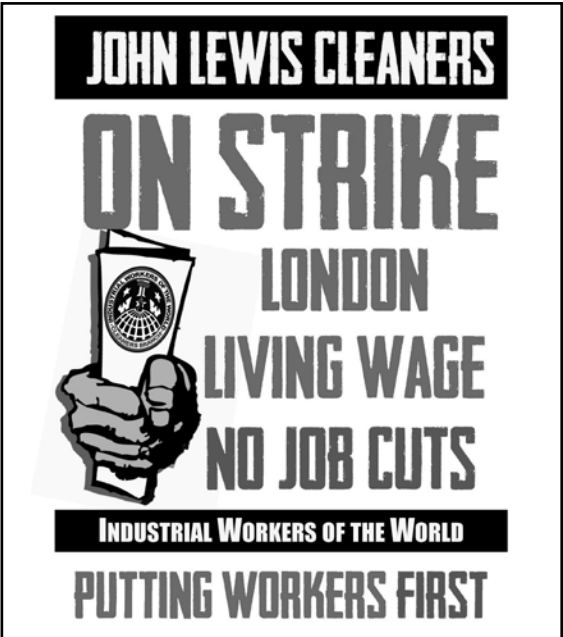
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living wage of £8.55 as they enter contract talks early in 2013.

“It is our members’ unity, solidarity and courageous stance that has won this increase. They are an inspiration and a lesson to other workers,” said IWW British Isles Regional Administration Secretary Frank Syrratt.

“There is still work to do. John Lewis needs to ensure all their workers—whether partners or outsourced [employees]—take home a living wage of £8.55 and receive full sick pay, lifting them out of poverty and insecurity. The IWW pledges to continue organizing and campaigning to make this happen,” he added.

For more information, contact south[at]jiww.org.uk.



Graphic: workersliberty.org

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Special

A Wobbly Organizer's Thoughts On The Struggle

Continued from previous page

Language exchanges, informal education classes, dances...we need to bring back the "union way of life." And stop sounding like the bosses! There's a fine balance to be struck between inspiring confidence by appearing professional, knowledgeable, and of course genuinely knowing what you're doing and not getting caught out by regulations, but also really speaking in an accessible way and not mystifying things. Workers need to understand their union and their struggle, or else how can they lead it? Don't patronize, do educate, but don't become like the enemy.

A "cleaners' charter"-type set of positive demands to unite struggles would have a lot in common with the obvious demands in other service industry jobs. We're talking about issues of low pay, job security, sick pay, holidays and flexible scheduling. We're also definitely talking about issues around management bullying, respect and dignity in the workplace.

Some of these issues are linked to the "invisibility" of cleaners within the wider working class. Cleaners often have a different employer than the rest of the workers in their workplace or sector, and are often invisible to their colleagues as they work very early or very late shifts, so they're not seen or interacted with by other workers. There are plenty of immigration issues too, including employers directly colluding with the U.K. Border Agency to use deportations, or the threat of them, as a tool against organizing.

The living wage is a key demand across the sector, but must be won in conjunction with safeguarding jobs and hours, and not seeing a corresponding increase in workload.

Sick pay, holiday entitlements and flexible working provisions need to be at least in line with the terms and conditions of the directly employed workers in whatever workplace cleaners are employed in. Flexible working policies are particularly important as there are many women workers and young parents in the sector.

With issues of bullying and basic respect, the main thing immediately here is union recognition and education of what workers' rights are. When there is an issue, you need a well-organized union capable of acting quickly to assert workers' rights. This needs to result in tightly worded anti-bullying policies and disciplinary and grievance policies, which can then be enforced. But a longer-term demand is to look at industry standards for training managers. There are a lot of low-level managers who treat cleaners like second-class citizens and who are consistently rude, aggressive, discriminatory and demeaning. We need union recognition, union strength and direct action to

challenge this, and then we need industry support to set standards to improve the overall culture.

This is actually a society-wide issue. Companies and managers can get away with this because there are a lot of people, including a lot of other working-class people, who see cleaning work and cleaners as inferior and beneath

them. I think we should be demanding that cleaners work normal "office" hours (i.e., whatever the standard hours of work at a given workplace are), and socialization with the "regular" workers in those places should be encouraged. The obvious extension of this is for cleaning work to be brought in-house rather than subcontracted to a cleaning company.

There are pros and cons with this though. In theory, if cleaners are a regular part of the workforce, covered by whatever union has recognition, this allows a union to organize and take action across the workplace to support specific group demands. In practice, though, this rarely happens. More to the point, being brought back in-house in many areas of the economy doesn't mean much for union strength because chances are there isn't already an organized union present anyway.

Building industrial strength in an industry based on contracting and subcontracting has been about targeting clients rather than the contractors. Often, the cleaning companies care more about working for that client than the client cares about subcontracting to a particular cleaning company. So putting pressure on the client can put the cleaning company's contract in jeopardy. We've seen some of that client-focused pressure work at John Lewis.

It's also a moral issue—we're saying that the clients are responsible for the workers in their buildings whether or not they directly employ them. The media-friendly "moral" aspect of cleaners' campaigns does generate more support and this helps, particularly when you're dealing with clients like John Lewis who rely on their brand reputation.

Solidarity is seriously vital. This means other unions, other types of workers; but it also means cleaners from different sectors and places supporting each other.

But above all, it's back to good old creative direct action. Retailers are obviously



Graphic: iww.org.uk

very susceptible to demonstrations and blockades—any action that impacts sales. But others, like offices and banks, maybe need different actions, like phone/email blockades or other kinds of economic sabotage. Or maybe it's their own clients and subsidiaries and investors that are the weak points. Whatever it is, find it. Occupations are

a big step up, but very effective if you have the strength.

The idea of a cross-union, rank-and-file cleaners' caucus, that could help coordinate struggles and give them a political focus, is a good one. I'd support such an initiative, so long as it is controlled by cleaner activists, not union officials or leftist groups.

The analogy with the New Unionism struggles of the 1880s and 1890s (the original British syndicalist movement and birth of industrial unionism as opposed to craft unionism) has real merits, maybe more than most folks are realizing. Sure, everything looks different; we lead different lives, with technologies and fancy clothes and all kinds of stuff like that. But substantively I think we're in a very similar position.

Global corporate power and expansion, massive inequality, global migration, a rapidly shifting and changing economy, low pay and insecurity, less skills, low union density (not to mention organization), especially in the low/semi-skilled sectors—all of those things are parallels.

The obvious practical lesson is that we need a straightforward, direct action-focused industrial unionism, which speaks to the experience, levels of education, and languages of our people. Also it's important that this be based in the normal daily lives and cultures of our people, rebuilding a union way of life. Maybe that's the overriding lesson of the New Unionism struggles and later industrial syndicalist movements of that time.

Then there are some lessons (obvious to any Wob) that teach us why building industrial and international organization, as opposed to sectional and national organization, is so important. Though, without the revolutionary aims, some big mainstream unions are attempting this in their own way.

But I think there's another side to the New Unionism and the Great Unrest (the

period of massive industrial unrest in Britain, associated with the rise of syndicalism between 1880 and 1920) which is often overlooked. Looking back at it, that movement often appears to us as being quite rough-and-ready, and based on a raw militancy and direct action spirit. But the movement was also intensely modern, futuristic even. Organizations like the IWW, the IWGB, the Independent Syndicalist Education League and others were really breaking with lots of what the left and union movement held to be obvious, and it was controversial.

Right now, I think even—maybe even especially—the radical left is far too conservative, stuck in ideas and traditions that we take for granted without questioning. I'm not going to go into specifics, I've got ideas, but they might all be wrong and I'm sure others have ideas too, but the working-class movement is in crisis, the unions are stuck, and it's time for a radical, futuristic view. The basic social relationship of capitalism remains the same, but society and lots of corporate organization is very different than it was even 20 years ago. Fuck catching up; we should be setting the new agenda.

When it comes to the exact question of how the contemporary IWW fits into the wider labor movement—and whether it's a catalyst for a transformation of the existing labor or the embryo of an alternative to it—I honestly don't know. Over the last five to ten years, I've regularly shifted my perspective between these viewpoints. I've been a shop steward, a lay activist, and a paid organizer with three different Trades Union Congress (TUC) unions, as well as active in the National Shop Stewards Network, in anti-cuts campaigns and more. All I know is that at the moment, organizing, fighting and even winning is much easier in the IWW.

I feel the mainstream unions are in crisis, maybe not in terms of numbers, but in structure, direction, culture and efficiency. This is true even if you don't share a radical or revolutionary mentality. The service-provision, "insurance"-based model is in direct conflict with an organizing and collective model, but unions are still trying to do both.

Maybe some really radical and brave new union leaders could sort them out a bit. Maybe some very efficient and effective propaganda groups, working alongside quality organizers, could shift the position and culture of the rank and file, and they could change things. Maybe. I'm not sure.

In the meantime, the IWW's growth and success, and its role as a space to experiment, is exiting. We're getting slaughtered, we've got to do something, and we've got to shake things up. Whatever the future holds, right now, the Wobblies are back.

The Right-To-Work For Less In Michigan

Continued from 1

legislation. Until recently, even as unions were attacked in neighboring states, the thought of there being any attempt to weaken unions in Michigan, let alone passing legislation, was inconceivable. Now that it has passed here, where else can it pass?

This defeat for the labor movement and the working class won't go unnoticed, and you can be sure that the bosses and politicians will be trying to introduce or reintroduce this in your state too. Learn from Michigan and don't be blind-sided by their attacks. Be ready and organized.

What do we do now? Like it or not, this was our fault. Four decades of declining union membership shows that we are not as strong as we need to be. But all hope is not lost. In very little time we got thousands of people to protest, and even with the passing of right-to-work, we can turn it around to reinvigorate the



Picket line of scab rats.

Photo: Scott Bell

labor movement. The best way to turn this around for the working class is through solidarity. If you work at a union shop then stay a union member; if your place isn't unionized then try to get a union and join the IWW. Through solidarity we can turn these attacks on unions as the gathering call for the working class. An injury to one is an injury to all.

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Obituaries

How Marvin Miller Made Strides In Major League Baseball

By Neil Parthun

Marvin Miller, an iconic figure in professional sports and the labor movement, died on Nov. 27, 2012, at the age of 95.

Miller got his start as an economist, assistant to the president and negotiator within the United Steelworkers during the 1950s. Yet, it was in the mid-1960s that Miller would begin to cement his national notoriety.

In 1965, three top baseball players—Robin Roberts, Jim Bunning and Karvey Kuenn—decided that they had had enough of their owner financed sham company union and poor pension plan. So, they sought to hire a strong unionist for the job. After a campaign to earn rank-and-file support, Miller was hired by the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) as their executive director in 1966.

In 1968, Miller’s MLBPA negotiated the first collective bargaining agreement in Major League Baseball (the MLB). The deal included the first increase in the minimum league salary in almost 20 years. In 1970, Miller secured the right for players to have an independent arbitrator resolve salary disputes and grievances between the teams and players, instead of the commis-

sioner who was hired by the owners. All the while, the union also sought to strengthen the pension plans for players since so many players had short careers and were not wealthy due to their ball playing. To get the goods when it came to salary arbitration and better pension benefits, the MLBPA went on a 13-day strike in 1972 and survived a lockout in 1973. But there was more to be won and more battles to be fought.

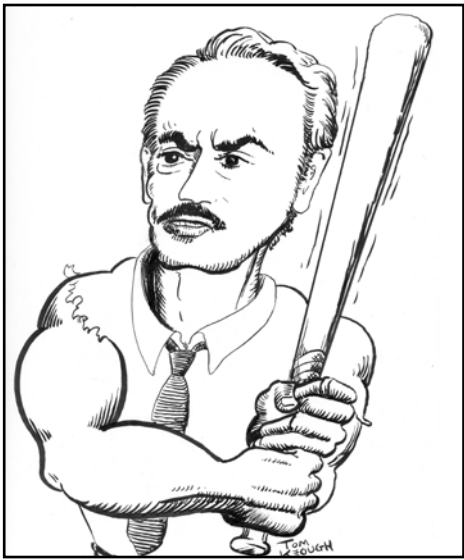
Former MLB player Curt Flood had unsuccessfully challenged the MLB’s “reserve clause” in the early 1970s. The reserve clause was an addendum to each player’s one-year contract. It would allow the team to keep the player for the next season. The players would have no substantive voice regarding where they played or for what salary. Miller had been supportive of Flood’s efforts and was also involved in other challenges of the reserve clause until its ultimate demise in 1974. With the death of the reserve clause, players gained the right of free agency—the ability to choose which team they would play for and demand that owners negotiate the best contract with them.

The owners attempted a lockout in 1976 to limit free agency rights and failed.

In 1980 and 1981, the owners attempted to push back against the newly-gained free agency rights by demanding compensation for players that signed with a new team. The players voted 967-to-1 to strike in June 1981. As Miller himself described it, “From the standpoint of labor it was the most principled strike I’ve ever been associated with...Many of the players struck not for a better deal for themselves but for a better deal for their colleagues, and for the players who would be coming into baseball in the future...There were veterans on every team who remembered how it used to be and the role of union solidarity in changing things.”

Miller’s tenure as the head of the MLBPA dramatically changed the power relationship between the players and ownership, giving them incredible new rights on the job and increasing their average salary from \$19,000 to \$300,000+ per year.

Current MLB Commissioner Bud Selig has openly stated that Miller should be in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Hall of Fame broadcaster Red Barber believes that Miller is one of the two or three most important people in the game of baseball. Former MLB Commissioner Faye Vincent noted, “Marvin Miller brought players



Graphic: Tom Keough

out of indentured servitude. They were basically slaves. How can you argue that it was anything other than a great thing? It meant that baseball became part of the modern world.”

Miller’s efforts to secure better working conditions for labor and to create a strong union movement based on solidarity is an example we can all learn from, whether or not our jobs put us between the chalk lines.

Farewell, Richard

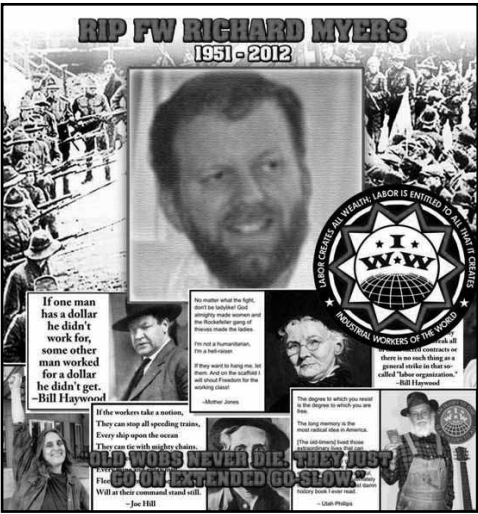
By Tina Braxton, *Indymedia.org*

Richard Myers, union activist, writer, labor historian, graphic artist, photojournalist, poet, and proud worker, passed from this world on the evening of Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. His loss leaves the Denver social justice community stunned and heartbroken.

Richard was born and raised in Nebraska and came to Denver in his youth. He worked in a factory for 33 years, where he also began a career as a union activist. Richard served as a steward in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Later he joined the IWW, where he played a vital role in making the Wobblies an important player in the Colorado social justice community. For two years, Richard also served in the IWW as branch secretary of the Denver General Membership Branch. He joined the fight for grocery and retail workers, with the United Food and Commercial Workers.

Richard worked passionately for many other causes and could always be found where people were fighting the good fight. He was one of the founders of Colorado Indymedia and a major participant in our predecessor, Rocky Mountain Indymedia. His poster art has been an important feature of almost every radical and progressive campaign in the area, for decades.

Richard’s writings in the Daily Kos,



Graphic: colorado.indymedia.org

TPMCafe, the *Industrial Worker*, H-Labor, and many other venues, have brought a compassionate working-class view to readers worldwide. He also served as joint editor and an author of “Slaughter in Serene,” published in 2005, and available at <http://workersbreadandroses.org> as well as many bookstores and libraries.

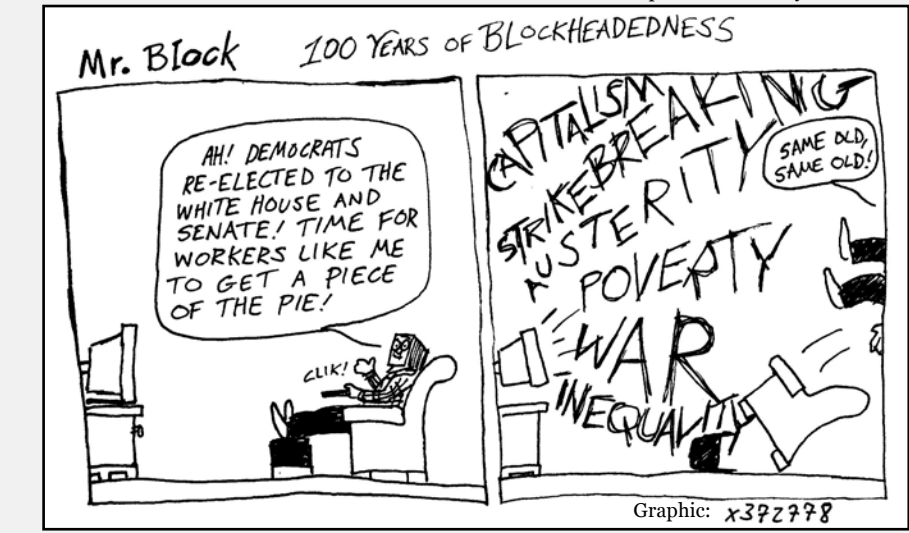
The best collection of Richard’s work, though, and heart can be found on his website at: <http://www.rebelgraphics.org>.

Richard’s friends and comrades are currently planning a memorial service, and details will be posted on <http://colorado.indymedia.org> when available.

Wobbly Arts



Graphic: Ben Debney



Graphic: x37z778

Review

“Red Dawn” And Revolutionary Envy

Director: Dan Bradley. “Red Dawn.” Produced by Contrafilm, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) and Vincent Newman Entertainment, 2012. 93 minutes.

By Zac Smith

In 1984, “Red Dawn”—a film in which the Soviet Union invades the United States and is challenged by guerrilla forces led by Patrick Swayze—made perfect sense. The Soviets, perennial villains of our real-life fiction, had occupied Afghanistan but were facing prolonged and organized resistance by jihadists. Meanwhile, Ronald Reagan was making political capital by taking a hard stance against the Eastern Bloc.

“Red Dawn” celebrated resisters of Soviet imperialism by identifying them with its scrappy underdog protagonists. Despite relying on a cast of indistinguishable high schoolers, the film gained some emotional resonance by portraying a realization of public fears about the Soviet Union, as movies like “Red Nightmare” and “Invasion U.S.A.” had done before it.

The film also engaged in some

quasi-serious exploration of the moral cost of fighting an improvised war (one teenager who is found to be secretly cooperating with the invaders is summarily executed). It was “The Battle of Algiers” for the Reagan set.

In 2012, “Red Dawn” just seems bizarre. The remake replaces the Soviet Union with North Korea. China was originally to play the villain, but fears of alienating the Chinese box office led to the invaders being switched in post-production to what must be the safest target this side of the Nazis. Despite the alleged continual ramping-up of violence in media, the second coming of “Red Dawn” is sterile and inoffensive: point-blank gunshots to the head leave no visible wounds, and the executed traitor is replaced by a character who is unwittingly tagged with a tracking device. Instead of being executed by his fellow guerrillas, he goes out in a blaze of glory against the invaders—depicted off-screen, of course.



Graphic: neofuturists.blogspot.com
The original “Red Dawn” movie poster.

The only current situation the movie readily parallels is the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. The idea that this would be purposeful seems ridiculous on its face. Why would a movie so crudely patriotic identify the United States as an oppressive invading force? Why would it identify its heroes with the jihadis who are now the enemies of U.S. power?

Jed Eckert, the he-man Iraq veteran who leads the resistance against the North Koreans, says that he was one of the “good guys” in Iraq, but now he’s one of the “bad guys.” Eckert declares this with relish, not regret. Returning from Iraq, Eckert was sullen and alienated. By the time he’s (spoiler!) blown away by a random North Korean mook toward the end of the film, he’s gained a new community in his militia-mates, reestablished a strained relationship with his brother and seems significantly more fulfilled than he did coming back from his service as a member of an occupying army.

If 2012’s “Red Dawn” has anything to say to us, it’s that it’s healthier to fight the evil empire than to be a part of it. If it speaks to anything in the psyche of the American public, it’s that we now envy the position of the people fighting us.

Those who have sworn their unconditional support for the United States find themselves defending a lumbering, incomprehensible corporate-imperialistic force that is unchallenged by any easily-identifiable rival of equal power. Storytelling has taught us that, when a person with few resources challenges an empire, that person is, by virtue of his position, imbued with heroism. We don’t often write stories which consist of a massively powerful and wealthy hero frustratingly trying to squash an under-equipped but determined villain. Even the Bible had to turn God into a scrappy underdog to keep him relevant.

How much simpler it would be to be one of our enemies! This is what 2012’s “Red Dawn” has to say to us. How much easier it would be to satisfy ourselves that right was on our side!

Reviews

Dispersing Power In Bolivia: Tending The “Sacred Fire” Of Social Movements

Zibechi, Raúl. Dispersing Power: Social Movements as Anti-State Forces. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010. Paperback, 174 pages, \$15.95.

By John Maclean

Social movements in El Alto, Bolivia, have been the agents of political change in the country for much of the past decade, ousting right-wing presidents, rejecting neoliberal policies and ushering in a new political era with the election of Evo Morales in 2006.

Understanding how these movements have operated and sustained themselves in recent years is a key part of grappling with the questions of social change and state power in Bolivia today. Raúl Zibechi, a Uruguayan journalist and author of many books on social movements in Latin America, focuses on social movements in El Alto in the new English edition of his book, “Dispersing Power: Social Movements As Anti-State Forces,” published by AK Press and translated by Ramor Ryan.

In “Dispersing Power,” Zibechi writes that societies in movement force cracks in “mechanisms of domination” tearing at the “fabric of social control” while dispersing institutions; people only discover what they are capable of when acting. Following developments in El Alto, Zibechi writes that relations between neighbors, friends and family “are as important as those [with] the union, the party, or even the state.” The author, discussing German sociologist and social theorist Max Weber, reveals how “permanent” political parties always embrace domination, and how among the indigenous people of Bolivia there is the non-Western idea of leading by obeying, not commanding. What we catch a glimpse of in El Alto is “social machinery that prevents the concentration of power or, similarly, prevents the emergence of a separate power from that of the community gathered in assembly.” Zibechi, again following Weber, writes that “solidarity

and representation are in opposition” and further, that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reports look on with horror at these “undivided” Bolivian communities.

The USAID objective is to “destroy the social movements” in El Alto, particularly the “neighborhood councils.” El Alto was fed, and built up, by many forced internal migrations from the Bolivian countryside and is comprised of hundreds of “urbanizations” which confound state control—a control which always demands a “center” and negates efforts based in “self-organization.” This dispersed, indigenous Aymara-influenced city, must be overcome by the failed colonial elites of Bolivia and their international backers.

Another perceived problem with the city is that a majority of its workers toil in the informal sector in family-based shops and “are not subject to [a] Taylorist division of labor.” Taylorism is an old school of business management which seeks to fuse the human body and its movements to the violence and regularity of the assembly line. Zibechi believes that the history of union struggles that the migrants possessed, and the older resources of Aymaran culture, enabled them to survive and later stage an incredible leaderless insurrection.

Accounts of struggles in Bolivia show decisions being made collectively, leaders being rotated, and an “outpouring from below” which greatly unsettled political representation. Zibechi characterizes these energies as “non-state powers” which tend to disperse, not unify. The success of the Aymara and others in El Alto flies in the face of the idea that divided, specialized bodies are more efficient. The movement tactics employed included the nighttime blocking of roads, efforts to distract police forces, community marches and mass actions used to freeze up cities.

All of this comes from a “long memory” and is activated in times of need, with no separation from everyday life. During the period of the 2003 Gas War, active communication kept indigenous communities mobilized.

The state seeks to weaken face-to-face control by provoking separations which encourage leading by commanding. What has happened in El Alto, writes Zibechi, “suggests that large numbers of humans can live without [the] state,” and that an inability to realize this has been a major “stumbling block from the standpoint of social emancipation.” A non-state power is a “capacity to disperse or prevent the state from crystalizing.” The ability of a state to co-opt or neutralize movements can be greater or lesser depending on many circumstances. Social movements seek to “rupture” realities we are told cannot be changed; they refuse to remain condemned. History shows that “non-articulated and non-unified movements” are able to topple horrid governments, free large areas for different life ways and fight for important rights. Zibechi sees a permanent “dispute” going on between communities and movements, which seek to bring together states and political parties but also to foster divisions by co-opting and dividing grassroots powers that challenge their influence.

In El Alto, life-sized dolls can be seen hanging with their heads turned to the side, signifying death, or splashed with the color red for blood. These dolls are put on display in El Alto neighborhoods to intimidate would-be thieves and assailants. They are an immediate form of self-defense, “the consequence of a corrupt and morally deteriorated state judicial apparatus” and failed policing, often in league with criminals. Under the colonial state, indigenous forms of conflict resolu-

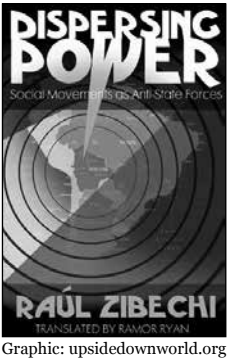
tion were forced “underground,” but in this situation they came again into the light. Conflicts can be resolved by different groups, and this allows people to “defend themselves without creating a specialized separate apparatus, just as they do not create a specialized apparatus to mobilize and fight for their interests.”

Zibechi cites many sources which try to outline what a nation-state, or large region, would look like with power not separated from communities. Some of these documents, like the “Achacachi Manifesto,” drafted in 2001 at the height of a popular insurrection against neoliberalism, were importantly written in the Omasuyos province, a historic Aymaran center. These documents underline the “collective expression of the concept of ‘to lead obeying’” and even of “the beginning of the end of representative democracy.”

The author also brings up a cautionary tale about the experience indigenous movements in Ecuador had with political party entanglements. He writes about how “gains became prisons” and how movement “counter-powers cannot be converted into [state-based] power without annulling...multiple potencies.”

Zibechi concludes the book with some reflections on community, which he sees as a “bearer of memory” and “know-how,” and an always-vigilant fighting force with which “to bring the common up to date.” He writes of communitarian movement efforts to “deepen the democratic flow of...the means of life and creation.” These words have great meaning in the context of the past decade’s resource wars in Bolivia over access to water, land and gas.

Overall, “Dispersing Power” demonstrates how powerful government forces frequently seek to undermine the deepening of radical social bonds. In this brilliant book, Zibechi explains how and why organizers should spend less time blaming governments and more time expanding the “sacred fire” of social movements.



Graphic: upsidedownworld.org

“Singlejack Solidarity” Teaches Valuable Lessons For The Working Class

Weir, Stan. Singlejack Solidarity. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. Paperback, 400 pages, \$19.95.

By Patrick McGuire

There are a handful of books that I believe every Wobbly should read. Some, like Joyce Kornbluh’s “Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology,” do an amazing job capturing the history and culture of our union. Others, like Staughton Lynd’s “Solidarity Unionism: Rebuilding The Labor Movement From Below,” explain the current shortcomings of the labor movement and point to a constructive way forward. After having recently finished Stan Weir’s “Singlejack Solidarity,” I think I need to add another book to my must-read list.

Stan Weir was a “blue-collar intellectual and activist publisher” who lived from 1921 to 2001. Weir worked as a seaman, auto-worker, Teamster, house painter, longshore worker and, finally, as a professor of labor and industrial relations. Throughout his career, Weir was a rank-and-file activist and had the fortune to participate in many important struggles that shaped the labor movement and the political left in the post-war United States. In short, he didn’t study working people from afar, but struggled with them. As a result, in his writings we find some of the best and most concrete ideas on “building the new society within the shell of the old” as developed by one of America’s finest organic intellectuals.

“Singlejack Solidarity” is a collection of Weir’s writings which span the period of 1967 to 1998 and cover a range of topics such as working-class culture, the influence of automation, the role of vanguard parties, primary work groups, and business unionism. George Lispitz of the University of California should be commended for editing such a useful

book and making Stan Weir’s writings available to the public.

First off, the book takes its name from a term used by hard-rock miners in the American West. These miners worked in pairs to drill holes for dynamite. One worker would kneel and hold the steel drill while the other would swing the sledge hammer (or single jack). Work partners would often build up trust and friendships due to the skill and danger inherent to their work. Organizers in the Western Federation of Miners and the IWW started to use the term “singlejack” to refer to their way of organizing that emphasized slowly building one-on-one relationships. This wisdom still speaks to us today as we talk about “organizing the worker, not the workplace.” We want to develop union members who take the union with them to whatever workplace they may be in. We know that no campaign or job action can be won without face-to-face contact with our fellow workers.

The topic which looms largest in “Singlejack Solidarity” is the longshore industry in which Weir spent a key portion of his working life. Weir was active in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and had the benefit of working with many “34 men,” or workers who had participated in the great 1934 strike. From these workers, Weir learned the history of workers’ resistance in the longshore industry. Weir was most impressed by the dockworkers’ victory which eliminated the “shape-up” system, in which bosses hired workers for half-day shifts by making the workers stand around in circles on the dock. Longshore workers replaced the arbitrary “shape-up” with a union-run hiring hall that included

a “low-man out” system which democratized shifts and workloads. For Weir, this is one of the most important examples of workers’ control in the history of American industry.

Weir also spends a great deal of time investigating the influence of “contain-erization” on the ports. He examines the ways in which a workplace that was once characterized by cooperative work teams (unloading the holds of ships) was broken apart and its workers atomized by increasing use of mechanization and the standardization of shipping containers. The role of the ILWU in only half-heartedly resisting this process is outlined in great detail, as Weir points out how the union was weakened by creating second-tier members, or “B-men.” These ideas should ring true for Wobblies today as



Graphic: upress.umn.edu

we see the effects of two-tier wage schemes being agreed to in concession bargaining. As my own experience in a United Food and Commercial Workers shop has confirmed, these types of deals are corrosive to the solidarity which should be built in a union. Weir’s analysis of automation and technological change can also inform our understanding of how our workplaces are changing today. How is capital currently seeking to increase efficiency and profits at our expense? And, to follow Weir’s arguments, how can we best resist in order to “humanize the workplace”?

The true gem of this collection is Weir’s essay, “Unions With Leaders Who Stay on the Job,” and it is worth picking up “Singlejack Solidarity” for this essay alone. In it, Weir tells the inspiring story of how he participated in a workplace action while employed as a seaman in 1943. Weir and his fellow shipmates pulled a quickie strike where they refused to re-board

their ship until better bedding, food, and supplies had been provided. From the reaction of the infuriated captain to the working-class education provided by the experienced sailors to the newest workers on board, this story is brimming with specifics on what direct action at the point of production can, and should, look like. And it also demonstrates how workers can get the goods without going through disempowering third parties. In fact, it is experiences such as this one which shape Weir’s critique of the labor movement due to its bureaucratization and timidity. The alternative which he lays out, of a democratic union movement which is based on the self-activity of the rank and file, is very much in line with the “solidarity unionism” approach which we have been building in the IWW.

The above are just a few of the topics discussed by Stan Weir in “Singlejack Solidarity.” He also recounts his experiences in and eventual disillusionment with various vanguard parties of the left as well as his friendships with such figures as James Baldwin and C.L.R. James. My only criticism of this book would be that there is significant overlap between the content of many of the selections (when you finish reading you will feel like you have a really good grasp on the longshore industry), but this can be forgiven because Weir never intended that these writings to be read as a collection and he wrote about what he knew best.

“Singlejack Solidarity” is exactly the type of practical, insightful and encouraging writing about working-class struggle that we need. It addresses some of the most important questions about how we organize and how to build a revolutionary labor movement which can abolish wage slavery. I strongly encourage you to pick up a copy and pass it on to a fellow worker.

Workplace Organizing

Rank-and-File Railroaders Resist Single-Employee Trains

By JP Wright and Ed Michael

Back in the old days, in order to operate safely, a freight train used a five-person crew—an engineer, a fireman, two brakemen, and a conductor. After two-way radios and electronic air brake monitoring allowed the railroads to eliminate the caboose in the 1980s, the crew size went down to three.

Tough contract negotiations eliminated another crew member, so now almost every freight train rolling across the United States is operated by just an engineer and a conductor.

Railroaders fear the conductor will be next to go. The railroads say they want single-employee trains, and union leaders have allowed language to seep into contracts that says if crew size is reduced to one, that last remaining crew member will be an engineer or a conductor—depending which union is negotiating the language.

With union officials asleep at the wheel on this dangerous prospect, Railroad Workers United (RWU), a cross-union coalition of rank-and-file railroaders, is taking up the challenge to stop the run-away train.

“Daddy, What’s a Train?”

Some trains are over 10,000 feet long and weigh more than 15,000 tons. Engineers drive the train and take care of the engines, but the freight conductor does the rest. If anything goes wrong with the equipment, the conductor walks the train to find blown air hoses, broken couplers, or trespasser accidents. If the train stops in a busy town, the conductor can quickly separate the train to allow emergency equipment to reach blocked rail crossings.

Both engineer and conductor are licensed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), with constant retraining and on-the-job testing to ensure compliance with the many operating rules and regulations that govern trains. We are drilled in the railroad’s Homeland Security awareness plan and told that the security of the nation’s railways depends on our two sets of eyes observing every inch of our unsecured railroad infrastructure.

Divide and Conquer

The rail industry in the United States is highly unionized and divided along craft lines into 13 unions. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), now part of the Teamsters, mostly represents engineers, and the United Transportation Workers (UTU), which merged into the Sheet Metal Workers to form SMART, represents the conductors.

For years the railroads have divided train crews by pitting the leaders of these two unions against each other.

Several years ago, the railroads introduced a technology called Remote Control Operation (RCO). Inbound train cars come to the “yard” to be received, separated, and regrouped into tracks so that outbound trains are built with cars all going to the same destination. Yard crews used to consist of engineer, brakeman, and conductor.

Now many yard crews have been reduced to a lone conductor with a remote control device strapped to his/her body. The conductor remotely operates the engine’s throttle and brakes while also uncoupling cars, throwing switches, and talking on the radio to the yardmaster and to incoming engineers.

At first BLET and UTU leaders stood united against remote control, but because an attempt to merge the two unions failed, UTU leaders broke ranks and agreed to RCO operations—eliminating many engineers’ jobs.

Several remote control operators have been killed or severely injured, crushed or run over by their own equipment. Of course, the companies’ accident investigations blame operator error, but they never address the underlying cause of those errors: forcing one person to take over the duties of three while operating dangerous equipment.

Positive Train Control

The railroads want road freight crews to face similar downsizing. After a freight train and a commuter train collided in Chatsworth, Calif. in 2008, killing 25 and injuring 135, the U.S. Congress mandated another new technology, Positive Train

Control (PTC), to be implemented by 2015.

The unions have been advocating PTC as a safety measure for years while the railroads have claimed it was too expensive. PTC monitors trains by computer and satellite global positioning systems. The computer can stop the train if the crew does not brake or slow down correctly, and acts as somewhat of an automated safety override system.

Plans are to phase in PTC first on passenger train routes and where heavy volumes of hazardous material are present. Some railroads are already experimenting with a form of PTC for “cruise control” to conserve fuel.

But the railroads believe PTC will position them to reduce crew size to one—a safety problem not only for train crews but also for the public, since train crews in over-the-road freight service are subjected to grueling fatigue.

Crews are on duty at all times throughout the year, and receive only a two- or three-hour notice to report for work at any time of the day or night. They normally take a train from their home terminal to an assigned away-from-home terminal and lay over there until a train is available to return home. They can be called again, and often are, after only 10 hours off. Then they may remain on duty for up to 12 hours.

All this makes it hard for crew members to adjust the demands of their personal lives and their leisure time so that they are properly rested for work when called upon.

The railroads supply a “train line-up” for workers to estimate when they may go to work—but the line-ups are often incorrect by 12 to 24 hours, and a crew must work when called, whether rested or not.

The unions have been trying to negotiate fatigue mitigation for years, but



Photo: unknown source, provided by Railroad Workers United

without much success. The railroads deem it too costly. So conductors and engineers rely on each other’s help to fight fatigue and maintain awareness of all the conditions of their train and surroundings.

Single-employee crews would leave a fatigued solitary railroader alone to deal with the duties and problems of both engineer and conductor. Railroaders know that mistakes on their part can endanger not only themselves but also the communities they pass through.

Rank and Filers Step Up

No rank-and-file worker thinks single employee operations are a safe idea. But despite the RWU’s requests, officials of the two unions aren’t saying where they stand. Many workers are afraid their leaders might agree to one-person crews in order to gain some advantage over the other union.

RWU has kicked off a national campaign to stop single-employee operations. We are distributing educational flyers and bumper stickers to spread the word, and we are reaching out to community organizations.

We are asking rail union locals to petition our union leaders to get on board. To protect rail workers and the public, we have to keep safety from going off the rails.

This piece originally appeared in the December 2012 issue of Labor Notes. It was reprinted with permission from the authors.

Sports

Hockey League Owners Lock Out Players

By Neil Parthun

On Sept. 15, 2012, the National Hockey League (NHL) locked out its players. This is the fourth sports lockout within the last two years. It is the third lockout and fourth labor stoppage for NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman.

The now expired collective bargaining agreement was a result of the entire 2004-2005 season being lost in a lockout. The owners stated that they needed a number of emergency measures to maintain the long-term health of the league. As such, they gained a host of concessions from the players including a hard salary cap (a maximum amount of money to be spent on salaries), a cap on rookie bonuses and a 24 percent rollback on player salaries. These concessions have created over \$1 billion for the NHL since their implementation.

Journalist Armin Rosen of *The Atlantic* wrote about the current state of the NHL’s fiscal health heading into the new bargaining sessions, stating: “The NHL is in the middle of what should be its golden age. Twenty-one of the league’s teams played their home games at 95 percent capacity or higher last season; 16 of them sold out every home game. The league just signed the largest national television deal in its history, and last year marked the first time that every game of the two-month long Stanley Cup playoffs was available to American TV viewers.” Yet, the league continues to believe that the current state of the NHL is imperiled and that the only solution is for the union, the NHL Players’ Association (NHLPA), to make more concessions.

While it is true that some franchises are struggling, that is due to poor management by the owners/league. One of the hallmark projects of Commissioner Bettman’s tenure has been the relocation and expansion of NHL franchises to the American South. The strategy has been an abysmal failure which has created dire financial straits for those franchises while denying opportunities for success in cities with rabid fan bases. The lack of adequate revenue sharing between the successful franchises and the struggling teams has also contributed to smaller markets’ struggles. The NHL’s owners are also seeking to protect themselves from themselves. Since the institution of the salary cap, long-term contracts with the money frontloaded have been a popular way to subvert the intent of the cap. The owners are attempting to limit player contract rights in the new collective bargaining agreement because they want to be protected from their own tendencies in offering contracts.

The league has been more profitable than ever and is currently valued at approximately \$3 billion. The limited problems the league has are due to owner mismanagement, a lack of proper revenue sharing and continuing to keep struggling franchises in non-viable markets. Instead of looking at themselves to mitigate these problems, the owners have instead de-



Graphic: bleacherreport.com

manded a multitude of concessions from the union.

The NHL has made a series of laughable offers including initial demands for another 24 percent rollback in current player contracts, limiting eligibility for free agency/salary arbitration, not paying out the full amounts due on current player contracts since they would exceed the player share of hockey related revenue and a requesting the players take a 14 percent revenue concession. These proposals were quickly rejected and the public quickly turned against Commissioner Bettman and the NHL owners, blaming them for the lockout.

To stem the growing tide of public discontent, the NHL developed a relationship with Republican strategist Frank Luntz. Luntz’s branding created the buzzwords “shared sacrifice” and “50-50 deal.” The success of the propaganda can easily be seen in the growing numbers of people blaming the union or just telling both sides to get a deal done so hockey can be played. Yet, a simple analysis finds the truth behind these influence peddling terms. It is far from “shared sacrifice.” It is an owner-initiated lockout which they can end at any time. Players have offered to play. The current proposals have shown significant movement on the players’ part to get a deal done while the NHL’s owners continue to demand more. Even the idea

of “50-50,” which sounds fair on its face, isn’t even truly equal since the owners get to take a percentage of money off the top before any revenue splitting occurs.

The current state of affairs is a stalemate. The players’ association has conceded to a 7 percent decrease in hockey-related revenue but has requested a “make whole” provision where all player contracts would be honored, even if their payouts would exceed the players’ share of 50 percent of revenue. The NHL has steadfastly refused to give anything more than a pittance of what is necessary to properly ensure current contracts are honored.

Despite getting exactly what the NHL wanted in terms of revenue, the owners are refusing to concede on free agent and salary arbitration contract language. After recent negotiations, NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr said, “On the big things there was as of today no reciprocity in any meaningful sense, no movement on the players’ share, no movement on salary-arbitration eligibility, no movement on free agency eligibility, no agreement on a pension plan.”

This current labor fight fits within the framework of union battles throughout the country. A very profitable company demands concessions from their workers to account for their own mismanagement, and simply because the company thinks they can get these concessions. These attacks need to be seen for what they are, put in the wider understanding of the labor movement and a vigorous defense of the players/workers must be mounted in our communities.

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.

A New Year For International Solidarity

By the ISC

On Nov. 14, 2012, there were simultaneous general strikes in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, with support strikes and symbolic solidarity actions in many other European countries. The European Union (EU), European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the “Troika”—are taking advantage of the economic crisis “shock doctrine”-style to impose austerity and restructure industrial relations across Europe. This has occurred in much the same way as developing countries have been “structurally adjusted” in the last 30 years by the IMF and World Bank.

Despite the wave of strike action, plans of actions for the future of the EU presented by the European Commission show that ruling technocrats of Europe plan to continue battering down European workers’ standards of living. They aim to create a neoliberal paradise, where accumulation of capital and protection of private property are guaranteed, while labor rights and democratic participation are trampled. But if the EU can barely maintain an austerity-dictatorship in Greece, will it be able to impose one on all of Europe?

The lack of effective resistance thus far to the moves of the Troika is not encouraging. The general strikes have been spearheaded mostly by the big public sector unions, or the socialist or communist trade unions in Greece and Spain, with low participation in private sector workplaces. Often, the actions are announced only a couple days before, leaving workers little time to prepare. The movement is largely controlled from the top-down, and is unable to either escalate enough to really scare the Troika, or come up with any strategy or demand more creative than returning to the social democratic pact. The mainstream unions will never lead an effective resistance to neoliberalism.

Most unions are tied to left-wing political parties who advocate more moderate levels of austerity and support neoliberal reforms nonetheless. The anti-austerity left-wing coalition party, Syriza, almost won the Greek elections with this nonsense, and similar parties will probably grow in the same way in other countries. Unfortunately, the crisis has also allowed fascist parties to grow in Greece, Hungary, and other countries, by blaming the economic problems on immigrants and other workers rather than the capitalist system.

An alternative to politically-entangled unions must be found through working-class solidarity and a genuine labor movement that challenges the status quo. The business unions in Europe



Nov. 14 strike in Madrid.

Photo: libcom.org

may appear better from a distance, but they are no different from those in the United States and Canada: they will call for strikes only when it appears advantageous to themselves, and will always seek to prevent them from growing out of control. Real transnational solidarity requires action—wide-scale strikes—not just empty words.

There is some hope. There are many opportunities for an autonomous labor movement organized from below to take action. Workers at Ford Belgium, for example, recently proposed a Europe-wide strike of all Ford’s branches. The revolutionary Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) unions in Spain and Italy are working to become a center around which other fighting unions and social movements can group. The CNT is actively working with other organizations to build up towards calling for a general strike that will not be controlled by the business unions.

At the same time, the CNT and USI are involved in day-to-day organizing, always seeking to build up a fighting spirit among the working class. During November, both unions were involved in strikes in hospitals against layoffs and privatization. Meanwhile, in the “rich” north of Europe, immigrant workers in Stockholm, ignored by Swedish business unions, continue to organize in the radical Sveriges Arbetare Centralorganisation (SAC). Of course, IWW members are also at work in the United Kingdom, Germany and elsewhere in Europe, seeking to build revolutionary unionism in mass movements and on the shop floor.

The incoming International Solidarity Commission (ISC) aims to continue the IWW’s long relationship of collaboration with the CNT, USI, SAC and other revolutionary union movements, as well as building new relationships and networking Wobblies internationally wherever possible. Moreover, we want to create more awareness among the IWW membership of revolutionary union movements in other countries. To help with this, we hope to have an active ISC contact in every branch. If your branch does not have one yet, or if you are not sure, please discuss it at your next meeting!

Deadly Factory Fire Spurs Protests

By John Kalwaic

A fire at the Tazreen apparel factory, a Walmart supplier, led to 112 deaths in Ashulia, Bangladesh, on Nov. 24, 2012. The victims who were unable to escape the blaze or who jumped from elevated windows, were mostly women paid as little as \$37 a month. These deaths were due to the negligence of the company and led to a protest of 10,000 workers. The factory produced goods not only for Walmart but also for The Gap, Target, J.C. Penny, Dutch retailer C&A and Hong Kong supplier Li & Fung. In 2011 Walmart rejected calls for improvements in fire safety in its supplier companies, which is one of the reasons for the outrage. This comes at a time when retail workers at Walmart and other stores are standing up for their rights



Victims of the fire.

Photo: libcom.org

in the United States. Bangladesh has been a place of militant anti-sweatshop activity in recent years: these factory fire protests have continued this tradition.

With files from Bloomberg News and the New York Times.

IKEA Workers Hospitalized In Italy

By John Kalwaic

On Nov. 2, 2012, four workers were hospitalized after riots took place in front of the gates of the IKEA plant in Piacenza, Italy. IKEA is one of the main furniture warehouses and retail stores in the country.



Cops vs. workers.

Photo: libcom.org

IKEA’s many companies or “cooperatives” (though they are not true cooperatives) exploit their employees, many of whom are migrants. IKEA refused to let workers at many of their “cooperatives” unionize and retaliated against their demand for unionization by firing 12 employees.

Workers at the plant are trying to unionize with the independent Confederazione dei Comitati di Base (COBAS) union.

Violent clashes also erupted on Oct. 30 when police tried to clear the workers blockading the store. Following the incident on Nov. 2, the mayor of Piacenza attempted to host a negotiation between workers and management. The manager promised to not fire any more workers and offered to transfer the union’s members to other IKEA cooperatives but the COBAS union found this unacceptable.

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From Dublin To Moscow: The EU's Failure To Protect Asylum Seekers

By Michael Capobianco

The French office of Education Without Borders Network (Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières) has initiated a petition for the Dzhannaraliev, a Chechen family that is facing deportation from France. The family would be deported to Poland, the first “Dublin II Member State” they entered after leaving their native Chechnya—a region notorious for oppression, impunity, rampant unemployment, and an extreme lack of opportunity for members of the poor and working classes.

The Dublin II Regulation is a piece of legislation from 2003 that claims to protect refugees from having their fates determined by various member states for the European Union (EU). According to the EU, the purpose of the Regulation is to “...establish the principle that only one Member State is responsible for examining an asylum application. The objective is to avoid asylum seekers from being sent from one country to another.”

In reality, it is a protection afforded to participating nations against “asylum shopping” by refugees who wish to improve their prospects of finding work and security for their families. The Regulation works well for Western European countries because financially-limited and working-class, but no less oppressed or endangered refugees, from places like Chechnya, Central Asia, and even North Africa cannot typically afford or even find methods of travel to Western European countries. They must instead seek entry by land or sea to less stable and secure EU border states like Belarus, Poland, or Greece. In the eyes of the Western European countries, these refugees may not have anything to offer economically or socially, and as such are saved from their burden by Dublin II. Discrimination in the laws against poorer refugees is evident in contrast to cases of people like Akhmed Zakayev, a former actor and Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, who was able to travel out of Russia with his entire family and settle in the United Kingdom, where they were granted asylum. That is not to imply that those who have the means to obtain the best possible situation for their family should not. It is

simply evidence of discrimination in the system. Regardless of the EU’s intent, it is clear that working-class refugees are the victims. So in the case of the Dzhannaraliev, the family is not alone in their plight. In fact, they are one of many examples of poorer refugee families in Europe that have exhausted every financial resource in an attempt to find a better life in spite of the Dublin II Regulation.

Dublin II has been heavily criticized for its bias toward poor people by rights’ organizations, such as Amnesty International. It has also received criticism from public officials like Thomas Hammarberg, the Swedish diplomat and former Commissioner for Human Rights for the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Hammarberg has not minced words and has been very clear in illustrating his criticism, saying, “The regulation is not designed to guarantee that the responsibility for asylum seekers is shared among the EU member states. Nor does it ensure that asylum seekers have access to adequate asylum procedures. It is based on the false assumption that the national asylum systems in place in Europe all provide similar, high standards of protection to people who seek to escape from violence and persecution.”

He went on to say, “The system does not function—refugees are the victims.”

Hammarberg’s criticism is not unfounded. It is indeed true that EU border states, such as Greece, Poland and Finland, have had a reputation for failing to protect asylum seekers and deporting them back to dangerous situations in the countries they had fled originally. For example, earlier in 2012 Finnish authorities threatened to deport Makhmud Dzhabrailov, an impoverished Chechen man whose mistreatment by Russian authorities had been documented, back into the Russian Federation.

Sadly, despite its recent Nobel Peace Prize award “for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe,” the EU has failed many people in human rights, especially those who are poor or in the working class.

With files from <http://bbc.co.uk> and <http://commissioner.cws.coe>.

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