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Mass Protests, Social Unrest Engulf Turkey

By Tom Levy

What began as an occupation to save one of the few remaining green spaces in Istanbul has sparked a movement that has swept across Turkey. Millions of previously unpoliticized students and workers have taken to the streets night after night to set up barricades and fight the police in dozens of cities around the country. Police brutality has led to hundreds of casualties. As reports of deaths begin to filter in, the protests continue to escalate, and calls for a general strike are beginning to be heard (at press time).

While such widespread disturbances are always going to be impossible to predict, tension in Turkey has been building for some time now. The current government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is neo-liberal, openly Islamic and increasingly authoritarian.

The main parliamentary opposition against Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been from parties

in the "Kemalist" tradition of Kemal Ataturk, the founder and first leader of modern Turkey. Throughout Turkey, there is a serious cult of personality around Ataturk, and, to his supporters, he represents secularism and a European-style social liberalism that stands between them and an overtly Islamist government.

The primary discourse of the movement still seems to be a Kemalist one. Turkish flags have occupied a prominent place within the protests despite the fact that the vast majority of the protesters come from the ranks of the previously unpoliticized. But it often seems that Ataturk is all things to all people with protesters expressing grievances that run the gamut from increasing religious fundamentalism, social issues, erosion of civil liberties, and government corruption to economic concerns. That said, the number of Turkish flags seems

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Protesters and tear gas fill the streets in Beşiktaş, Istanbul, on May 31. Photo: Emel Erguc

Sisters' Camelot Management Admits To Dishonesty About Fired Worker

By the Twin Cities IWW

The trial to seek a court order for IWW Sisters' Camelot Canvass Union member ShugE Mississippi to be rehired and awarded back pay took place on June 6 and 7. Both sides called witnesses and cross-examined them in a courtroom in front of an administrative law judge at the Minneapolis National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) office.

The most surprising testimonies came when NLRB lawyers representing ShugE cross-examined Sisters' Camelot managing collective member Eric Gooden and ex-managing collective member Clay Hansen.

Near the end of the trial's first day, Eric Gooden admitted under oath that ShugE was never fired from Sisters' Camelot



Graphic: Sisters' Camelot Canvass Union

in 2009. This contradicted a claim given in the written statement approved by the managing collective and read aloud on March 4, 2013, when ShugE's contract was terminated. Gooden also clarified in his testimony that the language of the firing statement did mean to assert that ShugE was fired in 2009, which clarifies that the

managing collective approved of lying publicly about the events of 2009. Gooden continued to admit under oath that if it were not for the demands of the union, ShugE would not have been fired in March.

The following day, Hansen, who quit Sisters' Camelot during the strike, testified under oath that to his knowledge ShugE did nothing that warranted being fired

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OpOK Relief: Solidarity Is Our Strength



Members of OpOK Relief.

Photo: Zakk Flash

By Zakk Flash

At the beginning of June, when I first drove to Little Axe, Okla., to take a look at post-tornado recovery efforts, the countryside was still in crisis mode. Mountains of rubble and garbage-filled gravel roads and red dirt paths leading to the remains of homes. Neighborhoods that had been full of working-class houses were uprooted and dirty, unsafe tent camps were all that remained. Just 30 minutes away, the big non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) operated, bringing national attention to Moore—a badly struck area, to be sure. But not the only one affected.

In Little Axe, Newalla, Carney, Luther, Shawnee and other areas, humanitarian workers at the local nonprofits complained how little had been done, despite the hundreds of millions that the Red Cross said had been donated. It was only later that everyone's thoughts were confirmed—money sent to the big players was ending up in Washington, D.C. Certainly some of it would be spent on affected people here, but the vast majority would be sent to

other areas or spent on overhead administration costs. At last count, the Red Cross was still sitting on \$110 million allocated for Superstorm Sandy. While the NGOs have done some fantastic work here, our communities know their own needs best. There had to be a better way.

OpOK Relief stepped in to fill the gaps as part of the People's Response. As a convergence of Occupy groups, anarchists, libertarian socialists, Food Not Bombs folks, Rainbow Family, IWW organizers, teachers, social workers, and non-bureaucratic relief groups from out of state, our focus has been on direct action. Local and international initiatives have come together to address community-specific needs. We've been able to assess damage on the ground, get people into emergency housing, help them secure their homes, and provide connections for outside volunteers to plug into affected communities, prioritizing the most impoverished and overlooked.

The response to our work is overwhelming: we're getting supplies and volunteers into areas that have either been underserved or neglected altogether by the major NGOs. Horizontal organizing, based on people's needs on the ground, is making all of this possible.

As a non-hierarchical solidarity effort, multiple people share the workload. I am grateful to play a part in this work, but this is a community effort. And the community will continue to respond.

If you haven't plugged into the People's Response yet, please volunteer your services at <http://www.OpOKRelief.net/volunteer>. Join the OpOK Relief group on Facebook and see how our teams come together. If your thing is food, consider feeding the displaced or those working to help them with Food Not Bombs in Norman.

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IWW History

When History Gets It Wrong: Reclaiming Our Victories

By Steve Thornton

Howard Zinn told us that “history is not inevitably useful; it can bind us or free us.” So when we in the IWW and the broader labor movement get the chance to set the record straight, we should take it. We owe it to those who came before us in the struggle for economic and social change, as well as today’s activists who might find inspiration and practical strategies from the past. Legendary organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn’s first strike provides us with a good example of Zinn’s warning. Flynn was sent to Bridgeport, Conn., to aid hundreds of immigrant steelworkers at American Tube and Stamping (AT&S). The talented Irish-American was 16 years old, heeding the call of the Industrial Workers of the World and the vision of the “One Big Union.” Her oratorical skills were so great that the police chief complained that the IWW “shouldn’t be allowed to import young girls to speak in flowing languages causing workers to brood and go out and kill some of our prominent men.” Hungarian, Italian, and “native” workers went on strike at the company’s two steel mills in the summer of 1907, shutting down production with the help of the skilled AT&S machinists who supported their demand for the restoration of rotating shifts. The old schedule had allowed workers to alternate between day and evening hours. It was one of the few things that made the grueling mill work bearable, and, when it ended, it was the last straw for the workers.

The strike won significant support from the local community, including extended credit at the neighborhood stores and free haircuts and shaves. In response the boss



Photo: unknown
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

had his wife hand out leaflets to strikers’ children offering \$1,000 if their fathers returned to work. He also threatened that if they did not end the strike they would be permanently replaced.

The IWW was low on funds—Big Bill Haywood’s trial in Idaho on a trumped-up murder charge was expensive—but rich in organizing talent. Besides the extraordinary Flynn, Bridgeport’s strikers heard from Vincent St. John and Carlo Trasca. Experienced Wobbly organizers Samuel French and Louis Basky led the strike committee on a daily basis with massive parades through downtown. In an important show of solidarity, the machinists stayed out on strike until their union sent an organizer who threatened to expel those who failed to cross the picket line back to work. The union never received recognition from the company, but the workers did achieve the return of the rotating shifts, a community mediation committee for raises, and the firing of a particularly obnoxious foreman.

Who Won?

Should we consider the walkout (the first of its kind in Connecticut by the IWW) a failure? Or can we claim it as a victory? Vincent St. John reported on the month-long struggle with a terse comment that the strike had been broken by the scabbing tactics of the machinists union. The AT&S boss bragged that the company had given nothing to the workers. The state’s Department of Labor dutifully listed the Wobblies’ ef-



The AT&S mill circa 1907.

Photo: Bridgeport Public Library

fort as a loss. Until recently, the last word on the Bridgeport strike came from a 1989 essay by the late Robert J. Embardo entitled “Summer Lightning: The Wobblies in Bridgeport.” Embardo agreed with the negative analysis and concluded that the IWW action was a “sugar-coated defeat.” From the title alone it is clear he considered the strike flashy but ineffective.

But the AT&S strike deserves more than a cynical dismissal. Labor historian Philip Foner called it a “significant victory.” Melvyn Dubofsky wrote in “We Shall Be All” that “in Bridgeport the Wobblies welded together unskilled Hungarian immigrants and skilled native Americans in a united front which in August 1907 won important concessions.”

Historian Cecelia Bucki, who has closely studied Bridgeport’s radical past, found that this early IWW effort made a

lasting impact on the city’s industrial and political structures, including the stunning capture of City Hall by the Socialist Party in 1933. “Far from being a repudiation of radicals,” Bucki writes, “the strike actually established a strong radical presence in the Hungarian community. The subsequent history of the Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, the IWW and even the post-war Communist Party in this community can be traced to the effects of this strike.”

The 1907 AT&S strike was not summer lightning. Like the rest of the IWW’s early history, it was more like thunder, rolling across Bridgeport and reverberating throughout the 20th century. Industrial unionism, effective cross-ethnic organizing, community coalition building, and an inspiring vision of the future: if we look hard enough, these are the lessons we can learn from our past.

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.

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- ☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.
- ☐ I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



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What Is Working Class Culture?



Municipal workers erase anarchist graffiti near a squat in Barcelona. Photo: X347979

By X347979

If you've ever met me, you probably don't think I look like a radical. I frequently wear button-up shirts. I own penny loafers, several good suits and a dozen or so neckties. My hair is neat and short and I don't own any clothing advertising the name of a band. In sum, I am not punk at all. Nonetheless, I identify as a militant. I have been a member of the IWW for almost 15 years. I have been involved in several organizing campaigns, committed civil disobedience and spent long periods of time doing solidarity work in Chiapas, Mexico.

I was reminded of the dissonance of my politics and my appearance recently when my wife and I were in Spain for a sort of second honeymoon. While in Barcelona, we stopped by an anarchist squat and visited with workers from the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), Spain's largest anarcho-syndicalist labor union. At the squat, we were received with suspicion. Punk music was blaring, people were drinking and there were four dogs that seemed to be constantly on the edge of a dramatic fight. It took a few minutes for us to find someone to talk to and even after we did the young woman who decided to show us around had to repeatedly explain to her comrades that we were anarchists from the United States. In truth, it was a somewhat awkward experience. All of the squatters were in their late teens, 20s and, maybe, early 30s and dressed in a similar fashion. A visit with them felt more like a visit to a subcultural bar than a visit with a political movement. I got the sense that if you didn't look the part you weren't quite welcome.

Our experience with the CGT was quite different. The CGT has more than 50,000 members and through Spanish labor law, represents significantly more than that. The union's office in Barcelona was a hive of activity. It takes up two floors of a large office building and includes a library and cafeteria. There were easily 50 people there when we visited.

The union members were more age diverse than the squatters. But more importantly, they were united not by their adherence to common subculture but by

their commitment to the union. Their style of dress was diverse and so was their taste in music. What clearly mattered most was people's commitment to the union, and that commitment was significant. The Barcelona CGT has around 12,000 members. But with that large membership it has only four paid staff, none of whom are elected officers. Everyone else whom we met, including the gracious Àngel Bosqued, the Secretary General of the CGT in Catalonia, was an unpaid volunteer.

The contrast between the squatters and the CGT has had me thinking about my own organizing work. Currently I am involved in an organizing campaign at my workplace. We have been at it for less than six months and have managed to build a solid organizing committee of 20 members. I have more experience organizing than most of the other workers and I am also a bit older. I was not one of the initiators of the campaign. One of the things that I have noticed about it is that, initially, those who helped start the campaign were most successful at bringing in people like them—in their case young, hip, and formerly involved with Occupy.

We can't build the union we want to build if we only stick to one demographic. It has been a major task of mine to get people involved in the campaign to think about recruiting people outside of their social circles. We have started to have some success. In the last few months we have added a number of workers to the committee who don't fit the profile of the initiators. Some of them even profess conservative politics. We have managed to get them involved not by assuming that we all share the same cultural references but that instead we share common grievances and that those grievances have a common solution: a democratic and powerful union.

Ultimately, I think that this is the key to building the IWW into large radical union like the CGT. Rather than assuming that Wobblies share a common culture, we should think of every worker as a potential Wobbly. The task of each Wob is to teach our fellow workers that we all have common problems and that those problems have a common solution.



Graphic: wikimedia.org

Recomposition

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

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 65

At Last — The Right to Vote!

During World War I, the women's suffrage movement intensified the campaign to win women the right to vote — and as part of this campaign, made special efforts to win the support of working women. For example, in September 1917, the National American Woman Suffrage Association urged “wage-earning suffragists everywhere” to work and organize for “the principle of equal pay for equal work.”

Working women were among those who picketed President Wilson in the White House, carrying banners that read, “All women should have the ballot, but we working women must have it.” Pickets were physically assaulted by men, some in uniform. The police stood by and watched, eventually arresting the women, who then faced brutal treatment in prison.



But the picketing continued, sometimes by members of the Women's Trade Union League. With so many women working in war-related industries, “doing everything for the Government,” they argued, they should have “the ballot as a weapon to safeguard the conditions under which both women and children work.”

Such arguments helped win over President Wilson, the Congress and state legislators. In August 1920, the 19th Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution, stipulating that the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex.” It had been 72 years since the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, N.Y. — long years of struggle carried out largely by women themselves, with occasional support from organized labor.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

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Wobbly & North American News

San Fran Concession Workers Take Action



AT&T Park concession workers strike on May 25. Photo: UNITE HERE Local 2

By Neil Parthun

The 2010 and 2012 World Series victories for the San Francisco Giants have had many effects. It has publicly shown the prominence of elite Venezuelan talent. The championships have made the team’s value skyrocket and allowed the ownership to rake in millions with increased ticket and concession prices. But for the workers who provide concessions inside AT&T Park in the last three years, pay raises have been a giant zero.

The nearly 800 employees are represented by UNITE HERE Local 2 and have been in a bitter contract dispute with the Giants’ subcontractor, Centerplate. Since 2010, the concession workers have not received a pay increase despite the team’s phenomenal success.

According to union officials, the workers make an average of \$11,000 per year. Such low pay creates a very difficult situation in an area like San Francisco which has a high cost of living. But when one adds in the increased costs of food, gas, etc. that have been rising since 2010, these working families are struggling even harder without any pay increase.

The union is also resisting attacks on the employees’ health care benefits. As a UNITE HERE Local 2 spokesperson explained in an interview, a worker gains the next month of their health care coverage by working 10 games/events at AT&T Park. The threshold is already challenging to meet—especially during months in which the Giants don’t have many home games scheduled—but Centerplate wants to raise the amount to 12 games that employees would be required to work before getting their health care coverage.

While the subcontractor Centerplate is the direct party demanding these concessions and refusing to pay a living wage, the

culpability of the Giants is also a contributing factor. AT&T Park has approximately 40 concession stands and each one of them can bring in up to an estimated \$30,000 per game. Yet, much of that money does not go to Centerplate and it certainly doesn’t go to the union workers. The Giants rake in approximately 55 percent of the concessions money, leaving very little after the operational costs—such as paying for the food and transporting the food to the stadium—are paid by Centerplate.

The Giants have claimed that Centerplate is the sole party involved with this labor dispute, but it is clear that if the team took a smaller percentage of concessions revenue—especially in a time when the team is having record breaking successes—these workers could be guaranteed good pay and benefits.

To show their disapproval with the lack of progress, the union authorized up to five days of strike in an overwhelming vote. The first strike day was May 25. The workers picketed outside of the park and made one request of fans attending: to enjoy the game that afternoon but not to buy any food. This continues to be the request for sports fans to show their solidarity with the concession stand workers on days that they are on strike at AT&T Park.

It is only fitting to close that old baseball classic song: “Take me out to the ball game. Take me out with the crowd”—only this time, it is the crowd standing for social justice, dignity on the job, a living wage and good benefits with the AT&T Park concession stand workers of UNITE HERE Local 2.

A petition campaign to support the AT&T Park workers can be found at: <http://www.thegiantzero.org>. On Twitter, search for the hashtag #GiantZero to learn more about the efforts.

Seattle Teachers Score Victory



Seattle teachers celebrate victory in May. Photo: democracynow.org

By John Kalwaic

In May, the teachers of Garfield High School in Seattle won at least a temporary victory against the state-mandated standardized test known as the Measurement of Academic Progress. The administration caved saying that the MAP would no longer be mandatory as long as the teachers provide an alternative assessment of a student’s progress. The teachers had been boycotting the MAP since Jan. 9 and

their protest went viral, sparking teacher and student boycotts of the “high stakes” standardized tests (see “Teachers Boycott Standardized Tests,” April 2013 *IW*, page 5). The administration declared teachers would not be punished for choosing not to administer the MAP. This is a small victory, but one that proves direct action can achieve meaningful goals with education struggles.

With files from Democracy Now!

Boston IWW Rocks Harvard Commencement



Action for fired workers. Photo: FW Le Le Lechat

By Geoff Carens

On May 30, the Boston IWW sprang into action to show solidarity for members of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW/AFSCME Local 3650). Two workers, Sarah and Darlene, were terminated from their positions as Operations Analysts in Harvard’s University Financial Services (UFS), supposedly for “not meeting productivity expectations.” But according to statistics later provided to HUCTW by the world’s wealthiest university, these two proficient African American workers actually outperformed white colleagues who all kept their jobs. The depths of management’s biases were revealed when Sarah was directed to attend an “English as a Second Language” (ESL) pronunciation class, even though she grew up speaking English in Cambridge, Mass., and has worked at Harvard for more than 16 years (the instructor said there was no reason for her to be in the class). Darlene, who has 25 years of experience, returned from a disability leave with a doctor’s note clearing her to come back to work, only to be ordered out of the office by her boss, and

later laid off. Another worker named Paul, a very dedicated Maintenance Technician in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Physical Resources department, with 31 years of service, had his position converted to an “essential” one in October 2012. He had surgery in January 2013 and took an approved leave, then returned in April only to be terminated in May. Harvard dubiously claims there is now a lack of work in Paul’s now “essential” position. Supporters are certain Paul was laid off merely because he had surgery and had to take time off. His job duties have been divvied up among other workers.

The Boston IWW includes HUCTW members, and our branch brought the noise to Harvard’s lavish commencement party, along with a huge surrealist bird which we felt only added to the festive occasion. As we marched around campus, our picket signs, IWW flags, and militant chanting drew some bemused stares, some haughty frowns, and some fist-pumping too from attendees. One thing is certain: the IWW made Harvard’s graduation bash the most memorable this year. More protests will continue until Sarah, Darlene and Paul get justice.



Wobblies march. Photo: FW Le Le Lechat

NY Cablevision Workers Fight Union Busting

By Neil Parthun

James Dolan, owner of the National Basketball Association (NBA) team, the New York Knicks, has often faced criticism for his front office decision-making and the team’s lack of on-court success. Journalists have alleged that they have had repercussions for their criticism, such as limited access to players for interviews. Earlier this year, Dolan threw a temper tantrum and temporarily fired a Madison Square Garden employee who didn’t recognize him. The Knicks have not won an NBA title since 1973. They have had six different head coaches over seven seasons—including Larry Brown, who was paid \$28 million in salary/contract buyout for one year of coaching—and they have signed mind-boggling contracts with players whose play didn’t bear out the cost. Yet when it comes to the employees at Cablevision—the “fifth-largest U.S. cable operator by subscribers”—which Dolan also owns, he has a full court press on their demands for a living wage and union recognition.

In January 2012, over 250 Brooklyn Cablevision employees voted to unionize and be represented by the Communication Workers of America (CWA). Since then, they have been trying to negotiate their first collective bargaining agreement with the company but have yet to settle a contract due to Cablevision’s union-busting tactics.

The company hired an anti-union firm and demanded that all workers attend anti-union meetings. They created a “Why Union Free” website and even took the step of giving a raise to all Cablevision technicians except for those workers who were organizing the union in Brooklyn. This had the dual impact of illegally punishing the Brooklyn workers while also trying to illegally influence Bronx employees who were in the beginning stages of their own union organizing campaign.

Cablevision also took the step of unlawfully firing 22 workers at the Brooklyn facility this January because of their “open



New York CWA picket. Photo: CWABrooklynVision

door” policy to speak with managers about workplace concerns and the lack of good faith negotiations between the company and the union. Only after over 100,000 people signed a petition were the employees ultimately rehired.

Angered by the myriad violations of labor law, the employees filed complaints against Cablevision with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). In April, the NLRB sent complaints to Cablevision over their illegal tactics.

True to form with their vigorous anti-union campaign, Cablevision has instead tried to vacate the decision on a technicality rather than deal with the merit of the complaints. They are arguing that since two courts have ruled that President Obama’s recess appointments to the NLRB were unconstitutional, this meant that the NLRB can’t make decisions because it lacks a legal quorum.

To add pressure to Cablevision and Dolan, sports fans and union supporters have been asked to sign a petition demanding the NBA keep the 2015 All-Star Game out of Madison Square Garden, a facility that is also owned by Dolan. The petition can be viewed here: <http://brooklynnotbusters.com>.

The NBA may have worse owners—looking at you, Donald Sterling—but Dolan’s actions are similarly reprehensible. It is the workers who should be rewarded with good faith negotiations, a living wage and benefits, not Dolan’s greed and attacks on working people.

Special

A 100-Year-Old Idea That Could Transform The Labor Movement

By Daniel Gross

One hundred years ago in May, a long-forgotten union powered by a remarkable engine of everyday solidarity and direct action was born. The union’s distinguishing feature—that it was directly operated by workers on the job—bears little resemblance to today’s traditional labor movement with formal negotiation by a bargaining agent as the end goal of even the most creative campaigns. With over 93 percent of private sector workers finding themselves outside of traditional union membership and with little prospect of getting in, this dramatically different and powerful unionism offers a compelling path forward for workers today.

The story of Local 8 of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) begins with a large industry-wide strike of longshoremen on the docks of Philadelphia. The local union borne of that May 1913 strike represented, in the view of some, the high-water mark of durable power and multiracial organizing in the widely-studied IWW. Despite that, its story was almost relegated to the proverbial dustbin of history.

The Local 8 example, and the road not taken for labor that it represents, was resurrected by historian Peter Cole in two recent books: “Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia” and “Ben Fletcher: The Life and Times of a Black Wobbly.” His painstaking work unearthing this history is a major contribution to today’s search for effective models of worker power.

While Local 8’s solidarity unionism model, to use Staughton Lynd’s term, was not that of the traditional labor union and its representational approach, it shouldn’t be mistaken for the model used by today’s worker centers either. Worker centers do stress leadership development, worker education and community involvement, just as Local 8 did. But Local 8 was explicitly and proudly a labor union and the control it exerted through worker organization on the job and across Philadelphia’s maritime industry was the hallmark of union power.

With a solid consensus that labor needs to change and many ideas on how to accomplish that change, Local 8 stands out as a fundamentally different path forward. Put another way, Local 8 blends the best of the worker center movement—dynamism, flexibility and openness to community—with the best of unionism—long-term organized power at work and in an industry.

Philadelphia’s longshoremen labored along one of the most important waterfronts in the World War I era. The workforce was diverse and, prior to Local 8, segregated. The workers were largely Af-

rican American, recent Eastern European immigrants or native-born workers of Irish descent. In an era plagued by racial violence, discrimination and xenophobia, Philadelphia still managed to stand out as an incredibly oppressive environment. United employers, backed by the government, meted out vicious attacks against worker organization and movements for change. Against this backdrop, the strike that launched Local 8 one hundred years ago and the subsequent consolidation of worker-operated union power on the port are all the more remarkable.

Workers had had enough with poverty wages, dangerous conditions, excruciatingly long working hours and a humiliating “shape-up” system where workers had to contend for a job each and every day at the whim of intensely corrupt hiring bosses. On May 13, 1913, Philadelphia’s longshore workers launched an industry-wide strike against the entrenched power structure of the shipping magnates.

The success of the strike against the odds set the stage for one of the most important, and least remembered, labor union achievements in the United States.

Stoking racial divisions was a central employer tactic on Philadelphia’s docks. The labor movement itself was soaked in racial prejudice, segregation and outright exclusion. Undergirded by the IWW’s ideological commitment to equality, Local 8 pioneered a deeply anti-racist labor union practice in the organization and in the industry with reverberations around the labor movement. The work groups of longshoremen (they were all men) who loaded and unloaded ships had been segregated. The union successfully ended that practice and everyday work began to be carried out by multiracial groups of workers. The union membership was multiracial and that extended to the leadership itself. One of Local 8’s preeminent leaders, Ben Fletcher, helped set the tone with grounded, passionate appeals for worker unity across racial and ethnic lines.

The vicious and hated shape-up was ended in favor of a union hiring hall where equity rather than favoritism and corruption reigned. Workers won significant wage increases, substantial improvements in working conditions and recognition of their membership in Local 8.

Local 8 wasn’t just created by a direct action—and that’s what is so remarkable and instructive about its example. Each and every gain on the job and in the industry—from big-picture issues like wages and hours, to fighting back against everyday management abuse—was won by direct



A 1920 cartoon depicts the Philadelphia longshoremen’s strike.

Graphic: IWW

organizing, rather than representation by union officials.

Startling and even unfathomable to many unionists today, Local 8 did not sign contracts with employers and was adamantly against doing so. Fletcher himself vehemently condemned unionists who would enter into contracts with employers.

The exclusive collective bargaining agreement between company and union, as well as the employer-collected dues that come with it, are sacred cows in the contemporary labor movement. How did Local 8 maintain a union industry with a union standard without signing contracts?

Dues-paying members of Local 8 wore pins that indicated that they were in good standing for a given month. If a worker showed up to unload a ship without the pin for the month, he’d be approached by his union co-workers. The worker would be informed or reminded that this was a union job, with the higher standard of living and dignity that came with organized work. At that point, ideally, the worker would get his dues paid to one of his co-workers serving as an elected delegate of Local 8.

If the worker couldn’t be persuaded to join or get paid up and the boss allowed him to undermine the standard by working non-union, workers would strike on the spot. In the highly time-sensitive business of unloading a ship, it wouldn’t be long until the fellow worker would pay up, move on or get laid off until getting into good standing. A union job secured not by operation of a contract but by the initiative and power of worker self-activity is the hallmark of solidarity unionism and the Local 8 model.

Higher wages, more humane hours, critical safety improvements, the end of segregated work and union recognition itself, were all secured by Local 8 members outside of any collective bargaining agreement. With this powerful organizing model, commitment to education and deep relationships in the community, Local 8 was able to exert a large measure of control over individual jobs and Philadelphia’s maritime industry overall. Members, families and supporters would even commemorate the union’s May birthday in style, with a one-day strike and celebration.

Local 8 never received the support it would have needed to endure against the multitude of forces arrayed against it. Battered by the unjust imprisonment of its leaders, relentless employer attacks, aggressive pressure from a government-favored union and its own internal strains, Local 8 of the IWW was defeated in the years after World War I. The federal National Labor Relations Act followed in 1935 and the consolidation of the traditional union model, now unraveling, was largely complete.

With the traditional union model and its emphasis on bargaining by representatives exiting the stage, working people are urgently searching for a new way to challenge corporate power and win a better life for their families. One hundred years later, the road not taken—represented by Local 8—holds the key.

This piece originally appeared in In These Times on May 28, 2013. It was reprinted with permission from the author and the publication.

Mass Protests, Social Unrest Engulf Turkey

Continued from 1

to be diminishing. Whether the current protest discourse can expand to include a deeper understanding of class issues and move beyond knee-jerk nationalism, it’s way too early to tell.

Some in Turkey have begun calling this the “Turkish Spring.” The Western media has begun comparing Taksim Square to Tahir Square in Egypt. To this author, such pronouncements seem premature. Erdoğan has been defiant, and, despite the brutality, this is not the full force of the state. Things will probably have to get a lot nastier, and, by that point it won’t be a matter of saving Gezi, but the resignation of the current government. A lot of that, of course, will depend on the ability of the protesters not only to maintain momentum but to develop more sophisticated tactics against the police.

As it stands now, the movement is everywhere. It dominates social media (although there are reports that Twitter and Facebook have been down). It’s the only thing people are talking about on the buses, and there is a constant chorus of supportive car horns.

Like much of the Occupy movement, protesters’ tactics so far have been much more radical than their proclaimed aims. The protests in Istanbul may have started out peacefully, but any pretence of that is gone. People show up prepared. There’s an expectation that protesters will be tear-gassed, and they come with surgical masks, handkerchiefs, homemade gas masks, and a variety of home remedies for tear gas exposure. Even the first-time protesters know the score: they go on the internet to find out how to recover from a tear-gas attack and protest in the full knowledge they’ll probably go to bed with burning eyes and an aching head. Once a public space is claimed for the protesters, a bonfire is lit. Protesters begin chants and bang loudly on whatever is available. Graffiti is everywhere.

Currently, the main tactic seems to



Photo: Emel Erguc
Istiklal Street, near Taksim Square, on May 31.

be waves of people arriving, getting tear-gassed, and then being replaced by a subsequent wave. This is bolstered by bonfires and barricades. But energy and determination aren’t enough. The police response will continue to be heavy-handed, and simply occupying a public space won’t be enough for the movement to win. It’s going to have to be able to score victories against the police.

Fortunately, as the 2010 student movement in the United Kingdom has shown, the previously unpoliticized are very capable of learning on their feet and devising effective tactics to continue the fight. The fact that the pretence of peaceful protest has been rightfully abandoned seems to suggest that the space for effective resistance is that much wider.

As this piece goes to press, there is a public sector strike scheduled for this week. Calls for a general strike have al-

ready begun to be heard. Whether and how this materializes is anybody’s guess, but a movement that expands from the streets to the workplaces is surely the best bet for bringing down a government.

The author wishes to stress that although he is based in Ankara, he does not speak Turkish. As such, the above are simply his opinions and observations on a fast-moving and ever-developing situation.

UPDATE: This piece was written at a high point of the protests. Since then, two “general strikes” have been called by two of the leftist union confederations in Turkey. Unfortunately, these strikes never spread beyond a small unionized core. Nightly protests are still occurring, but the numbers are significantly down. In their place a movement of popular assemblies has taken root.

In Istanbul, IWW members have been helping to organize workplace assemblies that specifically look at using the momentum and experience of mass protest movement to galvanize politically conscious, democratic, and community-oriented workplace organization.

Analysis

Fanning And Dousing The Flames Of Discontent

By Nate Hawthorne

Currently, organizations funded by unions are trying to win legislation requiring higher pay in the U.S. fast food industry under the slogan “Fight for a Fair Economy.” Pay increases are great, but these efforts fit into something I called “venture syndicalism” in a column last month (see “Venture Syndicalism: Can Reviving The Strike Revive Mass Unionization?” in the June 2013 *IW*, page 4). We can see elements of a theory of venture syndicalism in a document called “Joining Voices: Inclusive Strategies for Labor’s Renewal,” which the American Federation of Teachers put out in 2005 (for more on this see Joe Burns’ excellent book “Reviving The Strike”). While that document did not originate within the “Fight for a Fair Economy” campaign, it can help us get a sense of the discussions in the mainstream labor movement that inform that campaign and will probably inform future efforts. “Joining Voices” explains that “existing unions have much to risk and lose,” that is, lots of money which make them vulnerable to fines if they violate laws against “secondary boycotts and shutdowns, sit-down strikes, etc.” But new unions “with no accumulated treasuries... would have substantially less to lose” and so could “enjoy greater strategic and tactical flexibility” to carry out “unconventional tactics unencumbered by the restraints of current labor law.”

“Joining Voices” called for existing and wealthier unions to provide “money, logistical assistance, long-term loaned staff and other help” to “organizing committees of start-up unions” while allowing these new “start-up unions” to be fully independent, at least formally. If these “start-up unions” succeeded, “increasing union density in any sector, by any union” would benefit “all union members everywhere and the

labor movement as a whole.” Because these start-up unions have few resources, they are more able to break the law. The independence of these “start-up unions” would create “institutional firewalls for donor unions.” If there was a violation of the law, the independent “start-up,” with its smaller treasury, would take the hit, not the donor union with the big treasury. That’s the “venture” part of venture syndicalism.

Here’s the “syndicalism” part, though it’s more like “so-called syndicalism.” Unions today are experimenting in two important ways, by fighting for union contracts without going through National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections, and sometimes by “organizing outside collective bargaining,” to quote “Joining Voices” again. Efforts to pass laws requiring higher wages are an attempt to go around the NLRB while keeping the government as a key part of guaranteeing workers’ livelihoods. That is, they are an effort to abandon the NLRB while getting a different part of the state to play a role in mediating between workers and capitalists.

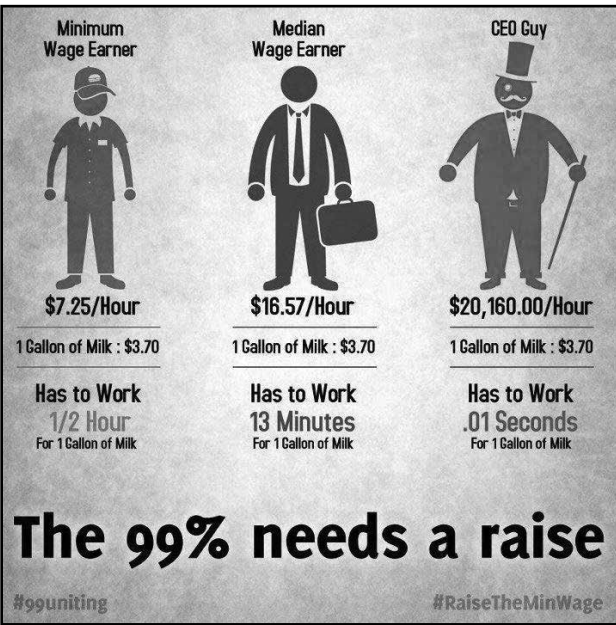
These efforts to go outside the NLRB are based on unions’ understanding that the NLRB is broken. Workers lose NLRB elections more often than they win. The odds of getting a first contract after an election are equally awful for those workers who do manage to win the initial election. The NLRB has little power to punish employers who break the law in fighting workers who organize. Staughton Lynd and Daniel Gross’s “Labor Law for the Rank and Filer,” a book every IWW member ought to read, lays this out quite well. So does Burns’ “Reviving the Strike.” This criticism of the NLRB is a big part of recent discussion in the IWW about so-called “direct unionism” (see <http://libcom.org/tags/direct-unionism>). Staff and officers in the business unions are at least as aware of the limits of the NLRB as we are in the IWW. The decline of the NLRB marks an important historic shift, as the U.S. capitalist class and government have largely abandoned unions as tools for governing capitalism. Largely due

to the NLRB, unions played a key role in how mid-20th century U.S. capitalism was governed and maintained (for more on this history see “A Debate on Collective Bargaining and the IWW,” December 2011 *IW*, page 7, and “Class Struggle and the State,” October 2012 *IW*, page 11).

Venture syndicalism is part of a larger trend of “militant reformism.” I point this out because it is easy for us to get swept up in struggles carried out by sincere people and to forget about the fundamental character of the organizations involved. Even when they use exciting, innovative, militant tactics, reformist unions are still committed to “the conservative motto, ‘A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,’” as our constitution’s Preamble puts it. The IWW and our sister organizations reject this slogan, embracing the revolutionary watchword, “Abolition of the wage system.” Our goal is to “bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old,” to quote the song “Solidarity Forever.” We should welcome rising militancy but we should be prepared for the people calling the shots in venture syndicalist projects to act as a force for the old society against the creation of a new world out of its ashes. We must remember that not all struggles help to end capitalism, and that militancy and radicalism are two different things.

Unions which are committed to nothing more than “fair wages” are like a gas stove. Different parts of a stove create and sustain fire, but also contain fire, keep it from getting above a certain temperature, prevent it from spreading or joining up with other fires, and put it out by cutting off the fuel. Similarly, different parts of reformist unions create and sustain class struggle, keep it from getting too hot, prevent it from spreading too much or joining up with other struggles, and bring conflicts to an end. Gas stoves are about making fire useful for cooking. Ultimately, reformist unions and government labor policy are about making the fires of class struggle useful to capitalism.

Venture syndicalism is an attempt to make unions once again into important tools for governing U.S. capitalism. This involves creating and sustaining some of the fire of class struggle. We should welcome that, but we should also be aware that reformist unions fight for goals which



Graphic: fightforafaireconomy.org

will include their ability to contain, limit and end struggles, if struggles get intense enough. Aspects of venture syndicalism will pull class struggle in the direction of the old world we reject. This means that IWW members who participate in these efforts should ask ourselves if our participation amounts to anything more than “we follow the strategy set by the people in charge and help them win on their terms.” If not, then we are basically just volunteers in a project oriented fundamentally around the conservative “fair wages” vision we reject.

I am almost but not quite saying that these campaigns are reformist so the IWW should not participate. IWW members should participate in venture syndicalist projects... if we have nothing better to do. In those cases, we should participate with a plan to gain skills, experience, confidence, and relationships so that we will eventually have something better to do. When we participate, we should be honest with ourselves about whether or not, and how, we are actually accomplishing our goals. We should also be clear about what we are and are not going to accomplish as volunteers in venture syndicalist projects. I am reminded of John L. Lewis, president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s. Lewis was relatively conservative but he liked hiring radicals as organizing staff. When criticized by moderates for this decision, his reply showed that he did not see radical participation in the CIO as a threat to capitalism: “Who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?” he said. When we participate in venture syndicalist projects, we should always remember who holds the leash.



One-day fast food workers strike in D.C.

Photo: Good Jobs Nation

Sisters’ Camelot Management Admits To Dishonesty About Fired Worker

Continued from 1

between Feb. 25, when the workers union went public to the bosses, and March 4, when he was publicly fired. Hansen continued to testify that to his knowledge ShugE did nothing that warranted being fired any time during Hansen’s entire time working at Sisters’ Camelot, from the spring of 2011 to April 2013. This testimony is especially important since the public statement was made on March 4, which not only wrongfully asserted that ShugE had been fired in 2009, but which also claimed his behavior was disruptive in the workplace since returning to Sisters’ Camelot in 2011.

“It feels so good to finally have the truth on public record. The management of Sisters’ Camelot lied about me ever being fired in 2009, and they lied again when they claimed I was being fired in 2013 for anything other than union activity. Now we have this admitted under oath by one of the bosses and I feel so much relief to have these lies exposed in a way that cannot be refuted,” said ShugE.

Sisters’ Camelot’s attorney John C. Hauge, a notorious right-wing union-bust-

ing lawyer, gave up on attempting to prove that the firing was not based on activity. Instead Hauge focused on technicalities. These included arguing the canvassers were not covered under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The NLRB had found merit with the Unfair Labor Practices complaint because it found that the canvassers were misclassified as independent contractors instead of employees. Additionally, Hauge attempted to argue that Sisters’ Camelot did not engage in interstate commerce and therefore would not be covered under the NLRA.

When union member Bobby Becker was asked about the overall trial, he said, “I feel great about what happened in that courtroom and am really hopeful that the judge will rule in ShugE’s favor. One great thing to realize about this trial is that even if the judge rules against us, we still win the moral argument because they’ll just be getting off on a technicality. When the transcripts of this trial become public record... nobody will ever be able to argue again that ShugE was fired for any other reason than retaliation for union organizing.”

OpOK Relief: Solidarity Is Our Strength

Continued from 1

Plug into our new OpOK Rideshare with your ability to transport supplies or request a ride to a work-site. Text @OKALERT to 23559 to be added to our cell loop for the latest.

Allowing residents and victims to shape the services they receive is an essential part of our disaster relief efforts. Find local organizers and community leaders on the ground in these locations, ask what they need, crowdsource and share information, and see what you can do to meet these needs.

Cooperative decision-making, participatory democracy and mutual aid are tenants of anarchist society. OpOK Relief isn’t an anarchist group, but anarchism motivates my work within it. Anarchism is movement for a society in which the violence of racism, sexism, homophobia, capitalism and coercion are removed



Graphic: OpOK Relief

from our daily lives. Anarchism is the belief in a world without war and economic poverty. Anarchism is a philosophy and movement working to build co-operative, egalitarian human relationships and social structures that promote mutual aid, radical democratic control of political and economic decisions and ecological sustainability.

I believe that our work here today can create the kind of world that I carry in my heart. I believe that this work brings the best out of everyone involved, from the people on the ground to the people directly impacted by these storms. I believe that everyone has a part to play here, that anyone is capable of making a difference in these struggling areas.

I believe in solidarity. I believe in mutual aid. I believe in you. Join us. Solidarity is our strength. #OpOK

Reviews

Workers & Peasants Demand A Kingdom Of Heaven On Earth

Blissett, Luther. *Q. Boston: Mariner Books, 2005 (reprint edition). Paperback, 768 pages, \$39.95.*

By John O'Reilly

Most people think about the Protestant Reformation about as frequently as they think about sitting down to do their taxes, if not even less. But a contentious medieval Europe is the backdrop for one of the best pieces of historical fiction that Wobblies should really pay attention to. “Q,” the novel by a collective of radical Italians who used to publish under the name Luther Blissett and now go by Wu Ming, is a great adventure story that also packs a political wallop. The sequel to “Q” has just been translated from the Italian to English and been released, so it is worth revisiting the original novel, published in 2000, to remember why exciting works of fiction like “Q” should be a priority for Wobblies to check out.

The book centers around two characters and is structured like a spy novel. The protagonist, who goes by various names throughout the book, is known most frequently as Gert-From-The-Well. He is a German who bounces around various revolutionary groups during the explosion of social conflict that takes place during the Reformation. He follows the flags of

peasant rebels, communistic Christian booksellers and preachers, cruel messianic zealots, pacifist communarians and persecuted Jewish liberals, as their fortunes rise and fall, ever in the quest to be free of the influences of the powerful and authoritarian Catholic Church, the kings and lords of Europe, and the increasingly out-of-touch “official” Protestant leadership. Gert deals with the inevitable crushing of movements for popular power by changing his name and moving on to a new struggle, a man weighed down by the fact that while his comrades often die, he lives on to fight another day.

His antagonist is the shadow known as Q, a papal operative who blends in with the crowds of workers and peasants throughout Europe, seeking information on heresies and finding a way into the good graces of radical movements in order to subvert them. Q, less a zealot than a cynical manipulator, finds a way to put himself on the sidelines of multiple popular struggles, using his influence and instincts to tear at the unity of those who would be free of the Catholic Church’s power. He and Gert’s paths consistently cross, though their significance to each other remains concealed for most of their respective journeys.

While “Q” is an exciting story of intrigue, back-stabbing and straight

up swash-buckling, what makes it most interesting for Wobblies to check out is that its center is on ethics and that it’s a story of anti-capitalism. Outside of a few science fiction writers, most fiction treats radicals as a stand-in for something else. Radicals are often signifiers, ciphers, of viewpoints that the author seeks to abstract. Radicals, rebels, anti-capitalists, and others are introduced to talk about the author’s ideas about intransigence, morality, discipline, freedom, personal virtue or a host of other ideas. What makes “Q” different is that the authors are themselves veterans of the Italian extra-parliamentary left, and they write the novel to talk about the ideas of anti-capitalist struggle itself. In “Q,” radicals are real people, with complicated and contradictory ideas, with lives and thoughts of their own, but still with a firm dedication to their cause of liberty from the dominant repressive order.

They are not archetypes but characters. Instead of communism being a signifier for something else, it is the content of the plot itself. Gert’s adventures through various revolutionary activities show the highs and lows, exuberance, excitement and excess, of people who spend their lives trying to live without bishops, popes and kings. It’s hard not to identify with the plight of the common people organizing themselves for liberation who appear throughout the novel, not as stereotypes of the hammer-and-sickle-wielding proletarians and peasants of socialist realism, or misguided bohemians and shady bureaucrats of most Western literature, but as the regular types of people you run into at the bar or the grocery store, who have just had enough of the oppression of the bosses

and cops.

Based on the actual history of various uprisings and scandals in Europe in the 16th century, “Q” delivers a heart-pounding story of revolt and repression. While the novel has its flaws, particularly in the relative weakness of its female characters (something recognized by its authors, who have promised that the sequel, “Altai,” will deal with better), “Q” is a first-rate adventure novel that highlights a reasonably obscure piece of the people’s history of Europe and imbues it with the fire of revolution. In a moment when everything from the papacy, to the divine right of kings, to the idea of God itself was up for debate, “Q” tells an engaging story of everyday workers and peasants demanding a kingdom of heaven on Earth and willing to go as far as needed to make it happen.



Graphic: libcom.org



Wu Ming, a band of novelists.

Graphic: wumingfoundation.com

What’s Going On At UAardvark?

Wittner, Lawrence S. *What’s Going On at UAardvark? Durham, NC: Solidarity Press, 2013. Paperback, 243 pages, \$14.95.*

By Greg Giorgio

“What’s Going On at UAardvark?” is a raucous romp of a novel that stands authority on its head and teaches the mechanics of a modern-day uprising. It’s a funny and irreverent critique of modern secondary education which employs clever character mockups parallel to the news headlines. University administrators, CEOs, military officials and union leaders all get their share of abuse from author Lawrence S. Wittner, Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York (SUNY), Albany and veteran peace, labor and civil rights activist. His keen sense of the corporatization of higher learning and the workings seen from inside the system make his jabs at the bosses crisp and on target.

Wittner piques the reader’s curiosity from the opening chapter as he introduces the story from the viewpoint of a visitor from a distant galaxy. The visitor observations of “the Earthians’ educational system” are something unnoticed while attention had been drawn by “The Backward Planet” inhabitants’ proclivity to destroy one another and the environment. But developments at UAardvark gave the observers inspiration to tell the story for their own use. They relate it via “the employment of a native Earthian.”

Jake Holland is a middle-aged English professor at the center of the story,

set in Aardvark, Ind. Jake drinks too much, and his once productive academic and activist life has fallen into an alcoholic funk. While he despises school policy and its administrators, he can barely summon enough spirit to get to class on time, let alone do something about it. His wife has left him, and he drinks and sleeps, and doesn’t do much more than that. But the Jack London scholar has a lefty, pro-union attitude and you can’t help but sense that he will find himself again in a worthwhile struggle.

The book’s second chapter really sets the tone for what the UAardvark system is like and those who purport to run it. It’s only a slightly exaggerated view of how a public university cozies up to corporate cash, while tuitions rise, government cuts funding, programs are eliminated and workers are laid off. Students and teachers are demoralized. In the case of UAardvark, every facet of campus life is under the heel of one corporate iron boot or another. Dining facilities and lecture halls are named for soda pop and oil companies. Televisions blast corporate propaganda as learning throughout the campus. Nobody reads books anymore.

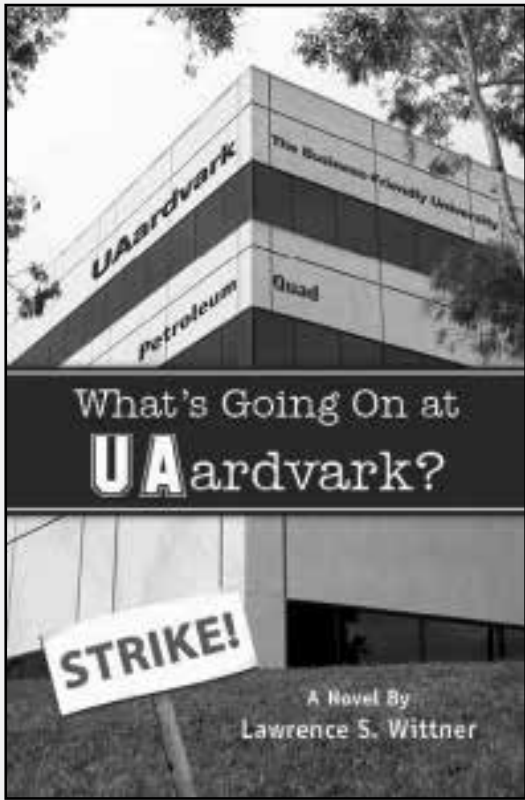
Wittner cleverly uses actual scenarios from his SUNY Albany days to illustrate the culture of the college in his novel. Like the cuddling up to a pro football team so they can use the university facilities to train for training camp—just like former SUNY Albany President, union buster Karen Hitchcock did in 1990 in some sort of bizarre public relations effort.

He also paints the ruling class types

with a broad, cartoon brush. But this heightens the appropriate sarcasm and sardonic wit to the story line. Wittner’s punchy prose and mostly short chapters give a flow and pace to the story, a fun take on the sadness of a system gone haywire as capitalism foreshortens all traditional, complex, democratic institutions. UAardvark’s administrators and the grandiose and greedy plutocrats have hatched their latest quest for capital’s spoils and it’s, well... unbelievable.

Some of the characters are not hard to imagine. There’s UAardvark President Hopkins, who bears a slight resemblance to a former U.S. president. General “Buck” Thorkelson has the pluck of former nuclear hawk, General Curtis Le May. Or William T. Swagger, perhaps the most cartoonish of the bunch, head honcho of CC Inc. Not least, a witch of a union leader, a corrupt one at that.

Other characters are more complex, like Hopkins’ secretary, Martha Skelton. She is clever and has a disdain for the frat boy buffoonery of her toy car loving boss who cheats on his wife. Natasha Randall is a student with a conscience. Class conscious, mostly immigrant maintenance workers help Jake and his professor poker buddies when the going gets tough at U Aardvark. Hell’s Angels, haiku and direct action? Christian Patriots? They all come to the party. Wittner plunks a little reality into the mix when a phony press conference to discredit the administration’s plans, à la The Yes Men



Graphic: laprogressive.com

is utilized. And a love story in intertwined in all of this, too.

While *Industrial Worker* readers may want to idealize some worker autonomy in the campus struggle, the journey’s a fun one and the end result may be to your liking just the same. A lot of the literature in the radical and labor press is devoid of humor and much self-criticism. Wittner has stepped in to fill that gap. If you read it, you may just laugh out loud.

Reviews

A People’s History Of The Venezuelan Revolution

Ciccariello-Maher, George. We Created Chavez: A People’s History of the Venezuelan Revolution. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2013. Paperback, 352 pages, \$25.95.

By John MacLean

In his book, “We Created Chavez: A People’s History Of The Venezuelan Revolution,” George Ciccariello-Maher seeks to re-establish “a relationship between the horizontal and the vertical” and to avoid the “twin fetishes” of state worship, and its opposite “antipower.” He writes that the “individual project [associated with Chavez] rests on a mass base more bent on destroying than seizing the state.”

The book begins with an interview from La Piedrita, in the hillside barrio of Catia, overlooking the Miraflores Palace of Caracas. La Piedrita (“The Pebble”) is an example of what Raúl Zibechi calls a “territory in resistance” carved out through the “ant work” of many in response “to the scourge of narcotrafficking.” Not only were the drug dealers sent packing, but the armed agents of the state were as well. When former President Hugo Chavez was still alive he accused some of the residents of this zone of terrorism and of working with the CIA as attacks against opposition business interests often came from here. Despite the accusations and an arrest warrant that couldn’t be served, the interviewed community member said clearly, “Chavez is our maximum leader.”

The guerrilla struggles which flared up in Venezuela with the end of the dictatorship in 1958 failed due to an ill-advised vanguardism and its increasing isolation from a largely urban population. The rebels neglected “mass work” and a “turn toward the people” was seen as needed. Through a decades-long period of splits on the left and attempts to reconnect with popular concerns, state violence was increasingly “socialized” and gradually distributed “across society as a whole.” In the early 1980s there was Cantaura, an assault which saw 250-pound bombs dropped on the remnants of guerrilla units. Later in the decade there was another attack at Yumare, and finally the Ampara assault against fishermen accused of being guerrillas. Oftentimes the victims of state violence would later be dressed in military garb and displayed before a complicit media. Finally, in 1989, “World War IV” began in Venezuela with a popular rising against austerity (the third war is thought to coincide with the triumph of neoliberalism, and the end of the Cold War). The “murderous reply of the state”—what became known as the “Caracazo,” the killing of unknown hundreds perhaps thousands—left the institutions utterly discredited and awakened “a radical military current” associated with Chavez.

Through the stories of the mur-

dered students Yulimar Reyes and Sergio Rodriguez Yance, we learn of a long history of struggle on the campuses of Venezuela. We read of pushes from both left and right, which found students trying to “insert themselves into national life” and engage in efforts over the shape of their country. Chavista efforts have dramatically expanded educational opportunities for many previously excluded groups. We also learn of the near erasure of women from the land’s history, of the founding mother Manuela Saenz, and the significant contributions of contemporary activists—in getting housework recognized in the new constitution and in getting a bank for women going. There seem to be so many possibilities here for radical changes to the money system and moves toward a citizen’s income with programs like the Mothers of The Barrio Mission. The long-standing “disruptive voices” of indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan communities have similarly been pushed to near erasure by the “myth of harmony” and the ideology of “mestizaje.” All of these advances forced the hand of Fedecamaras, the national Chamber of Commerce. During the 2002 coup against Chavez, “the pot of racism boiled over” and “aristocratic manners” were cast aside as “expressions of racism once again displaced the soothing discourse” of a mixed, color-blind national fantasy. The “rabid fury of Venezuelan fascism” represented by the business alliance “gleefully dissolved all branches of government [and] declared null and void the 1999 constitution.” Only the people streaming down from the hills had the power to say “no.” There is a popular saying in the country: “If you bring it like the eleventh [the date of the coup, in April], we’ll give it back like the thirteenth.”

A chapter on labor begins with the defeat of the oil industry lockout in 2002 and 2003, which is characterized by one commentator as a middle-class rebellion dressed up as a general strike. The state seizure of the Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA, the state-owned oil and natural gas company), dealt a serious blow to the opposition and was made possible by the efforts of workers over and “against the official institutions of the working class.” The early history of the labor movement gets a little confusing when the author gives no dates for a strike in oil, “a strike by Venezuela as a whole,” and mentions the help of the “International Workers of The World.” Despite the more radical origins of the movement, labor was led into a dependent relationship with political parties and bosses. As a result, autonomy suffered, and strike activity withered. A new unionism



Mural on a street in Venezuela.

Photo: blackleftunity.blogspot.com

replaced the corrupt old federation, but still arguments over autonomy and political entanglements persist. A pivotal battle occurred in 2008 in Ciudad Guyana at the massive steelworks along the Orinoco River, which pitted the unions against a Chavista governor, a minister of labor, and a transnational company. This effort forced the re-nationalization of the steel giant and, for Ciccariello-Maher, shows that “a strong push from below can have a dramatic impact above.”

One of the more “controversial” founding fathers of Chavismo is Ezequiel Zamora, a peasant insurrectionist from the late 1850s who was eventually executed by the state and the landlords. His simple slogan was “Hatred of the oligarchy!”—the landholding minority, which owned most of Venezuela then and still does today. Ciccariello-Maher writes: “Here was not a spirit of national reconciliation or a calculating politician, but a revolutionary driven purely by hatred of oppression and love of the poor.” Violent land battles persisted even as Venezuela became one of the most urbanized countries in South America, due to the growing significance of oil. In 2001, Chavez decreed the “Ley de Tierras,” which, in part, led to the failed coup and oil lockout. In 2005, rural groups would march on urban areas. One effort was called “Zamora Takes Caracas” which sought “to draw attention to impunity for murdered campesino leaders” and push on “the war against latifundios” (old landholding practices which saw privileged families controlling access to the earth and marginalized most of the people). Politicians have long sought to tie up and channel these movements as they have with labor. In the countryside, at the limits of the state, organizers are vulnerable to vigilantes and frequently are left to defend themselves.

The neglect of people and agriculture led to an “exodus” into the cities. In the aftermath of the Caracazo, the rural population shrank, and by 1999 when the new constitution was drafted, the urban informal sector grew to comprise as much as 50

percent of the country’s working population. Informal workers are excluded from “capitalist relations” and unregulated. There is a clear “disjuncture” between formal workers and these street vendors and couriers. The author also contends that they have regularly “behaved in a far more revolutionary fashion than their more nominally ‘working class’ counterparts.” It is this feared and misunderstood population that has played a “decisive and determinant role” in the Bolivarian revolution.

Ciccariello-Maher concludes with a Leninist trumpet blast at the walls from 1917; his is a tempered faith in “dual power,” the reaching down of laws, and the incessant popular “ant work” on ladders from below. The “historical lessons” of past revolutions, like those in Haiti and France, are mostly “negative” and there is ever the possibility of Chavisimo turning on and betraying its base. He notes favorably the 2006 Law on Communal Councils and the 2009 Organic Law of The Armed Forces, as being potential openings beyond bureaucracy and a specialized military. If he had spent more time reading Raúl Zibechi and less trying to remember a Leninist future for Venezuela, he might have seen what they both share. For example, in “Dispersing Power: Social Movements As Anti-State Forces,” Zibechi clearly sees the importance of the informal migrants who built up the Bolivian city of El Alto. In an interview he said that: “The revolt of El Alto can only be understood from the participation of market vendors and informal workers. They made the day-to-day revolt.” In the same discussion, Zibechi said, “The Leninist proposal is valid for ‘combat against.’ But not to build a new world.”

In Venezuela, we see the collapse of a violent two-party system and of a co-opted labor federation. This is likely why so much scorn is heaped on figures like Chavez. Going forward, how are we to build territories and organizations in resistance while at the same time safeguarding our autonomy?

Wobbly Arts

Left Behind

By FW X375159

Have you heard about the Sisters of Camelot?
It’s a story that’ll make your stomach rot
They talk a hip lefty non-profit* jive
*Though they ditched that principle in 2005
The tale involves scabbing and union busting,
In all thought and acts the bosses were disgusting
Of workers’ rights they care not

The management team were in quite a fit
Their canvassers were Wobblies and they wanted to talk for a bit
Instead of responding to this good faith will to negotiate
The management embraced the practice of the arbitrate
They could talk with the canvassers and listen
But instead ordered them out of the soup kitchen
Such a response from a “Collective” makes me want to spit!

By so callously ignoring the right to unionise
They shows us all at least, the need to organise
The Canvassers were left no choice but to strike
In retaliation they told one member to “take a hike”
Sadly such practice finds support in Minneapolis
The cities self-proclaimed radicals must be taking the piss
Many back the bosses, and happily parrot their lies
“You don’t need a union we’re all in this together” is the official line



Photo: Sisters’ Camelot Canvass Union
Sisters’ Camelot Canvass Union vigil.

Though their actions are reminiscent of Capitalist swine
It seems this noble collective
Is in a condition most defective
It seems that the situation must be dire
If lowly workers threaten the power to fire
This whole affair wouldn’t look out of place in a third world mine

Why should the Canvassers be allowed administrative consent?
Well for a start their labor brings in proceeds of up to 95%
And despite weeks of victimised bluster
Camelot has hired a Union buster
So determined are they to hang on to power
They’ll fight it out it seems to the final hour
So I ask you, in what way is this any different?

From any other labor struggle
Why has Camelot got so many in a muddle?
It seems to me to be quite clear cut
That this is another case of Chiefs ruling from their hut
To the Canvassers I say a heartfelt “good luck”
Keep at it and may the collective come unstuck
And may those who should know better be dunked in a puddle

DON'T LEAVE YOUR FRIENDS BEHIND
Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities
Victoria Law and China Martens

OURS TO MASTER AND TO OWN
WORKERS' CONTROL FROM THE COMMUNE TO THE PRESENT
IMMANUEL NESS AND DARIO AZZELLINI

THINK OVER
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY OF THE WORLD
BY TIM ACOTT

The ACCUMULATION OF FREEDOM
WRITINGS ON ANARCHIST ECONOMICS
EDITED BY DAVID GRAEBER, ANTHONY J. NOCELLA II
A JOHN AYER PUBLICATION

COUNTER-POWER
Michael S. Katz

BLACK FLAME
The Revolutionary Club Politics of Anarchists and Syndicalists
Edited by Michael Katz and Graham H. Smith

Henry E. McGuckin MEMOIRS OF A WOBBLY
A history of one of Britain's earliest syndicalist unions
38 Strikes Fought, 38 Strikes Won
Wilf McCartney

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Special The IWW And Earth First! - Part 3: Tree Spikes And Wedges

By X344543

When Greg King and Darryl Cherney co-founded Southern Humboldt County Earth First! in 1986, the principle target of their actions was the now Maxxam-controlled Pacific Lumber Company. Sensing that the 800-plus Pacific Lumber workers—of which almost 350 had made it known in a full-page ad that they opposed the Maxxam takeover—and the environmentalists shared a common adversary, King and Cherney tailored their campaign to the workers as well as the forest itself. Their earliest demonstrations conveyed the message that this particular Earth First! group was concerned for the future of the loggers and millworkers as much as they were for the redwoods and the flora and fauna that depended on the workers' future.

A good number of the workers welcomed this show of solidarity, and a handful of them, including shipping clerk John Maurer, millworker Kelly Bettiga, mechanic Lester Reynolds, and company blacksmith (whose job primarily consisted of forging specialized logging equipment needed for the cutting of the unique redwoods) Pete Kayes—who would eventually join the IWW—engaged in regular, amicable dialog with the environmentalists.

At first, Maxxam largely ignored the protests and dissidents, but as Earth First!'s efforts gained momentum and support, and as more workers began to grumble about their mandatory overtime and question the now rapacious timber harvesting efforts, the bosses began to take the growing grassroots resistance more seriously. An unprecedented spate of successful legal challenges by a local environmental watchdog group called Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) under a hitherto inconsistently enforced California forestry practices act was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Using the PR firm Hill & Knowlton and stroking the ego of the more conservative "scissorbill" employees, Maxxam fomented the creation of a "timber worker" front group known as Taxpayers for the Environment and its Management (TEAM). The organization initiated an intense propaganda campaign

accusing the environmentalists of being "unwashed-out-of-town-jobless-hippies-on-drugs" whose sole aim was to destroy the economic well-being of the humble residents of Humboldt (and Mendocino) county. TEAM claimed to be composed entirely of timber workers, but it was actually largely made up of low-level managers, gyppo operators, and assorted ranchers, many of whom belonged to other, similar front groups, such as one called WECARE, which had previously exaggerated the differences between workers and environmentalists.

To be fair, Earth First! had inadvertently set themselves up to be a prime target in such efforts. One of the most controversial tactics advocated by this militant direct action movement was the practice known as "tree-spiking," the act of driving large nails into standing trees, followed by marking the affected arbors with a large, spray-painted "S" in white, and then making an anonymous call to the targeted logging operation in an effort to deter the timber cut.

Dave Foreman was an especially strong advocate of this tactic, but he also stressed that it should be done selectively, and that great care should be taken to prevent any harm or injury to the frontline workers (hence the painted "S"). However, what Foreman didn't count on was that the employers, as a rule, placed profits above the workers' safety and cut the spiked trees anyway and sent them to the (often poorly maintained) mills, thus putting the millworkers at risk of injury or even death.

To make matters worse, Foreman had no way of knowing that folks who were not Earth First!ers, but willing to

spike trees, might use the tactic, but neglect to use the recommended safety precautions. Further, he failed to account for the negative press that would result from tree spiking efforts gone awry, and the employers' willingness to use it to drive wedges between timber workers and environmentalists. Earth First! would quickly find out in May 1987 just how much they hadn't foreseen.

Early that month, in the Louisiana-Pacific (L-P) mill in Cloverdale, Calif., located in Southern Mendocino County,

a millworker named George Alexander was nearly decapitated when his bandsaw struck a spiked log. The company waited 10 days before issuing a press release, but once they did, they blamed the "tree spiking terrorists" (meaning Earth First!), and issued a \$20,000 reward for the apprehension of the perpetrator.

What the company-issued press release didn't reveal, however, was that the northern California Earth First! groups didn't use tree spiking as a tactic, that the spiked log had been sabotaged after it had been cut due to the placement of the spike, and that the most likely suspect was not an Earth First!er, or even an environmentalist, but actually a right-wing gun nut who bragged about spiking the tree in protest against L-P for illegally logging trees outside of their approved timber harvest area on his private property (L-P had an established reputation for doing such things).

Furthermore, L-P also didn't reveal that Alexander was not a company man. Indeed he was mildly sympathetic to Earth First!, though he opposed tree spiking, for obvious reasons, and he was actually very critical of L-P for its lax safety practices and profit mongering. The press and L-P also failed to mention that while the company offered a generous-sounding \$20,000 reward, Alexander had to threaten a lawsuit in order to get even a paltry fraction (\$9,000) of his medical bills covered by the company. This didn't stop L-P from using the bloody images of an injured Alexander for their own propaganda purposes (a move Alexander resented).

The corporate timber front group, WECARE, offered to pay Alexander to be a spokesperson for their anti-Earth First! propaganda, but Alexander refused. That didn't stop WECARE from using his image as well. And the odd timing of the delayed press release may have been calculated to coincide with an Earth First! protest against Maxxam (which is not unlikely since both Maxxam and L-P called upon the services of WECARE to create pro-corporate timber propaganda).

Unfortunately, enough timber workers



Graphic: Mikal Jakubal

throughout the Pacific Northwest bought the propaganda, and by May 1988, the workers were sufficiently convinced that Earth First! was a band of unfeeling terrorists. The willing collaboration of the capitalist press only further cemented this image in the minds of the general public. Worse still, careless Malthusian-influenced statements made by Dave Foreman, Ed Abbey, and Chris Manes—whose views did not by any means represent the majority of Earth First!—only further added to the tension. Most leftists, including many in the IWW, saw no redeeming value in Earth First!

On the other hand, in the days before the internet, many Earth First!ers knew nothing of Pete Kayes, John Maurer, Les Reynolds, or Kelly Bettiga and their openness towards environmentalism. They had no idea that George Alexander was very close in his own views to their own. Instead, their conception of the typical timber worker was the reactionary caricature of them provided by the likes of TEAM and WECARE.

Everyone assumed that the timber bosses had won, but no one could have anticipated how wrong that assumption was.

To be continued...

Next installment: "Part 4: I Knew Nothin' 'Til I Met Judi."

Capitalism

Trans-Pacific Partnership: Corporate Power Tool Of The 1 Percent

By Stephanie Low and Tom Keough

Have you heard? The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) "free trade" agreement is a stealthy policy being pressed by corporate America. A dream of the 1 percent, the TPP could, in one blow, offshore millions of American and Canadian jobs, free the banksters from oversight, undo all labor laws in at least 11 nations, ban "Buy American" policies needed to create green jobs and rebuild our economy, decrease access to medicine, flood countries like the United States, Canada, and Peru with unsafe food and products, and empower corporations to abolish our environmental, safety and health protection laws.

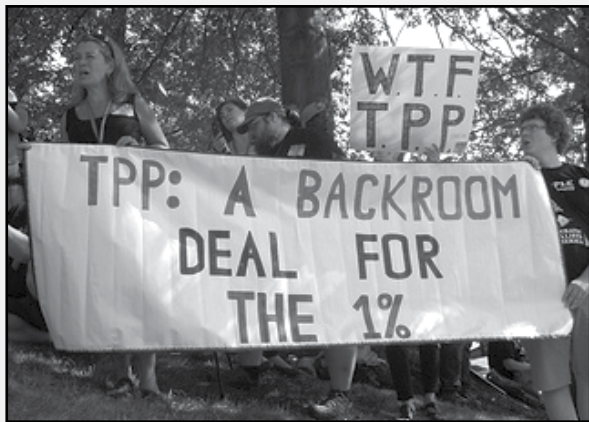
Most people do not know anything about the TPP, but it's a very important agreement to know about. It's a trade agreement now in negotiation. Normally the U.S. Senate adjudicates trade agreements, but President Obama has said he wants to get Fast Track Authority. If Congress votes to grant him that, he could sign it before Congress gets to even see it, forcing them to vote yes/no without being able to change a word of it. This is what he did with the health insurance laws and what George W. Bush did with the U.S. Patriot Act. Congress passed these overwhelmingly before they were given copies to read. Unfortunately, all

recent agreements under Fast Track have been passed by Congress. The key to stopping TPP is to lobby our representatives to make sure they agree to vote against Fast Track. Activists think we can do it, but much work is necessary, as soon as possible. Eleven governments—the United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam—are in secret closed-door talks negotiating the TPP, with countries like Japan and China potentially joining later. Six-hundred corporate advisers have access to the text, while the public, members of Congress, journalists, and civil society are excluded. And so far what we know about what's in the text is very scary! Obama hopes to finalize it by October, though recent news indicates that the TPP is running into problems and it could be finalized by the end of the year.

George W. Bush began the TPP negotiation process, and Obama began promoting it in strictest secrecy... until a few chapters were leaked approximately one year ago. Basically, it's the 1 percent—the trade reps of 600 transnational corporations—who have direct access to the text, and what has been leaked indicates that their most hoped-for agendas are being written into this "trade" agreement to make as much money for them as pos-

sible. A leaked TPP negotiating text showed that the Obama administration is pushing not only dangerous investment terms found in the bilateral free trade agreements, but an extension of these corporate rights. The TPP would empower any corporation operating in these countries, including subsidiaries from additional countries, to skirt any laws and courts to demand taxpayer compensation in foreign tribunals if a court or law had caused them to spend money on anything. Government actions deemed subject to these rules now include the denial of regulatory permits, environmental and health protections from toxics, bans to cigarette packaging, natural resource management, from water rights to mining policy, emergency regulatory measures taken during financial crises, and minimum wage laws. Many legal experts and policymakers in the United States and officials in other countries, however, are beginning to learn lessons from the mounting evidence of the excesses of the system and are trying to oppose this.

The leaked investment chapter of the TPP shows that this agreement would expand the privileges afforded to foreign



Anti-TPP rally in Leesburg, Va. Photo: firedoglake.com

corporations by guaranteeing them special rights and privileges not provided to domestic firms under domestic law. In addition to requiring the government to provide special, preferential treatment to foreign investors, this regime would also empower foreign firms to privately enforce their new rights through what is called an "investor-state dispute resolution." A nation's domestic policies would be required to comply with the TPP rules. This will affect at first only the citizens of the member countries, but in time, all citizens of all countries.

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

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.

NOTE: All stories below written by John Kalwaic.

Massive Workers' Strike In Turkey



Union workers march into Taksim Square on June 4. Photo: workers.org

In the first week of June 2013, massive strikes took place in Turkey in solidarity with the larger protests against the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. These massive protests began with a protest against building a shopping mall over a park in Istanbul and then grew into a broader movement against the heavy-handed prime minister. On June 5, the two major labor confederations, the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey and the Confederation of Public Work-

ers' Unions, engaged in major strikes and demonstrations against the prime minister. The police viciously attacked many of the workers. The trade union demonstrators were peaceful; yet despite these nonviolent demonstrations, the police attacked the protesters with water cannons. Despite these crackdowns, the protesters have not wavered from their stance.

With files from Workers World, The Real News and the Courier-Post.

Read more on page 1 & 6.

Greece Tries To Clamp Down On Strikes

Greek teachers and other state workers launched a strike in May 2013. Teachers have been hit hard by the austerity measures put forward during the 2010 Greek bailout. The government has been increasingly repressive toward dissent and tried to ban teachers from going on strike. This was not the first time that the Greek government has banned strikes. Train and ferry drivers went on strike in February and the government banned these actions. Many Greek state employees responded to these crackdowns with the strike in May, despite threats of arrest. Greek strikers



Teachers strike. Photo: socialistworker.co.uk

still remain defiant.

With files from the World Socialist Web Site.

British Train Drivers Oppose Racist Platforms



Hope Not Hate's publication. Photo: union-news.co.uk

At their annual conference held in May, the United Kingdom's train drivers union, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), backed an unusual resolution which al-

lows train drivers to refuse to transport racist organizations and their members to rallies.

Racist groups such as the British National Party and the English Defense League are among those groups that ASLEF members can refuse to transport.

According to the resolution, ASLEF General Secretary Mick Whelan told the Hope Not Hate campaign after the vote: "We believe it is important to resist all forms of racism and fascism and the protection of the public and our members of staff." The ASLEF will now seek to negotiate with train companies for this rule to go into practice.

With files from Union-News.co.uk.



This ad was not paid for with any money collected for the NGWF. This was paid for by individual IWW members.

Graphic: Tom Keough

Barcelona Firefighters Oppose Austerity



Riot police charge at firefighters on May 29. Photo: huffingtonpost.com

Spain has been going through massive anti-austerity protests in recent months. In the latest incident, firefighters clashed with riot police in Barcelona, the provincial capital of Catalonia.

The firefighters were protesting government spending cuts that would lead to a reduction in staff. The firefighters' union representatives stated that these cuts would lead to a reduction in safety for the people of Catalonia. Firefighters, dressed

in their yellow work gear, actually started fires during the violent clashes with the riot police in a battle of fire axes versus police batons.

The government in Spain, much like the government in Greece, has been using the budget and the Euro crisis as an excuse to cut social spending and clamp down on unions.

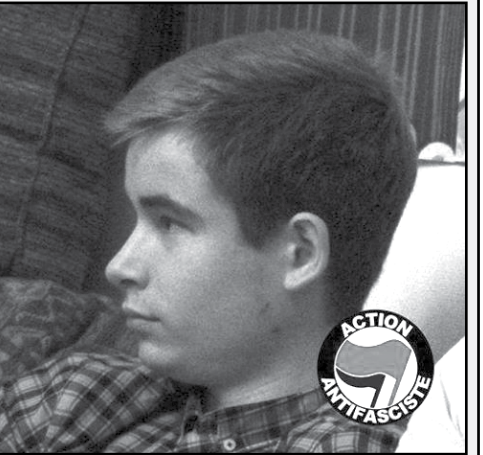
With files from the Huffington Post and EuroNews.

Antifa Killed By Neo-Nazis In France

In a tragic story, 19-year-old anti-fascist and gay rights activist, Clément Méric, was beaten to death by neo-Nazi skinheads outside a clothing store near the Gare Saint-Lazare. The beating left Méric braindead and he died a day later.

Méric's attack was a product of extreme right-wing violence which has grown in recent months. More than 15,000 demonstrators in Paris have come out to support Méric and his family, as well as to protest right-wing violence. Demonstrators chanted "death to fascists."

With files from France 24 and Albanian Screen.



Clément Méric. Photo: france24.com

Guest Workers Strike In The Emirates

In May 2013, thousands of construction workers in United Arab Emirates (UAE) walked off their jobs. Most of the UAE's workforce comes from South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, and most of these workers send money home to their families. Strikes in the UAE are rare as labor unions are banned.

and spread to Dubai. Arabtec confirmed the slow-down and the fact that workers did not show up for work. The UAE government has now claimed that the striking workers have chosen "voluntarily" to return to their countries of origin. How "voluntary" this return was or whether the workers were simply deported for striking in a country where strikes are illegal is in question. The UAE has the most guest workers proportionately in its population. When strikes do occur, they exist without any unions or official structures. Since labor unions are illegal, workers take workplace action by talking with their co-workers.

With files from Al Jazeera.



Photo: union-news.co.uk

The construction workers struck against the Arabtec construction company, which bankrolls the construction of many of the UAE's buildings, including Dubai's tallest tower. The strike was over pay increases and working conditions. It started against the company in Abu Dhabi

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