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IWW Returns To The Railroad With ULP Strike

By Brendan Maslauskas Dunn

Workers at a small railroad servicing company based in Waukegan, Ill., called Mobile Rail Solutions—which is contracted by Union Pacific—went out on strike on Aug. 1. The workers decided to strike over a series of unfair labor practices (ULPs), including the firing of three workers. Although the workers attempted to negotiate with management to prevent a strike, their offers were ignored. "We were fired within a week of filing multiple OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] complaints and going public with the union," said Eric Vasquez, 25. The union they decided to join was the IWW.

IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Sam Green was approached by one of the workers in June. They spoke and the worker went to an Organizer Training 101 that the union offers. On the picket line, Green recounted the organizing that took place. He said that he met up with a group of nine workers to see if the union "could give them what they needed and to see if it would be a good fit. They answered by signing authorization cards."

After 24 of the 27 workers at Mobile Rail Solutions signed union authorization cards, they went public with the IWW on July 8. After going public, support for the union spiked up to 98 percent of the workers. Management was intransigent with the workers and would not recognize the union, so the new Wobblies filed for an election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which they won in a 17-to-5 vote on Aug. 14. Management has continued to attack the IWW with threats and intimidation.

Ahern Owen, 38, the worker who originally reached out to the IWW, paced up and down the picket line in Chicago's blazing August heat. Owen has a background in organizing of a different nature, mostly within the environmental justice movement. His background certainly was helpful in getting things in motion with the IWW but he found that workplace

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Mobile Rail workers on the picket line, Aug. 2. Photo: IWW Mobile Rail Workers Union

The Parallels Between The Sisters' Camelot & Jimmy John's Anti-Union Campaigns: Part 1

By Robbie Jenson & Travis Elise

Travis & Robbie are members of the Jimmy John's Workers Union and the Twin Cities General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In this article they discuss the similarities between the struggles at Jimmy John's and Sisters' Camelot. Parts 1 and 2 of this article will analyze the similarities between the union busting tactics employed by both Sisters' Camelot and Jimmy John's. The remaining parts will debunk the community statement ("A Letter of Support for all the Workers at Sisters' Camelot") written and signed onto by several members of the south Minneapolis radical community.

On Feb. 25, 2013, the canvassers at Sisters' Camelot, a non-profit mobile food shelf and soup kitchen, announced to their managers that they had formed a union and were card-carrying members of the IWW. Days later the Sisters' Camelot Canvass Union (SCCU) presented their bosses with their terms and attempted to begin negotiations. Management refused and the SCCU began a strike that has being going on for over four months (at press time). During that time, the managers at Sisters' Camelot, who make decisions collectively and handle different kinds of programming work themselves, have (along with their staunch supporters) launched a vicious anti-union campaign that has been surprising, confusing and misleading to

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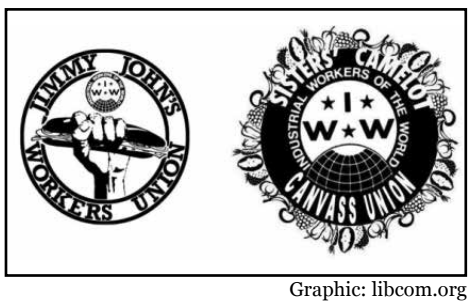

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Life-Long Wobblies

Junior Wobblies at the Work People's College talent show. Photo: Erik Davis

By J. Pierce, with Sadie Farrell

Two IWW dreams came true for me at Mesaba Co-op Park this summer. One was to lead a conversation about being life-long revolutionaries. The other was to teach IWW principles to kids in a memorable way. The Work People's College Committee approved the workshop I co-led with FW Linda called "Che Guevara vs. Mr. Rogers: Long-Term Planning for Lifelong Wobblies" (hereinafter referred to as "Life Planning"). The Junior Wobblies counselors gave me the opportunity to design some curriculum for the kids. These two experiences, as it turned out, went hand in hand.

The IWW has always been a multi-generational organization—something we are all very proud of. However, the union is entering a newer stage of retention since our gradual resurgence in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Many of our 20-something-year-old-members from that time are now 30- and 40-somethings with kids, partners and the stresses of being grown-up trouble-makers. Life Planning and Junior Wobblies are two exemplars of our readiness for the new IWW.

Life Planning

I've been promoting the idea of "IWW career counseling" for a while. In numerous conversations, fellow workers expressed their frustration at dedicating years of their work lives to IWW organizing. When it was all over, they had little to show for it: no money, no job prospects, and no marketable skills—nothing that meant "success." The only viable career path, at that point, was to work for the business unions, which are constantly tempting IWWs with a mirage of security and respectability. Wobblies have also quit the union in order to "become their own boss," ascend into the left intelligentsia, or graduate to being a "real" union member in a trade. This led to the idea that we should be helping each other build toward a career that allows us to stay in the IWW and work a job we might actually enjoy. Life planning combines "career counseling" and "life coaching" and draws out the contradictions and complexities that a Wobbly encounters as we progress through years of struggle.

Entanglements that we covered in the workshop included raising Wobbly kids

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Send in your announcements for the annual "In November We Remember" issue of the *Industrial Worker* by Friday, October 4, 2013. Celebrate the lives of those who have struggled for the working class with your message of solidarity. Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to:

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$12 for 1" tall, 1 column wide
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The default format for the *Industrial Worker* is moving to an electronic PDF version and members will no longer be automatically subscribed to receive paper copies of the *IW* in the mail, beginning October 1, 2013. The default form of distribution will instead be through email, unless otherwise specified. If members wish to receive print copies of the *IW*, please send an email to ghq@iww.org or iw@iww.org with the subject "Opt-in to Print IW," or call GHQ at (773) 728-0996 and request a print subscription.

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Note that ALL members are allowed to request paper copies and branches that have bundle requests will still have those requirements be honored.

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Remember, every paper *IW* costs the union a significant amount of time and money. Go paperless, live in harmony with the earth and help save the union money!

Are you organizing? Do you need resources? Do you have resources to share?

The Organizing Department Board (ODB) was created to strengthen the IWW's organizing efforts. The ODB's goals are to: support campaigns, connect organizers to each other, help develop diverse organizers across North America, and support new or non-organizing branches to do organizing.

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Where you come in?
This board will not be able to fulfill these goals without communication from members.

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Contact us if:
- Your branch doesn't already have an ODL (Organizing Department Liaison), please elect one or contact us for more information.
- You're in a campaign of any size; so we can be aware of it and support you directly.
- Your branch has an ODL or campaign but is not reporting. Please, let us know what is going on and thoughts about how to make the process work better for you.
- And/or you have some significant organizing experience and want to support IWW organizing elsewhere!

Contact us today!
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Lakeside Press IU 450 Job Shop: 1334 Williamson, 53703. 608-255-1800. Jerry Chernow, del., jerry@lakesidepress.org. www.lakesidepress.org
Madison Infoshop Job Shop:1019 Williamson St. #B, 53703. 608-262-9036
Just Coffee Job Shop IU 460: 1129 E. Wilson, Madison, 53703. 608-204-9011, justcoffee.coop
Railroad Workers IU 520: 608-358-5771. railfalcon@yahoo.com
Milwaukee GMB: 1750A N Astor St., 53207. Trevor Smith, 414-573-4992
Northwoods IWW: P.O. Box 452, Stevens Point, 54481

IWW History

Ben Legere: Long Distance Runner On The Left

By Steve Thornton

Ben Legere had just turned 26 when he was convicted on riot charges during the Little Falls, N.Y. textile strike in 1912. But the frame-up did not stop the Wobbly from organizing workers as the authorities had desperately hoped. Once he began his sentence at the nearby Auburn Correctional Facility in 1913, Legere became a teacher at the prison school. Always the organizer, this young writer and activist taught other inmates about industrial unionism and revolutionary socialism, right under the warden's nose.

Benjamin James Legere was born in Taunton, Mass., on May 30, 1887, the same year Albert Parsons and the other Haymarket martyrs were hanged. "When they executed the Chicago anarchists, Legere came on the scene," he once said. "So, serves them right, huh?"

Legere's father was French-Canadian and part Mi'kmaq First Nation who worked his way from Canada to New York, getting jobs as a logger, iron worker and finally, as a small farmer in Massachusetts. When his son Ben was 19 years old, he joined the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks and then moved to Bridgeport, Conn. He quickly hooked up with the Socialist Party (SP), speaking on street corners, chairing public meetings, and running for the city's Board of Alderman on the Socialist ticket. He became an active member of the Bridgeport Socialist Club, a smaller and more militant rival to the electoral-minded SP chapter.

Socialist activity led him to the IWW. By 1911, Legere was helping to launch the Brotherhood of Machinists with "Big Bill" Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. In early 1912, he and Matilda Rabinowitz (his movement partner and lover) were raising funds for the famous Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Mass. Legere was the only IWW man to crash a Lawrence City Hall meeting, at a considerable risk to his own safety, organized by the bosses to stir up a large anti-union crowd. "He came out all right, thanks to his calmness under the circumstances," reported the IWW's Justus Ebert.

Legere harshly criticized the Bridgeport Socialist Party leadership for its lack of effort on behalf of the Lawrence strikers. The party finally offered a city council resolution of "moral support" after the strike had essentially been won. "The workers in Lawrence needed no moral support," Legere wrote, "their cause is so unquestionably just and moral in every way that to offer them moral support is bitter irony."

In May, Legere was in Willimantic, Conn., helping to lead the successful Quidnick and American Thread Company mill strikes. Both fights had been inspired by the recent victory of the Lawrence workers. It was here he challenged American Federation of Labor (AFL) textile union leader John Golden to a debate on industrial unionism versus craft unionism. Golden had played a treacherous role in Lawrence and again in Willimantic, undermining the IWW's efforts and colluding with the bosses. "Defend yourself on the charge that you are a disorganizer of labor instead of a labor organizer," Legere wrote to Golden, who did not respond. By August, Legere was speaking to an open-air mass meeting of at least 500 workers in Willimantic's Lincoln Square. Up until this time, Legere self-identified as an industrial union socialist. Now he was a full-fledged Wobbly.

In November 1912, Legere and Rabinowitz were called to the Little Falls strike. He was arrested along with at least a dozen strikers and organizer Philip Bocchino after the authorities broke up a peaceful parade in front of the Phoenix textile mill. He and Bocchino were sentenced to a year at hard labor.

While in Auburn prison, the "prison professor" Legere received hundreds of labor and socialist magazines and books which he used as teaching tools. "In six months we had made the prison school a

Matilda Rabinowitz. Photo: Phoebe Legere

Ben Legere. Photo: *International Socialist Review*

center of revolutionary socialist and industrial union propaganda," Legere wrote. "I found it easy to interest the prisoners in socialism," he continued. "In fact, most of the prisoners there for crimes against property are men who, driven to rebel against the rigors of capitalist exploitation, naturally turn to burglary." Legere's teaching helped these men understand that there were more effective ways to challenge the system than by breaking and entering.

After prison, he toured with an acting company through Canada and was once again thrown in jail. This time the "crime" was wearing an IWW pin on his coat. The authorities kicked him out of the country. Legere's time in Canada, however, exposed him to the One Big Union (OBU, a Canadian syndicalist trade union active primarily in the Western part of the country, not to be confused with the IWW's vision of one big union). He put all his energy into the Canadian union's formation.

In 1922, he was back in Lawrence organizing mill workers under the OBU banner. A number of cotton mills in Rhode Island and Massachusetts had instituted a 20 percent wage cut to workers' pay in March, while the Lawrence bosses soon announced the drastic cut as well. This triggered Legere's reappearance in the city to organize a massive strike. In keeping with the IWW's Bread and Roses legacy a decade earlier, Legere led a mass picket in front of the city's largest employer, the Pacific Mill. The owners got an injunction against picketing, so Legere led strikers on a "walk" with him back to the mill. Once the Pacific Mill gave in and rescinded the pay cut, other area firms followed. After Lawrence, Legere was active in the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee, as was most every other activist of his generation. By 1934, he was living in California, helping to lead Upton Sinclair's End Poverty in California (EPIC) movement and working as an actor with the United Labor Radio Campaign of 1935.

Decades before the Chinese leader Mao Zedong wrote that "revolution is not a tea party," Legere spoke to Willimantic mill workers and warned them that "this fight for the uplifting of humanity is no pink teas engagement or afternoon party." Ben Legere, whom historian Dexter Arnold dubbed "a long distance runner on the left," died on Jan. 29, 1972, having carried on the fight all his life.

IWW Constitution Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

Join the IWW Today

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

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

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

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

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

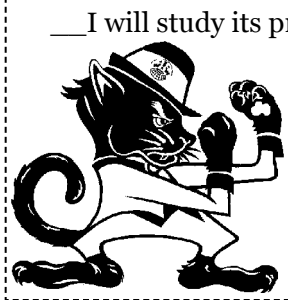
TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

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

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

___I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.

___I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Post Code, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone:_____ Email:_____

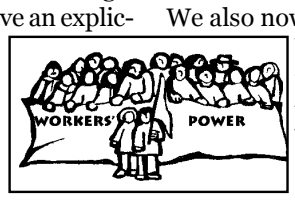
Amount Enclosed: _____

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

Job Conditioning

By X350520

An important Wobbly concept is job conditioning. This is when workers slowly and subtly change the practices or the culture in their workplace, to their advantage. Job conditioning doesn't involve an explicit agreement with the boss to change workplace conditions. It's more like creating "facts on the ground" that make our job better.



Because job conditioning doesn't involve an outright confrontation with the boss, usually even more timid co-workers will join in. It can build solidarity on the shop floor, change how everyone feels about going in to work and build up our confidence in relation to the boss.

Here are some of my favorite memories of job conditioning:

I worked part time in a mom-and-pop retail store, getting paid in cash. We had no water cooler, or fountain, or kitchen. Our only source of water was the tap in the bathroom, which was gross. However, we sold cases of bottled water. The owners helped themselves to these but never offered them to us. In the mornings on the way to my shift, I didn't have money for both a coffee and a water, so I just bought a coffee. Some days my thirst would overtake me, though, and I would cave and buy a bottle of water from the boss, noting it in my book where I recorded my hours, so that he could deduct it from my pay. One day my co-worker said that this was ridiculous; we shouldn't have to pay for water. So we started telling him when we were taking water, but "forgetting" to write it in our books. And then we just stopped telling him altogether. This let us stop agonizing over whether to drink some water when we were thirsty.

I worked in one of those first class airline lounges—the private ones where the first class travelers get to chill before getting on their planes. Catering and janitorial services were contracted to Sodexo, which was the company that my co-workers and I worked for. We kept the bar stocked, put out cheese platters, cleaned the bathrooms, and so on. We didn't have a break room of our own. One day we heard we were getting a new manager. Before he came on the job, my co-workers and I installed a full-length mirror in his office and put a bunch of boxes of tampons in there. When he arrived we told him that his office doubled as our break room. To reinforce the point, my co-worker and I ate our lunch in there every day, while playing cards on his desk. He got the point and started leaving when it was our break time. It was fun to pull one over on the boss and it was nice to have a break room. We also now had access to the company's labor manuals, which showed us all kinds of benefits we were supposed to be getting but weren't.

I worked a full-time, 9-to-5 job for a government department. I was one of seven interns or entry-level young people there. We did things like answer letters from constituents using boilerplate formulas. We had plenty of work to do, and even more during politically heated times. We had a one-hour paid lunch break, but the more ambitious or more guilt-prone among us would work through it, eating at our desks. One particular co-worker was a friend of mine. I started insisting she come for lunch with me, using it as a chance for us to socialize and catch up. Then we started inviting more people to join us. Eventually, all seven of us would go for lunch for the full hour, every single day. We'd try out the restaurants nearby or chill in the park. Our workplace culture had changed so that everyone took the breaks we were entitled to, and our bosses couldn't pressure us to work through lunch because we simply weren't there. Plus, we got a chance to build camaraderie and to talk about our bosses.

Job conditioning can involve a lot of things, whether it's appropriating more free stuff for yourself, getting some flexibility in your schedule, ensuring everyone gets their breaks, or pushing back on the constant supervision we often face on the job. You can start it on your own, or just involving one co-worker, and then radiate out from there. You can talk about your reasons for doing it with your co-workers, or just start doing it. But it can really make a difference in terms of how you relate to each other, and to your job. It's a way of making work a little more human, and it's a subtle way of pushing back against the boss's power to dictate everything in the workplace. Once those "facts on the ground" are established workers will instinctively defend them.

We're trained at work to think that the boss has all the power. Ultimately, job conditioning is a way of reminding both ourselves and the boss that we don't need them, they need us.

The Illusion Of Self-Employment In A Capitalist Economy

By X365097

It's considered a high honor in the American value system to open a business and "be your own boss." From a Wobbly point of view, a problem with this idea, even for those who operate without employees and for worker-owners of cooperative enterprises (both of which categories qualify for IWW membership), is that the broader marketplace in which the business must operate is still almost entirely under the control of the capitalist "1%".

What that means, first of all, is that the supposedly independent businessperson or persons must, in most cases, purchase tools, fuel, and other business supplies primarily from exploitative, monopolistic, for-profit entities. Also, for owner-operators whose industry is so consolidated that there are only a handful of customers to whom they can sell their goods and services, the lack of independence is even more pronounced.

What a situation like that amounts to is the worker or group of workers must provide her/his/their own equipment, and yet there is still a powerful economic dependency. In effect, the controllers of the market remain a boss even for the supposedly self-employed and for workers who, within their workplace, have substituted the rule of an owner or manager with a cooperative system. The market-controlling 1%, by virtue of their sheer economic influence and power, are able to determine prices and set a number of other conditions that the workers, despite the certain degree of control they have asserted over the way that they work, must obey.

Given this, it is clear that for such workers to remain disorganized and estranged from each other is for them to willingly accept the very sort of submission that the praise they receive from their communities for their "self-employed" status presumes that they have rejected. The IWW has a solution, which is for workers of all backgrounds to organize by industry into One Big Union governed by direct democracy and aimed at breaking the 1%'s control over our economic lives.

Workers today can embrace the illusion of independence and continue to be manipulated by the capitalist owning class, or unite to break its control over our labor and redirect production according to human need as determined through democratic processes. This is the purpose of the IWW: to agitate, educate, and organize all workers in the understanding that until all of us are free, none of us are free.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 66 **Speaking Her Mind**

In May 1920, Kate Richards O'Hare gained release from the Missouri State Penitentiary where she served time for the crime of speaking her mind.

Born on a farm in Kansas in 1877, Kate Richards grew up there and in Kansas City, Missouri. In her late teens she became a machinist's apprentice, to the disgust of her fellow workers — who gave her the "dirtiest, greasiest work in the shop." But she stuck at it, and became one of the first female members of the International Association of Machinists. In 1895, a speech by "Mother" Mary Jones led to an interest in socialism. She became an organizer for the Socialist Party, a frequent candidate for office and an editor who investigated working conditions on behalf of unions.

Once the U.S. entered World War I, Kate O'Hare traveled widely giving anti-war speeches. The war would benefit the profiteers, but not workers and farmers, whose problems would remain unsolved, she said. After an anti-war speech in Bowman, North Dakota, in 1917, she was arrested, tried and convicted of "espionage" and sentenced to five years imprisonment.

Protests set her free after a year and a half. She became respected for her prison reform work — especially her campaign to end the shameful practice of allowing garment companies to use convict labor.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

Wobbly & North American News

Longshore Union Promises Action For Trayvon Martin

By John Kalwaic

Graphic: resistancephl.com

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in Oakland, Calif., pledged support for the National Justice for Trayvon Martin movement. There has been action around the country protesting the verdict of George Zimmerman, an armed vigilante judged not guilty in criminal court in Florida for the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. ILWU Local 10 is a fairly progressive, predominantly African American local that also pledged support for the cause of Oscar Grant when the African American man was shot by a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) transit officer in Oakland. The ILWU has promoted many causes including a 2007 May Day shutdown of the ports in protest of the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

With files from Resistancephl.com.

Work Stoppage & Hunger Strike At Pelican Bay Prison

By John Kalwaic

Photo: popularresistance.org

In July, a work stoppage and a hunger strike took place at the Pelican Bay State Prison in California. Prisoners were engaging in civil disobedience and strikes against unfair conditions in the prison. Some of the major gangs such as Mexican Mafia, Nuestra Familia and the Black Guerrilla Family agreed to cease hostilities, and instead called for a hunger strike on July 8 to protest indefinite incarceration in solitary confinement. The prisoners suffer from the use of solitary confinement for the most minor of infractions as well as from group punishment, in which the warden punishes everyone in a supposed gang for one member's infraction.

The hunger strike and work stoppage came after the prison authorities failed to implement reforms that they promised after the first hunger strike at Pelican Bay in 2011. More than 30,000 prisoners participated in the strike this year. During both Pelican Bay hunger strikes, the current one as well as the one in 2011, the prisoners have demonstrated that people from different gangs and also different racial and ethnic backgrounds can join together to fight oppression.

With files from the Los Angeles Times.

Viva La Huelga!

The Agricultural Strike At Sakuma Brothers Farms And The Tradition Of Oaxacan Resistance

By Brendan Maslauskas Dunn

As workers walked past fields of strawberries and blueberries into a negotiation meeting in July with Sakuma Brothers Farms, Inc. management, they were told to accept management's terms or lose their jobs. This threat came amidst a heated strike of over 200 immigrant farm workers in Burlington, Wash., just north of Seattle. It is the second strike that the workers initiated over a list of demands over wages, dignity and respect.

The strike started after the firing of farmworker Federico Lopez on July 10. Lopez and his co-workers believed he was targeted for bringing up grievances to his superiors. Some of the workers were listening to an interview of Rosalinda Guillen on a Spanish language radio show on a local radio station. They decided that they wanted her to assist them with their struggle at Sakuma Brothers Farms.

Rosalinda Guillen works for Community to Community Development, a farm worker and food justice organization located near the Canadian border in Bellingham, Wash. She began working as a farm worker in Washington state in 1960, eventually joining Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers (UFW). She became a leader in the bitter eight-year campaign to organize the workers at the Chateau Sainte Michelle Winery in the state which ended with a contract and victory for the workers in 1995. A rallying cry for the UFW in its early days became "Viva la Huelga!" as the strike and other disruptive tactics were often deployed by the workers in an industry where there was little labor protection.

Like their forbearers in the UFW, these workers work and live in deplorable conditions. Sakuma Brothers Farms provides the workers with what the company calls "cabins," which are really shacks. These small dwellings form labor camps where the workers and their families live in crowded, dirty conditions. The shacks are small, incredibly hot during the day, and cold at night. There is substandard furniture and mattresses, bedbugs are a recurring problem in the camps and bathrooms are located in a different area. Up to half of what workers make is deducted from their paychecks to pay off the debt they owe for the housing. Sometimes, there is barely enough money left over to pay for the gas they need to drive to work. Sakuma Brothers Farms is proof that company towns are not a thing of the past.

Similar to business practices of companies that ran company towns years ago, the work itself is divided by ethnicity. The piece rate workers are mostly from Oaxaca, Mexico. Many of them don't speak Spanish but instead speak indigenous Mixtec and Triqui languages. Most supervisors are mestizo, the main crop supervisors are white and the executives are either Japanese or white. This stratification is nothing new in the agricultural industry but it is intentional. It is not uncommon for the indigenous piece rate workers to be derisively called "oaxaquita," "indio," and "estupido." This abuse and intimidation compelled the workers to root a number of their demands in respect and dignity. The strike, after all, is about much more than wages.

Rosalinda Guillen and others from Community to Community rushed to the defense of the workers, helping them craft a list of demands. Community to Community organizer Tomas Madrigal said that "the wage is the most important demand," adding that there are a number of other important issues at stake. Sakuma Brothers Farms has a piece rate wage for the blueberries picked at 30 cents per pound. This makes it nearly impossible for the workers to make the state's minimum wage of $9.19 an hour in an eight-hour shift. They find themselves running through the fields, and rushing to pick as much as possible, only to fall far short of the minimum wage. Miners who work in the field are paid even less.

The first strike was successful in reinstating Federico Lopez, pressuring management to remove a particularly abusive crew boss and getting management to look into issues of wage theft and negotiate a process to decide a better wage. They would not budge on much else, prompting the 200 workers to strike again. Union busting consultants were brought up from California to intimidate the workers, but the tactic failed to dissuade the workers from continuing with the strike and negotiations.

The workers soon learned that management was looking into bringing up workers with H-2A visas, reserved for temporary or seasonal agricultural workers, for the August blueberry harvest. Madrigal believes that the company will use these workers as scabs in an attempt to break the strike. "It's our analysis that the company will use the H-2A visa to go after this workforce." Many of the workers from Oaxaca have returned for the strawberry and blueberry harvest every season for the last several years. There was a strike in 2004 and another in 2011. The workers gained little from the strikes and many were fired for complaining of their treatment and low wages.

This strike however may be different. Although Rosalinda Guillen and others from Community to Community have done much to assist the workers and participate in negotiations, organization within the workforce has existed for quite some time. The workers are still non-unionized but are in effect acting as a union and taking bold actions that are rarely seen in the trade union movement today. It may sound surprising but the workers have no history or experience in union organizing. "For people that say they never experienced organizing, they learned really quickly," said Madrigal in an interview. He continued by describing the democratic decision-making process of the workers, calling it "very transparent." All major issues that have to be decided on are translated into three languages.

Some of the striking workers at Sakuma Brothers Farms. Photo: Star Angelina Murray

The workers recently decided to strike under the name Familias Unidas Para la Justicia (United Families for Justice) as they see the struggle of workers on the job as a larger struggle for the living conditions, dignity and justice of entire families. Because of the increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border in recent years, many of these workers and their families are here to stay. There are organizations that exist to assist Oaxacans and maintain a connection with their home. One such organization is the Frente Indígena Oaxaqueña Binacional (Oaxaca Indigenous Binational Front). The Front and the striking workers met in July. The Front was created in California in 1987 to connect indigenous Oaxacans all along the migratory labor route from Oaxaca to the Pacific Northwest. The network established by the Front is as much a political and economic one as it is cultural.

Oaxaca, after all, is a place of political renewal and revolt. It was there that an uprising occurred in 2006. Initially triggered by a teachers strike, a popular uprising developed and the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (or APPO as it is abbreviated in Spanish) was formed. The APPO helped create a form of direct democracy and self-government in Oaxaca during the uprising. The bordering state of Chiapas is home to the Zapatistas who rose up in 1994 after they declared that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a "death sentence to the indigenous people of Mexico." Is it possible that although the striking workers in the Pacific Northwest are 3,000 miles away from their home and similarly detached from the social movements there, that there is some continuity of struggle, of standing up for justice against great odds?

Over 100 years ago, another Oaxacan named Ricardo Flores Magon traveled north of the border to stand up for dignity and justice. He became one of the leaders, or "anti-leaders," of the Mexican Revolution. He joined the IWW and organized a multiracial fighting force to venture into and fight in Mexico. Like the UFW, the IWW focused much of its work on organizing agricultural workers in the early 1900s. The union set up the Agricultural Workers Organization to organize migrant farm workers in every kind of farm imaginable. In Washington state, the IWW organized in the fields, docks and timber industry.

There is hope that these farm workers, with no history of organization, may find victory in their struggle, much like the UFW at Chateau Sainte Michelle Winery. Their Oaxacan native son, Ricardo Flores Magon, had this to say about the conditions of Oaxacans and other Mexicans in 1910:

"While the poor acquiesce to being poor, while the oppressed acquiesce to being slaves there will be no liberty, there will be no progress. But when discord tempts the hearts of the humble, when it comes and tells them that while they suffer their masters rejoice, and that we all have a right to rejoice and to live, the passions then blaze and they destroy and create at the same time, ravage and cultivate, demolish and build. Blessed be discord!"

The hearts of the humble Familias Unidas Para la Justicia at Sakuma Brothers Farms are attempting to demolish the dismal conditions of their labor. In doing this they are cultivating a newer and more democratic form of work through their strike. "Viva la Huelga!" is the call of the hour. And although victory currently hangs in the balance, there is much the labor movement can learn from these striking workers and the long tradition of struggle they come from in Oaxaca.

For more information, updates and to donate, visit http://www.foodjustice.org.

Special

IWW Returns To The Railroad With ULP Strike

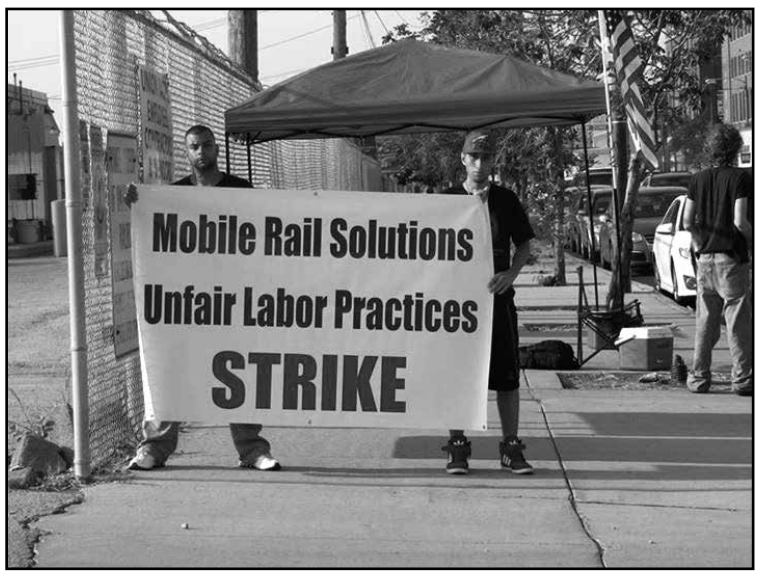


Photo: IWW Mobile Rail Workers Union

Continued from 1

organizing was something entirely different from what he was used to.

"When you're organizing power with a different type of target (e.g. environmental struggles), the only repercussions are with corporations," said Owen. He was quick to add that with workplace organizing, things become more risky when you are fighting the "people that hold power to your food and clothing." Organizing and struggle, and the risks involved with it, become tangible realities on a day-to-day basis.

Some of these realities have unraveled in painful ways for the workers. Rail yards are dangerous places to work, with engines and trains going in every direction, in every weather condition imaginable in the Windy City. The workers at Mobile Rail Solutions service engines, so their job entails bringing oil, water, traction sand and sanitary service to train engines. Cleaning, maintenance and welding are also part of the job.

In the last year, management cut back the hours of workers who had been with the company longer, and shifted from two-person crews to one-person crews, making the work much more difficult and dangerous. In April, the company announced that workers would have to buy their own safety equipment. To add insult to injury, the company has a history of favoring white workers with promotions and higher wages, sometimes $6 more an hour than the majority Black and Latino workforce. With these conditions, it should be no surprise that there is a constant revolving door on the job.

The IWW seemed like a natural fit for the workers. "I like the do-it-yourself model. If people form their own union, they won't have that pie in the sky concept," said Owen. He noted that workers often view trade unions, or business unions, as saviors, even though "they take dues, they don't fight for you; they just sit there." Owen also found that the role of a worker-organizer, as opposed to an outside paid organizer that many business unions rely on, helped in forming a legitimately democratic and grassroots union and with it more solidarity and trust between the workers.

With the democratic nature of the IWW also comes the much larger picture of industrial unionism. In an industry that has a workforce carved up by multiple unions that are shackled to the interests of business by no-strike clauses in their contracts, the IWW offers a model that cuts down the divisions created by different trades by encouraging workers to act as a class with common interests. Because of the unique role these Wobblies play in their industry, locomotives that were not serviced continued to pile up in several Chicago rail yards in the first day of the strike. Sam Green emphasized that the union "is planning for the long haul and we desperately need help with the strike fund."

Located just north of Chicago, a city that gave birth to the IWW in 1905, the eight-hour workday, the Haymarket martyrs and so much else that shaped the landscape of labor and social movements in the United States, the IWW Mobile Rail Workers Union has much to offer in a way forward for railroad workers. There is no telling what the success of the IWW will mean for the broader railroad industry.

To support these fellow workers, please donate to the strike fund: http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mobile-rail-workers-strike-fund.

Stay tuned to http://www.iww.org for updates.

Day 4 of the strike on Aug. 4. Photo: IWW Mobile Rail Workers Union

The Parallels Between The Sisters' Camelot & Jimmy John's Anti-Union Campaigns: Part 1

Continued from 1

many. Interestingly, however, the collective's union-busting strategies are disturbingly similar to the last public campaign of the Twin Cities IWW, which was at a local Jimmy John's fast food franchise—despite the difference in mission, structure and culture of the businesses.

As members of the IWW and the enduring Jimmy John's Workers Union (JJWU), we feel the need to identify these common strategies for busting unions and the ways they have been used by both Jimmy John's and the collective at Sisters' Camelot. Our hope is that this perspective will help clarify the present situation and encourage the collective and supporters of Sisters' Camelot to recognize the SCCU as a positive force capable of improving the sustainability and integrity of the organization that our communities value so enormously.

At Jimmy John's, workers organized under the radar, building the committee and taking action on the shop floor from early 2007 until September 2010, when the JJWU announced itself to management. Shortly thereafter, we filed for a union certification election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to force our bosses to negotiate with us. During this period, our union experienced a barrage of union-busting tactics by the bosses and their paid anti-union consultants. Fortunately, the IWW has already consolidated decades of experience into organizer trainings that provide workers with an idea of what to expect from an anti-union drive, and it's surprisingly consistent in any kind of shop. With the strike and subsequent anti-union efforts unfolding at Sisters' Camelot, we recognized immediately the eerily similar actions and statements made by the collective and their supporters. After the retaliatory firing of one union canvasser, we both became alarmed and felt the urgent need to draw attention to these commonalities between the management team at our corporate franchise and the collective at this non-profit organization. We want to encourage our community members and others sympathetic to non-profit missions to analyze this struggle in terms of class, which has been something most have failed to do. This can be challenging because of the emotional connections many in the community have to the organization, its mission, and to collectivism as a radical endeavor. But the reality of the situation is clear: an organization cannot be anti-authoritarian when it defends its own stark hierarchies.

Here we have listed some of these common union-busting strategies, and below we discuss the ways in which they have been used both at Jimmy John's and at Sisters' Camelot. We were surprised and disappointed to hear them from the Sisters' Camelot collective, but that only reaffirms their position as bosses and makes clear the need for the canvassers to stand strong as a union.

A few of the things bosses will say include:

• "Unions have a place but not at our workplace."

• "This business is like a family and is different than most companies."

• "This is the first we have heard of your concerns. If we had known, we would have gladly made things better. You can use existing ways to engage with the business so we can fix problems by working together. We will do things to show our appreciation of you and make it easier for you to come to us."

• "We are workers, too. We have worked hard to build this business and deserve your respect. Your organizing is hurtful to us. We are victims of your organizing."

• "This union drive could cause the business to close. We simply can't afford to have a union."

• "The IWW is an aggressive organization with scary politics that is using you to achieve its political agenda. They will harass you and trick you. We can protect you from them."

• "There is a certain individual that is causing problems for all of us. They are hostile, manipulative and disruptive, and they are destroying our relationship with you. They have ulterior motives. We will all be better off without them."

and finally...

• The Dirty Truth: The Bosses Will Lie.

Unions have a place but not at our workplace.

We call this the "not in my backyard" excuse. Bosses will often attempt to legitimize their anti-union position by claiming that they have experience with unions or support unions for certain jobs or in certain kinds of workplaces. They explain to workers that a union is not appropriate at their workplace or that they don't need one because they are different or because they have a unique opportunity to work together. Even at Jimmy John's, a franchise of a corporation, claimed this by saying that it was a certain kind of work for a certain kind of people.

At Sisters' Camelot, the managing collective has also stated they are not anti-union and that they wish to find an "alternative" solution to the labor strife in the organization, one which does not "jeopardize" their collective values. They think they are somehow different or unique enough that a union is not needed. Of course, Sisters' Camelot and Jimmy John's are different, but not in a way that means its workers should not organize themselves. In fact, based on its mission, Sisters' Camelot should be more willing to negotiate in order to support social justice for workers. Failing to do so is hypocritical and defends hierarchies within the workplace.

Our bosses at Jimmy John's said we weren't a "real union," and one manager even accused the union members of being a bunch of alcoholics too lazy to get real jobs. Ironically enough, Rob Czernick, a supporter of the collective, stated in a collective meeting that he supported "real workers and real unions, not a bunch of people who work a couple days a week for party money." When we heard this, we had a very eerie feeling of déjà vu.

In reality, unions are for all workers. In particular, the IWW doesn't shy away from supporting workers in any job, including those who are in low-paying and precarious jobs like fast food or contracted positions. Every worker has the right to organize with other workers in order to improve their working conditions and to challenge power imbalances in the workplace, including the canvassers at Sisters' Camelot.

This business is like a family and is different than most companies.

In many ways, Sisters' Camelot is very different from most businesses. It is a non-profit organization, has a mission that uses direct action to support poor communities, and supports healthy living on a healthy planet. It is also managed by a collective which is deeply involved with and committed to certain kinds of work done by the organization. Of course, it is still a business and, like most other business, has bosses. Bosses control hiring and firing, determine the terms and conditions of work including pay, and control how the work is organized.

At Jimmy John's, there is a hierarchy of bosses that includes assistant and general managers, area managers, owners, corporate auditors, and Jimmy himself. Sisters' Camelot operates differently, with its collective serving as a management team that makes decisions based on consensus. While this is applauded by many radicals for various reasons (and is a process we both value under certain circumstances), it doesn't change the fact that the canvassers are excluded from the decision-making process entirely. While canvassers can attend meetings and voice their opinions, they have no vote. This puts them in an uncomfortable and vulnerable position that creates a power differential that operates just like the one we experience at Jimmy John's, where we feel left out, ignored, and disrespected—not like a family.

Note: Part 2 will appear in the October Industrial Worker.

Special

Reviving A Working-Class Tradition At Work People's College

By X370471

From 1921 to 1941, the IWW had an official school, dubbed Work People's College (WPC), in Duluth, Minn. During the course of its 20 years of existence, hundreds of workers attended the school and learned how to be effective and militant organizers. In 2012, the tradition of WPC was revived, and this year the IWW held its second consecutive WPC at Mesaba Co-op Park in Hibbing, Minn.

From July 12 through July 16, over 100 rank-and-file Wobblies from across the United States and Canada converged at one of Minnesota's 10,000 lakes for the 2013 IWW Work People's College. Here they partook in a tradition that runs deep in the IWW, the building of militant, working-class organizers prepared to bring about real change in the world.

Photo: X370471

The WPC has been resurrected from its slumber in order to strengthen IWW branches by equipping a new, diverse generation of leaders with the tools they need to fight and win the next battles in the class struggle. Though not enough time has yet passed to be able to fully realize the effect of the 2013 WPC on the class struggle, I believe that time will show its merit. Despite this, just the high spirits of many Wobblies upon returning to their branches following WPC is promising unto itself. In the words of one of this year's participants: "It's amazing how less tolerant you are of your boss's mouth, your first day back to work after attending the WPC."

But how exactly does WPC promote and achieve these goals?

First, WPC is set up as a five-day intensive training program that any organizer, experienced or not, can learn much from. From 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day, the attendees were in workshops. These great workshops covered a variety of topics including Dismantling Patriarchy & Capitalism; Membership Development; Strike/Strike Solidarity; Branch Administration; Labor Law 102; Media; Power/Privilege on the Committee; and so on. These workshops are continually being developed and refined and new workshops are bound to appear.

WPC 2013 also featured some guest speakers from struggles around the world, including representatives of the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ), a student union federation, which recently won a large-scale fight against tuition hikes in Québec (if you're interested in student syndicalism and are a student, make sure to check out the Montréal Student Movement Convention 2014, as well as the work of Ellen David Friedman, who spoke about workers' struggles in China).

The other essential ingredient that WPC used to achieve its goals was a healthy degree of rest. The class struggle is hard work. Most of us have seen a fellow worker get burnt out; perhaps we have even experienced burnout ourselves. Instead of promoting the burnout of the most committed among us, WPC is wise enough to encourage a healthy approach to organizing wherein organizers work hard, but also make sure that they take an ample amount of rest time. The time spent simply socializing with fellow workers from all over the United States and Canada is a rejuvenating experience, allowing participants to re-enter the class struggle at full strength upon returning to their respective branches. The friendships built at WPC will, with all luck, last for a lifetime of struggle.

Wobblies on canoes. Photo: X370471

WPC ran parallel to the Junior Wobblies summer camp as well. The Junior Wobblies summer camp is a great way for parents to be able to attend WPC parallel to their children. The exploits of this year's Junior Wobs included occupying a paper airplane factory, attracting the attention of a group of fascist strike breakers. When the fascists attempted to take the paper airplane factory from the workers, the Junior Wobblies constructed a formidable barricade and repelled the fascist force with a bitter water balloon fight. It goes without saying that the stalwart effort of the Junior Wobblies carried the day and saved the WPC!

In my humble opinion, WPC was a success, and it is only bound to get better. Needless to say, WPC is a great experience and I encourage any Wobbly to attend and add more tools to their tool belt. Try to get a spot at the 2014 WPC! There is limited space, though provisions are made to allow at least two dedicated people from each branch to attend as of now. In addition to the WPC in Minnesota, there is also a WPC in Europe planned for summer 2014! Like all things though, the operation of this great union function requires money. Please consider donating or joining the "Committee of 100" through their website, http://www.workpeoplescollege.org. As "Big Bill" Haywood used to end his letters: help the work along. And a great way to do so is to make sure that the WPC continues as a union tradition.

Life-Long Wobblies

WPC participants relax. Photo: Erik Davis

Continued from 1

and supporting Wobbly parents; finding life partners and maintaining those relationships; overcoming burnout, mild and severe depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness; struggling with work, criminal records, lack of money or jobs, housing problems, prison, deportation, retirement; and more. As we invent collective solutions to these highly personal problems, we are forced to be honest with ourselves about what it really takes to be a life-long revolutionary.

Junior Wobblies

As we examined various collective solutions to life planning, we discovered that the single best "long-term plan" is already in full bloom: it's the Junior Wobblies! A youth and family component to the IWW addresses an infinite amount of concerns, and is fun too. The first Junior Wobblies camp took place last summer, July 1 through July 5, 2012, at Mesaba. The Junior Wobblies camp is run by parents, counselors and increasingly by the Junior Wobblies themselves. Junior Wobblies programming runs at the same time as Work People's College workshops, giving Wobbly parents the opportunity to participate in Junior Wobblies activities, attend workshops or do a combination of both!

For this year's Junior Wobblies camp, we dreamt up an extended role play to get the kids doing the principles of the IWW. We did this by preparing a "Spanish Revolution" theme and using "living history"—playing dress-up and reenacting (an inspired version of) Spanish Civil War history. We tied the activities together with the idea that the kids were an anarchist youth collective building toward the revolution of 1936. We discussed regimentation and racism in the schools. We discussed how boring "robot" schools prepare kids for boring "robot" jobs. We practiced breaking down racial barriers and standing up to bullies. We worked in a mind-numbing paper airplane plant and had silent agitators encourage other youth to fight for the good things in life: "Stop cleaning the litter box and read!" "No—Sleep! Yes—Swim!" "Eat the rich and your pizza!" "Stand up to the bullies and join the Junior Wobblies!" "Capitalism sucks!! Join the Junior Wobblies!" We sewed red-and-black neckerchiefs and practiced union songs. And we defeated the fascists at the barricades thanks to disciplined production of water balloon munitions and the creativity, unity and spirit of the workers in battle.

Instead of instructing the kids in "politics," the trick was to get them to feel what we feel as class-conscious workers. By using living history, role plays and interactive scenarios, the kids get to use their own thinking to arrive at their own conclusions. Simulations such as the barricade activity allow people to make mistakes and learn from them ahead of time while preparing for the real thing. Many of the kids won't fully grasp the ideology behind the barricade activity, but they will remember the experience, the process and how it made them feel. The adventure of fighting alongside the "union" and the Junior Wobblies against these people called "fascists" and then singing "Solidarity Forever" and "A las Barricadas" in triumph—these are not political ideas. They are visceral sensations that will stay with them for a long time.

Photo: Warren CE

The secret is that adults need to have multi-sensory experiences, too. Adults learn the same way children do; it's just less embarrassing if we can pretend the dress-up is for the kids. Educating children, or adults, in IWW values is not about convincing ourselves intellectually. It's about creating experiences that engender the positive feelings of solidarity and cooperation while practicing good habits like befriending people who are different than you and standing up to the bullies together. The Junior Wobblies talked about how we needed to demonstrate the principle of solidarity by helping each other and having each other's backs while showing each other kindness and respect if we were going to organize successfully for the revolution. The Junior Wobblies lived the principle of solidarity all week long. Older kids helped younger kids participate in activities. Veteran Junior Wobblies helped new recruits learn the ropes at Mesaba, and the kids took care of each other if one of them was hurt or upset. It's easy to feel a sense of solidarity when working with the Junior Wobblies, and supporting our union parents is the best way to transform the IWW into the organization we all want to see.

The New IWW

At Mesaba this year, and in every branch, we have ample real-world evidence of the phenomenon of life-planning or the lack thereof. We had organizers who were stressed out, broken down, and burning out fast. We also had fellow workers who were working their plan, staying healthy, and supporting others to do the same. But the days of leaving our members to "sink or swim" on their own are coming to an end. As a union, we must find collective solutions to the challenges our members face. The more we transition to a family-oriented, healthy-habit, long-term-planning IWW the better we are going to be at building and sustaining life-long Wobblies.

Reviews

Wu Ming Express Values, Desires For A Better World

Wu Ming. Altai. *Italy: Einaudi, 2009. Paperback, 411 pages, $17.15.*

By Nate Hawthorne

Wu Ming—a pseudonym for a group of Italian authors—sometimes describe themselves as a band, just a band that makes novels instead of albums. Whatever you call it, the key bit is that these people write together and what they write is awesome. Wu Ming themselves have a fascinating history, which is so interesting it would take up too much room here to do it justice, crowding out the book, but I encourage you to check out the Wikipedia entry on them. Pay particular attention to the account of the Luther Blissett Project. Also I should mention that the group remains active in the Italian far left after many years, which means they write from a place of outrage at injustice and desire for a better world.

All of their work that has been translated into English is historical fiction. Wu Ming's novels "Manituana," about Native Americans who side with the British during the American war of independence, and "Q," about peasant revolutionaries during the Protestant Reformation in Germany, are two of my all-time favorite books. I gave "Q" to my dad for Christmas a few years ago. My dad has a high school education, works in construction and is definitely not a radical. I love the guy but we don't have a lot in common. I really wanted to have this novel in common with him so I wanted him to like it and I worried that he wouldn't. When I asked what he thought of it he said, "Awesome book. Seriously awesome, I couldn't put it down." Good taste runs in the family.

Graphic: gdsp.wordpress.com

I just read "Altai," Wu Ming's newest novel. "Altai" is also the name of a falcon used in hunting. If I knew what kind of sound those birds make when excited, and I knew how to type out that sound, I would do so now. I hope it suffices to say "hell yeah." This is a great book. (Don't tell my dad but "Altai"'s gonna be his birthday gift this year.)

"Altai" picks up after "Q" and the central character of "Q"—a German radical who passed through many an uprising—appears in "Altai" as well. The book's main character is a spy for Venice who is set up to take a fall for political purposes right at the novel's beginning and ends up working for his former enemies. I don't want to spoil any of the plot points so let me just say that he undergoes important personal transformations and becomes embroiled in further intrigue and military expeditions.

"Altai" is a spy novel, full of gripping suspense and tension. There's enough mystery to captivate, but it never gets confusing. And while there are militant moments, this is not a book that glorifies war—far from it. The book expresses a profound skepticism that military measures can achieve human liberation, and rightly so in my view.

Wu Ming. Graphic: versobooks.com

The book is set largely in Constantinople, contemporary Istanbul. As Istanbul's been the scene of vile repression and heroic protest lately, it seems to me that the publication of "Altai" in English is appropriately timed. While the earlier book, "Q," had more scenes of ordinary people in rebellion than "Altai," "Altai" is still concerned with issues of power and social change. If the world is a chess board, we are the front row, the pawns, and they the back row, the kings, queens, bishops, who are willing to see us suffer and die for petty rivalry and profit. Except at its edges, "Altai" doesn't depict people in rebellion against their positions, but rather it focuses on the people in power and the terrible things they are willing to do. The sympathies of the novel, however, lie with the pawns, or with the movements that aim to kick the board off the table and begin a new game altogether.

The book is resonant with the present moment as well because of the central role that Jewish identity, anti-Semitism and struggles for a Jewish homeland play in the novel. I would describe the novel as anti-Zionist and anti-racist, which is to say, certainly not anti-Semitic. This theme is obviously relevant to the present given continuing conflicts and tensions, as well as popular rebellions, in the Middle East and the role of Israel and U.S. support for Israel in shaping that region.

I often feel unsophisticated as a reader of fiction (I read for enjoyment, not profundity), so I'm not totally sure about this, but I think the falcon, the Altai of the novel's title and a few scenes, is a symbol. At one point in "Altai," a character named Ismail, the revolutionary who was the main character in "Q," argues that the methods used in a struggle shape its goals: "If you want to catch a hare, whether you hunt it with hounds or with a falcon, on foot or on horseback, it will always be a hare. Freedom, on the other hand, never remains the same; it changes according to the way you hunt. And if you train dogs to catch it for you, you may just bring back a doggy kind of freedom." The novel's narrator, as a spy, then former spy, then spy for another master, is not a dog. He's a kind of falcon, with more freedom and sophistication than a hunting dog. And yet, falcons are leashed and hooded by the hunters who own them, and hunters set their agenda and take the results of the hunt. The narrator finds a limited kind of freedom and fulfilment via playing that role, but at significant cost. He tells Ismail, "Machiavelli wrote that you must keep your eye on the end, not the means." Ismail replies, "Over the years I've learned that the means change the end." Perhaps the difference between dogs and altai is not so great; if our route to freedom involves hoods and leashes, it may end up not being the freedom we wanted.

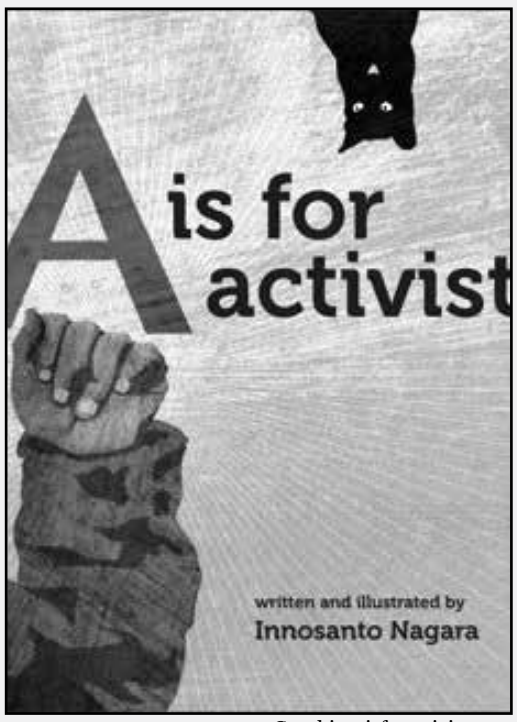
"Altai" is a rich novel and not a simplistic political fable, so I don't want to reduce the book to a simple set of political lessons. Instead, I would like to end by talking about the importance of stories like this. As radicals, I think we need stories that express our values, both our hopes and our outrages, our desires for a better world and our rejection of this world. Wu Ming writes those kinds of stories.

Book For Kids On ABCs Of Activism

Nagara, Innosanto. A is for Activist. *Oakland: Kupu Kupu Press, 2012. Board book, 28 pages, $8.99.*

By Zakk Flash

For radical parents, it sometimes feels like the deck is stacked when it comes to kids' media that represents progressive values. Children's books often tokenize girls, depend on stereotypes, and push kids into fulfilling narrow gender roles. Diverse families are hard to find—most mainstream kids' books feature all white kids living with two heterosexual parents. For those who want to help raise feminist, cooperative, anti-racist, and anti-authoritarian children, the challenge can be daunting.



Graphic: aisforactivist.com

Innosanto Nagara, a founding member of Design Action Collective, a worker-owned cooperative design studio in Oakland, wanted a book to teach his son the ABCs—and the principles that drove his activism. "It was important to me that the book be one that I too would enjoy reading over and over—not something I'd want to hide after day three, even if my son loved it," he said.

The result? An abecedarium called "A is for Activist." This ABC board book captivates, educates, and agitates the children that activists raise.

Far from the usual fare that kids read—stories of helpless (anorexic) princesses being saved by rich (white) men on horses—Nagara brings a simple book with complex underlying meaning, weaving mentions of the Occupy movement, LGBTQ rights, unionism, feminism and Malcolm X with gorgeous illustration.

Like any other ABC book, alliteration acts as an anchor, keeping little ears attuned to the story's message. The rhyme schemes are fun, even if some of the concepts seem outside the grasp of a young audience. But the opportunity to re-read as children grow and explain the concept of, say, May Day, is exactly what Nagara was looking for. "I wanted this book for the quieter, more intimate time I spend with my child," he says.

While this is truly a book to be celebrated in the home, it has garnered some very public praise. Author Naomi Klein called the book "full of wit, beauty, and fun!" Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Global Exchange and Code Pink, said the book gave "a message that is sure to resonate with kids, who have an innate sense of fairness."

For progressive activists, this book provides an opportunity to foster that sense of fairness. Parents who want to raise their kids to raise their fists would do well to get them started with "A is for Activist."

Reviews

Building A Solidarity Network Is Harder Than It Seems

Build Your Own Solidarity Network. *Seattle Solidarity Network, 2011. Pamphlet, 44 pages. Available online: http://libcom.org/library/you-say-you-want-build-solidarity-network.*

By R. Spourgitis

The Seattle Solidarity Network (SeaSol) is a "workers' and tenants' mutual support organization that fights for specific demands using collective direct action." SeaSol has a dedication to direct action and emphasis on empowering workers and tenants, and they have a very high success rate. Given this, the "SeaSol Model" seems to embody an inspiring new mode of class struggle for the increasingly precarious working class, so it is no wonder it has been exported all over the world and become a popular project for many anarchists and other anti-capitalists in particular.

The 2011 pamphlet "Build Your Own Solidarity Network," written by SeaSol members Cold B and T Barnicle details SeaSol's strategy for taking on fights (the pamphlet is online at http://libcom.org/library/you-say-you-want-build-solidarity-network).

In November 2010 a group of us in Iowa City, Iowa, began forming a solidarity network. Thinking strategically about what you can or cannot accomplish in a project, and the steps taken to get there, were not things I was used to when we started our own solidarity network. Building a solidarity network was part of an important shift in my politics. It meant going from issue-based activism and one-off campaigns or protests to direct action work on immediate economic demands at the point of exploitation. This work aligns with IWW practice. The descriptions of demand-delivery and section titled "Agitate – Educate – Organize" will be familiar to those who have been through the Organizer Training 101.

The guide has nuts-and-bolts information about group-based tasking and organization, which many of us spend years learning the hard way. Granted, only reading about it falls short of doing it, but the importance of these lessons should not be understated. Seemingly small items like encouraging group members to take on key tasks, following up with them, and running efficient, well-moderated meetings are necessary to a functioning organization of any sort, and it is refreshing to see this plainly laid out.

My experience building a solidarity network in Iowa City differed substantially from what was described by the SeaSol organizers in this pamphlet. There were difficulties we did not anticipate, and while we did not expect to adapt the model whole cloth to our area and be immediately successful, there were recurrent issues that hampered our ability to build fights from the network that the pamphlet does not address. I suspect that our experiences with this solidarity network model are not wholly unique and I hope that others will write more about their experiences with these types of projects so that we may refine our strategies and tactics. In Iowa City, we experienced tensions within the solidarity network model and these experiences are probably similar to others who have not had the successes with this model that Seattle has.

"People wanting to know how SeaSol got started often ask whether we had funding, whether we had an office, or whether we had extensive legal knowledge. We had none of these things, and we didn't need them."

It is a strength of the model that a solidarity network can begin with few existing resources. One thing the pamphlet stresses is that a key strategy to success is identifying what you can win, which is perhaps harder than it sounds and often requires a kind of resource. Specifically, it requires at least some legal knowledge of tenants' and workers' rights. In Iowa City, not having much familiarity with the specifics of our state and local law, particularly housing, quickly became a problem. We realized early that we needed to know if what people were contacting the solidarity network about could be built into a fight, and the law was a factor in this. Through online research we found relevant housing code and labor law information to our area. We then produced a booklet that went into an on-call book of sorts, with a notepad for people's information, and a list of area aid agencies.

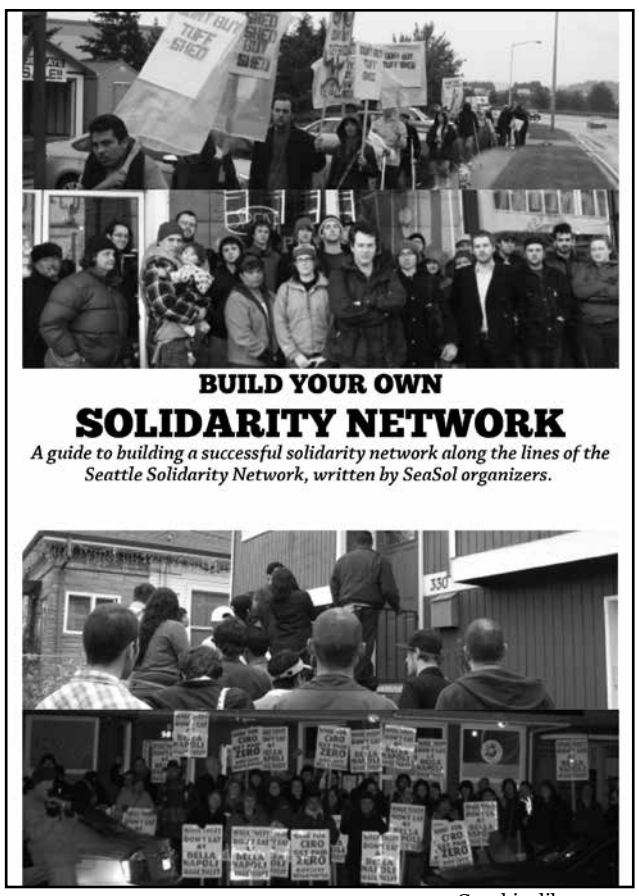
The vast majority of our calls were housing related—around 90-95 percent of them. It became apparent that the tenants contacting us were usually not experiencing illegal actions on the part of their landlords, such as refusal to renew leases, hiking rents with lease renewals, giving bad referrals or threatening to call the police for minor infractions. In our area these are legal actions, even as they are terribly exploitative and oppressive for these tenants. As the SeaSol model is based on being winnable, this meant not taking on these cases. The emphasis on taking on "winnable fights" in effect translated to fighting against illegal actions and it was rare that this was blatantly the case.

"...the activists who started the project did not have to see ourselves as something separate from the group we wanted to organize. We were part of that group."

The solidarity network model seeks to embody the principle of "solidarity not charity." The fact that we work together as fellow tenants and workers to put pressure on those bosses and landlords screwing us over, instead of mediating through official channels, is a powerful thing. In practice, I found this is somewhat misleading about the realities of this work. Contrary to the principle underlying the model, we often fell into a distinctively service-led approach. None of the organizers' workplaces or housing situations were built into fights, and so instead of fighting where we live and work, we ended up trying to assist others to fight where they live and work. We encouraged those who contacted us to become involved in the network, but this was never sustained beyond a meeting or two. One lesson here may be that when an individual meets with a network devoted to resolving their grievance—even if this network has a combative class-struggle approach—he or she is not unfairly expecting specialists of some kind. If the network explains that it does not specialize in this particular grievance, that does not change what the individual is expecting from that network.

This service role was exactly what most people who contacted us expected from us. It was notable that when we told contacts we want to follow their lead and described the demand delivery and escalating tactics approach, there was a sudden drop-off in interest. Although the authors of the SeaSol pamphlet say "people who have taken the initiative to contact us are more likely to be people who are prepared to play an active role in a campaign," our experience was almost anything but this.

There were a handful of people we met with who had very clear, winnable-sounding fights. In these instances, the individual either handled it themselves or went through another channel to resolve his or her grievance. There were also those who contacted us and we waited too long to respond. Sometimes, we followed up with them immediately and never heard back. Given the immediacy of their need and seriousness of the living situation, it was understandable that we were not always equipped to help, even in a charitable, service-led capacity.



Graphic: libcom.org

It should be pointed out that we were aware of these problems at the time. We worked on improving our response time. We did some of the things suggested in the guide, such as changing the wording on our flyers and flyering more consistently. Since we seemed to get many people in tough situations but which we couldn't help, we changed them from saying "Problems with your landlord?" to "Stolen deposits or unmade repairs?" This did not have an appreciable difference in the type or volume of calls we would receive.

Being that so many of the contacts were renting units in apartment complexes, something we discussed was the need to build collective action with committees of tenants from the apartments—much like described in the "Inside Organizing" section at the end of the guide. Unfortunately, we never connected with a single tenant willing or able to build such a committee, let alone a group of them. This is not to say those tenants are not out there, but they did not contact us.

Our area is like many places in the United States—there are no tenants' unions or associations. There is a Housing Authority directly complicit with the police and the major property management companies, and a handful of neighborhood associations devoted to immediate need programming and state social workers. As a result, there is little to no recourse for the injustices dealt to tenants. I have to wonder if such a lack of social services and mediation, as disempowering and meager as they are, differs from other places and led us to be expected as another service.

Additionally, our immediate region is undergoing big changes in its racial composition. As gentrifying efforts have stepped up in major metro areas, recent years have seen an increase in Black and Latino residents in Iowa City (67 percent and 97 percent increases respectively between 2000-2010). There is a more complicated picture behind these demographic shifts and their causes and effects than I can do justice to in this brief review. Still, it is clear that for many new residents to the area that the structural racism of local power is felt from the police, schools, city services, and, of course, in housing.

I illustrate this local context because nearly all of the few contacts we met with were Black women. Conversely, our solidarity network was made up of a majority male, entirely white grouping. This is not intended to lament our group's dynamics or to advocate retreating into inaction based on white guilt, but it would be dishonest to omit such marked differences of race and gender between solidarity network members and our contacts. This fact comes to mind when the authors suggest door-knocking and more heavily flyering apartment complexes with known problem landlords. At times we did flyer specific areas, but taking that recommendation to its fullest extent in my opinion would have amounted to some of the worst kind of white radical paternalism. While efforts were made to include the women we met within our organizing, these could have been stronger. However, an individual or two does not represent a community, and the divide of white radical activists and a majority people of color service community remain as a fact of this organizing experience.

The Iowa City Solidarity Network operated for a little more than a year. In that time, we learned about our area and the reality of engaging local struggles to a depth unappreciated before. Occupy Iowa City emerged in late 2011 and our efforts shifted to that project. Given the frustrating and lackluster experience of the solidarity network, it was something we decided to close in December of that year.

Reflecting on this model, I think there are aspects indicating more individualized service work than is appreciated, as the single individual with a legally legitimate grievance calls in for support and the solidarity network organizers act as specialists in struggle. There is more at work here than the SeaSol model, though. There are bigger issues with the project which span the anti-capitalist left: organizers lacking real connections to working-class communities—not forced or imaginary ones; the lack of a recent shared history of collectively fighting back; and the lack of a material support system for those willing to take risks in their jobs or living situations, to name a few.

The SeaSol model may be useful in other places. IWW people considering a solidarity network may want to find out what services already exist for tenants and workers in their area to determine if they are prepared to handle people in crisis mode looking to them for service and if they are equipped to mobilize a number of people for a public showing of solidarity. Additional questions or criteria are probably needed for an IWW branch to consider it, such as if fights will come from their own membership or outside. If the latter, how to handle people new to the IWW coming in for their workplace or housing grievance.

At this stage of class struggle, different approaches in different places are worth trying and a solidarity network might be a useful one indeed.


SeaSol organizers in action. Photo: libcom.org

I.W.W. Literature DEPARTMENT

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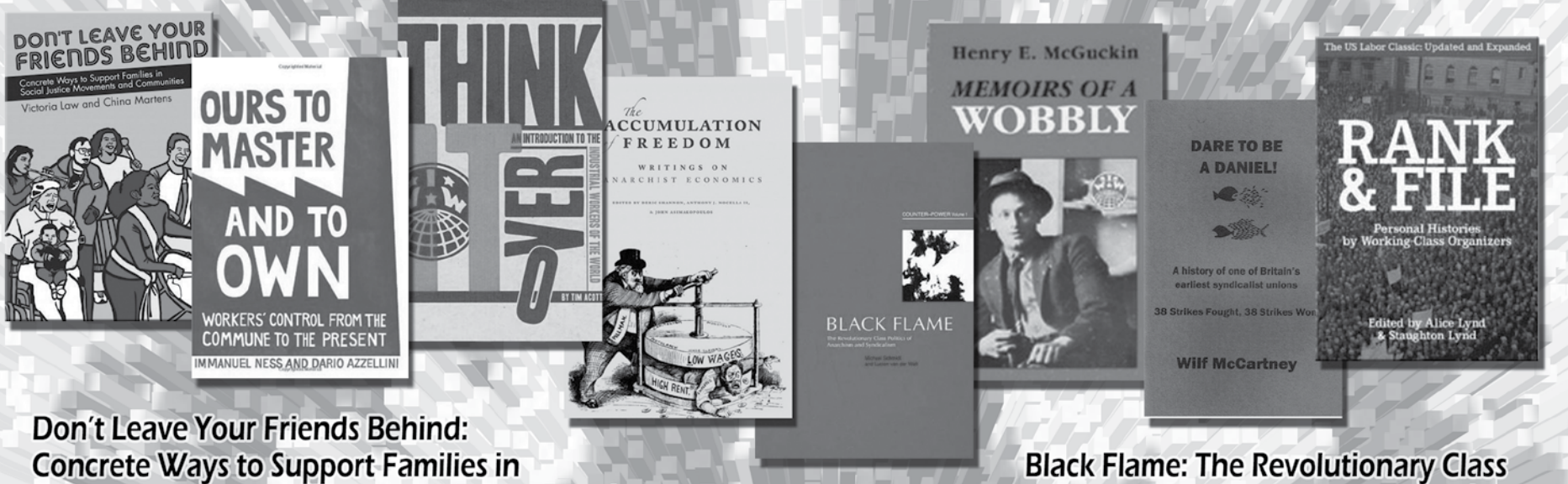

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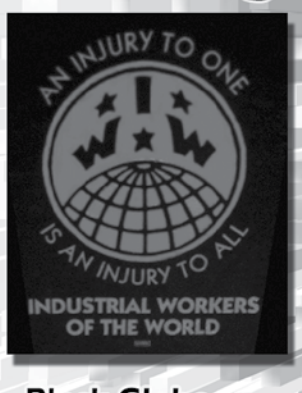

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Special

Trade Union Women: Creating A Path To Empowerment

By Jane LaTour

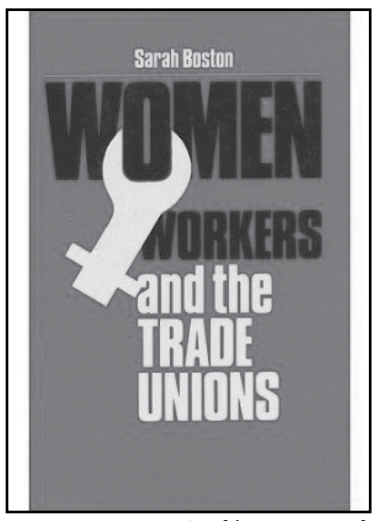
One of the joys of the 2010 British movie, "Made in Dagenham," comes from watching a working-class woman—a trade unionist—slowly discovering her ability to inspire other women to stand up to injustice and eventually lead them to victory. What adds to the fun is the fact that the story is based on real events—a strike in 1968 by sewing machinists working for the Ford Motor Company at the River Pant in the United Kingdom that led to the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1970.

A book launch in mid-March for "Gender and Leadership in Unions," a scholarly, comparative look at women in the United Kingdom and the United States, brought this film to mind and set off an exploration of their story and those of other factory women who took part in the fight against sex discrimination and for equality and power within their unions.

The stories of the fight for equal pay with men and the role of trade unionists and their allies in that struggle have receded in people's consciousness. Most women in both the United Kingdom and the United States know little about either the leaders or the foot soldiers who took part in these epic battles for the (1970) Equal Pay Act in the United Kingdom and the Equal Pay Act of 1963 in the United States.

Sarah Boston's "Women Workers and the Trade Unions," published in Great Britain in 1980, documents the history of women from 1874 to 1975. It's a lively account, lucidly written, with chapter titles such as, "Asking for Bread and Getting a Stone" (1923-1939), and "Be True to Us on Budget Day" (1950-1960). The last two chapters, "Little Indication of Progress" (1960-1968) and "You'll Have to do it Yourselves" (1968-1975), provide a vivid depiction of the possibilities brought about by women trade unionists of the Dagenham generation.

As Boston writes, "The early 1960s were curious years for women workers. They were transitory years between the conservation of the 1950s and the new militancy of which the strike of machinists at Fords, Dagenham, in 1968 marked the beginning." One important factor in laying the groundwork for militant dissent was the huge gap between women's rights in the public sector versus those of the private sector: "Sick pay and occupational pension schemes, maternity leave and greater job opportunities were all gains which public sector women benefited from but were notably absent for women in private industry," Boston writes. Another factor was the huge increase in the number of female members in trade unions affiliated with the Trades Union Congress (TUC)—women accounted for a full 70 percent of the increase between 1964 and 1970. As their numbers grew, women began to assert themselves within the trade union movement.



Graphic: amazon.co.uk

The summer of 1968 was a critically important milestone on a global basis—and a turning point for women workers. As Boston writes:

"In global terms the action of women at Ford's may have seemed quite insignificant, but in terms of the long struggle by women workers in Britain for equality it was highly significant. The fact that it was a strike of women in a very clearly defined area of women's work—machinists demanding that the value of their work be recognized—was important. Equally important, the women demonstrated their industrial strength by bringing Ford's Dagenham to a standstill. Although the strike was made official, it was very clearly a strike by women and for women, with very clear leadership from a well-organized, active women's strike committee. Whilst it was not unique for women to demand recognition of their worth or to bring work to a halt, the bringing of the mighty Ford's to a standstill by women machinists and the bringing in of Barbara Castle, the employment minister, to help negotiate a settlement attracted widespread attention to the strike. But it was the attention the strike drew from other women workers which was to give it its particular significance. Women had been growing impatient with the failure of the TUC and their unions to act in their interests, and the strike at Ford gave women a lead. Other women quickly realized that if they wanted to improve their lot they would have to do so themselves and persuade, drag, or demand support from their fellow trade unionists. The strike marked a radical turning point in the attitude of the women and men who formed the vanguard of the movement for women's equal rights. Obviously this change did not happen overnight, but the Ford's strike was the point from which the women's movement in the British labor movement 'took off.'"

For an analysis of the American counterpart to the British struggles documented by Sarah Boston, we look to Dorothy Sue Cobble's "The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America," published in 2004. Cobble's book carries the story of working-class women's activism or "labor feminism" forward from the 1940s through the comparable worth movement of the 1980s. Her analysis resurrects different variants of feminism and alternative visions of equality. This rich history explores the debate among trade union women over the fight for equal pay versus the broader, more expansive vision of comparable pay. She exhumes many previously unexplored corners and layers of female leadership in unions and allied organizations—and succeeds in documenting a vibrant socially and ethnically diverse movement for change.

From these two propitious thresholds, filled with possibilities and portents for progress, we move forward to the current assessment of women's position in trade unions as documented by the research that went into "Gender and Leadership in Unions." This is a collaborative product of British scholars Gill Kirton and Geraldine Healy, as editors and primary authors, and other academic researchers who made contributions to the project. In addition to the trade union women who took part in the study, 10 women from the United Kingdom and 10 from the United States traveled abroad (to New Jersey and London)—exchanging insights, experiences, and in the process, establishing bonds.

The book is expensive ($125 from Routledge Publishing)—filled with citations that connect to the scholarly research and written in clear, albeit academic language. But its utility is found in the baseline it provides for measuring the position of women and the issues they face in exerting their presence within their respective trade union movements.

The other quite useful function of the book is that it places the current research alongside earlier research and together, creates an overall, in-depth picture of the subject.

The good news is minimal—we learn what any active trade unionist on either side of the Atlantic knows, but with documentation and context—that women are still in the position of having to push an agenda that prioritizes female workers' needs and concerns, what the authors refer to as "gendered policies." As they write: "…historically the unions have done little to challenge the prevailing pattern of gender segregation so strongly connected to gender inequalities, and some even argue that unions have even contributed to it by their efforts to exclude women from the best jobs and maintain women's lower pay."

Still from "Made in Dagenham." Photo: film.britishcouncil.org

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Even with good reasons for changing the practices and behavior of male-dominated unions, resistance persists: "The structure of women's employment and the impact of family on women's employment participation make it clear that there is a distinct set of work issues that are of particular concern to women that the unions can no longer afford to ignore." The authors make the case for why it makes sense for unions to pay attention to gender-based issues: "There is a compelling argument on social justice grounds for unions to bargain and campaign vigorously at a variety of levels for improvements on behalf of women…The feminization of the labour market in recent decades means that there is also a business case for unions to develop and sustain gendered policies of attraction and retention." However, as they note, the timing for this agenda is bad: "It is obviously problematic that the debate about unions and gender equality is now taking place in the context of a weakened union movement."

Whatever happened to the push in the late 1970s and early 1980s for gender equality and shared power? Why are women still peddling over the same ground? The chapter on "Women Union Leaders: Influences, Routes, Barriers…" offers plenty of insights. Subjects speak about exclusionary experiences and the litany of these behaviors is long and familiar: "Well it's difficult just to be noticed…for us to say 'look we are here'…The barriers are that union officials either feel threatened or just don't buy into the equality issue… cannot deal with strong women and that's a real problem…etc."

Another familiar problem is the intersection of gender with race, "creating a hierarchy that distributes most leadership positions to white men, but that also privileges white women above women of color and other minority groups."

Despite the recurring barriers women must cope with, changes are evident—and the situation isn't unrelentingly depressing. "Some interviewees felt respected and supported by their male peers, with some stat[ing] that they did not feel marginalized at all in their unions. A significant number of respondents found that they gained respect once their male colleagues saw how competent they were. Some of these respondents stated they did not experience sexism in their unions, whilst others felt that their positive personal experiences co-existed with continued sexism in their union." While women in both the United States and the United Kingdom are underrepresented at the top of the unions and in their respective federations, the AFL-CIO and the TUC, some women, "notable exceptions," despite all odds, have succeeded in gaining top positions.

An interesting question is what, if any, role does political consciousness play in the lives of active trade union women leaders? Here, unsurprisingly, researchers found a sharp divergence between women in the United Kingdom and the United States when it comes to "the influence of explicit political ideology on their commitment to the union and their view of leadership. Most of the U.K. high-level women leaders we interviewed made links between the labour movement, the women's movement, class consciousness, and progressive politics…in describing the labour movement, one U.K. woman leader stated, '[The] tradition of internationalism is in our blood.'"

"In contrast, [A]lthough the U.S. high-level women leaders expressed deep commitment to the labour movement, they tended to identify their leadership philosophy as rooted in their personal ethics and involving a pursuit of individual fairness rather than related to larger issues of systematic injustice or power differentials," the researchers go on to say.

Now that the trade unions are almost flat on their backs and young people are sidelined as the shrinkage in labor's ranks marginalizes union membership, organizing at the workplace is coming back into vogue. As this piece is being written, thousands of fast-food workers are walking off their jobs, mounting one-day strikes to call attention to their poverty wages and lack of benefits. For employees of Walmart and other low-wage empires that pay their workers next to nothing and make their survival dependent upon government assistance programs, organizing collectively alongside a union becomes an option for America's new army of the under-employed.

Walking with eyes wide open into the ranks of labor is a necessity. An informed approach as this embrace is considered and being carried out is critical. Learning about the history, the limitations and the possibilities of a revitalized labor—or labour—movement becomes part of the tool kit for workers crafting novel approaches to challenge their working conditions. Knowledge is a form of power.

For young women trying to fathom their role in creating a path to empowerment, a trip to the British blog "Lipstick Socialist" (http://lipsticksocialist.wordpress.com) is highly recommended. It will provide an infusion of energy—a look at the traditions and the joy and power of collective action. The site, out of Manchester, links the trade union, feminist, and socialist traditions of Northwest Britain, and makes manifest what it means to be backed up by a conscious connection to the power of history.

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.

Workers Esperanto Convention In Madrid

By Brandon Oliver

Graphic: satesperanto.org

At the end of July and beginning of August, workers from five continents gathered in Spain to organize, debate, and enjoy the heat of a Madrid summer. The occasion was the annual convention of Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (SAT, or World Anational Association), an organization which uses the international language Esperanto to unite workers across national boundaries. Members came from Japan, Korea, Australia, the United States, Brazil, Madagascar, Russia, and many countries within the Eurozone. The huge variety of backgrounds amongst participants was not a problem, since they were able to communicate in a common language.

Many unions and sympathetic organizations sent greetings to the conference, including the IWW through our International Solidarity Commission. During the opening session I delivered the IWW's message, which quoted our Preamble and compared it with SAT's objective of promoting "the practical use of the international language Esperanto for the objectives of the worldwide working class." The message was enthusiastically received and, combined with a later presentation about contemporary and historical class struggle in North America, drummed up a lot of interest in the IWW.

Various parts of the convention stand out as examples of how Esperanto is useful for allowing direct person-to-person contact and thereby also helping to break down barriers of dogmatism between radicals in different countries. The comrades in Spain who organized the convention allowed us to feel the history of Spanish class struggle through their own experiences. For example, we visited a monument to four labor lawyers and one union member who were assassinated by Francoists in the late 1970s, during the supposed "transition" to democracy, because of their union activities and their ties with the Spanish Communist Party. The union member who was murdered had worked in the same plant as one of the organizers of the current convention, who presented the history from a personal standpoint.

One of the beautiful things about the IWW is that we have always seen the working class as a global entity within a global struggle. Having direct contact with comrades from other countries through Esperanto clarifies both the urgent necessity of working-class unity, and the obstacles we still have to overcome. It also makes it clear that working-class unity has to be multi-directional; it will not happen if IWW members in primarily Anglo-Saxon countries imagine that workers elsewhere are waiting for us to organize them. In fact, through the kind of direct contact that Esperanto enables, it becomes obvious that workers in every country have a lot to learn from the comrades across the border(s).

For more information about SAT or Esperanto, visit: http://www.satesperanto.org/-English-.html.

Chinese Workers Kidnap Bosses

By John Kalwaic

Workers protest the Zhongji Pile factory. Photo: labornotes.org

Workers in China have no way to strike legally or collectively bargain. The only labor union in China is the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). The ACFTU is controlled by the government and cannot strike. So, what do these workers do when they have a problem with the boss? There are plenty of workplace incidents in this country where many workers toil in sweatshop conditions. Some workers in China are now resorting to kidnapping their bosses ("bossnapping") as a way to force them to pay them the money they are owed. In Beijing workers kept their American boss hostage over the issue of two months of unpaid wages, while the factory was slated to move to Bangladesh. In June and July, the factory's 200 workers took over their factory and held the boss hostage inside. The American executive held hostage was Chip Starnes of Specialty Medical Supplies, who denied his workers' allegation that he owed them any money. Starnes also accused the workers of mistreating him while he was held hostage. However, the workers claimed all they did was forbid him to leave until he agreed to pay them their wages and promised not to move the factory abroad. Other bossnappings have also occurred; on June 30 more than 200 workers at the Zhongji Pile factory in Huizhou, Guangdong Province, surrounded the company offices. The company, which makes roads and bridges, promised these workers at least RMB 4,500 per month (about $734 in U.S. dollars). There were cutbacks in hours and pay due to the recession, and worse still the company was going to sell the factory. The workers blocked the main entrance and built barricades around the doors out of desks and chairs, trapping company executives on the fifth floor of the building. The Chinese army and police arrived and tried to placate the workers and finally had them agree. Bossnapping is now one of the last resorts left in an economy hit by recession and the global race to the bottom, which has countries competing for the cheapest wages to keep corporations happy.

With files from the Huffington Post *and* Labor Notes.

Indian Auto Workers Fight Repression

By John Kalwaic

Photo: labornotes.org

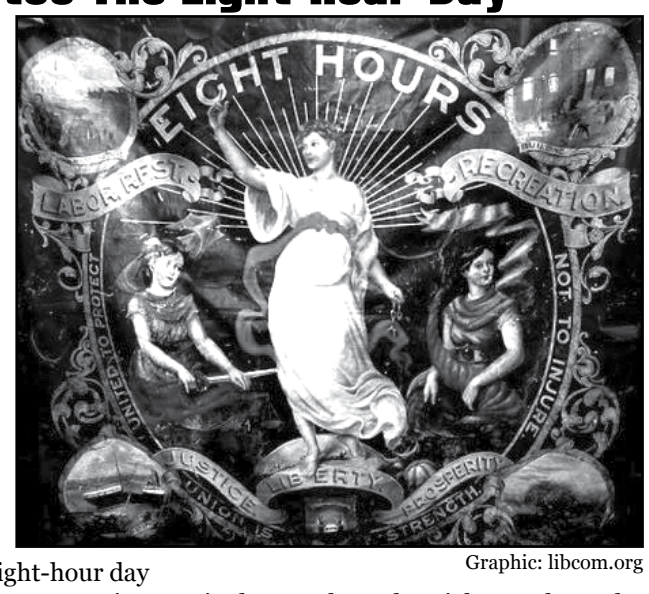
India has now become one of the world's biggest exploiters of auto workers. In July, auto workers launched a *dharna* (sit-in and hunger strike) in Manesar, India, for the release of 147 of their fellow workers from prison. South Asia and South Africa have now become the most profitable markets for the Maruti Suzuki auto company. When workers in Manesar formed the Maruti Suzuki Workers Union (MSWU) last year many of them were arrested in police raids, and have since been in prison on trumped-up charges. Workers have been engaged in hunger strikes and sit-ins to get their 147 co-workers out of jail, as well as to have the fired 546 permanent MSWU workers and 1,800 contract workers reinstated at the auto plant. The struggles around these auto workers have been going on since 2011. The union's original campaign involved getting a fixed contract. However, the auto bosses are powerful in Manesar, and company thugs had been harassing the workers before the actual arrests occurred, as union activity has become increasingly criminalized.

With files from Labor Notes.

Graphic: Tom Keough

Poland Eliminates The Eight-Hour Day

From Libcom.org



Graphic: libcom.org

In sad news this summer, the Polish government announced on June 13 that it has eliminated the eight-hour workday. The reason is to attract corporations to stay in Poland and not to move abroad for cheaper labor. Polish workers first won the eight-hour day in 1919, shortly after the country attained independence. The eight-hour day came as the result of the long struggle for workers' rights, and the elimination of it has come as a setback for workers.

The elimination of the eight-hour day is accomplished by increasing accounting periods for calculating the average amount of hours worked for the whole year and by also introducing flexible working hours. In the past, you had to have a certain resting time between your shifts and if your shifts were moved from day to day, it could be considered outside your normal working time. You would then be entitled to overtime pay. The new rules allow bosses to impose much longer working days, so long as if some other time of the year they cut the hours. For workers in some industries and areas, this could mean long days for all their working time, and a few months of idleness, instead of stable working hours. It is also not clear what rights workers who are hired temporarily (for example for six months) would have under this scheme. What is clear is that already for many years, Polish employers openly defy whatever rights workers still have and nobody wants to crack down on them.

Workers are facing a myriad of unprecedented attacks against their well-being. However most are disorganized, controlled by concessionist business unions or uncertain about their ability to act, being afraid of widespread repression. Yet others have been successfully brainwashed by years of neoliberal propaganda from every corner.