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Amersino reinstates two in NYC warehouse

Third worker plans appeal, IWW warehouse workers keep fighting

By Diane Krauthamer

In a legal battle that has lasted for more than a year, two fired union workers are finally returning to the job with thousands of dollars in back wages.

On February 27, 2007, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ordered that warehouse owner Henry Wang, of Brooklyn-based Amersino Marketing Group, reinstate Manuel Lopez and Juan Antonio Rodriguez, pay full back wages, and cease and desist all illegal measures against the union. Wang fired five workers for organizing with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the spring of 2006, thus violating two sections of the NLRB Act.

Michael Rosas, an NLRB administrative law judge (ALJ), found that Wang violated two sections of the National Labor Relations Act during the IWW IU 460/640 Food and Allied Workers Union's organizing drive at Amersino in the spring of 2006.

Union representatives were pleased with the reinstatement of Lopez and Rodriguez. However, they expressed regret that Rosas failed to include a third fired worker, Eliezer Maca Gallardo, in the decision. The union plans to file an appeal with New York City labor attorney Stuart Lichten and keep up pressure on the streets in order to win Maca Gallardo's reinstatement.

"I think we have a really strong case here," Lichten said, referring to the union's plans to appeal. "I can't understand why [Maca Gallardo] wasn't reinstated. The factual findings were correct, but the judge just came to the wrong conclusion."

What happened

Shortly after Amersino workers began to unionize with the IWW in February 2006, attorneys from Make the Road by Walking and the Urban Justice Center began taking affidavits from the workers to build a back wage and overtime wage case. On March 18, Wang terminated Manuel Lopez and Rene Pulidos for union activity. On the morning of March 20 Amersino workers met with IWW organizers Bert Picard and Billy Randel in a nearby coffee shop

to discuss the situation. Twenty workers signed IWW membership cards, after which they marched on the warehouse to inform Wang that they had joined the union and demand that he comply with minimum wage and overtime laws and reinstate Lopez and Pulidos. Wang refused, and a picket followed that same morning. Within 45 minutes of the picket being set up, Wang capitulated and agreed to all of the union's demands. During the week of their demand for recognition, the workers waged two more brief work stoppages in order to combat the company's attacks and harassment. Both were successful and IWW organizers filed for an NLRB election.

Soon after publicly declaring their IWW membership, at a shop meeting workers noticed unusual reductions in their paychecks. On the morning of April 10, fifteen Amersino workers, along with Randel and other supporters, held a picket to demand that Wang "pay what he owed." Wang came out of his office to confront the demonstrators and accused the IWW of "brainwashing" his employees and "holding his company hostage." According to the NLRB ruling, he also said: "Over my dead body there will be a union in this plant." Despite his hostility, when faced with the prospect of a strike, Wang backed down and promised to resolve the pay issues.

On the days leading up to the NLRB election, the company attempted (unsuccessfully) to bribe workers to not vote, and used a common strategy of "padding" the Excelsior list of voters to include non-workers. Eliezer Maca Gallardo, the IWW's sole observer of the election, knew who did and who did not work for the company, and challenged 13 ballots. Wang's observer challenged an additional 9 ballots.

On April 29, workers walked out in solidarity, when Wang fired both Gallardo and Rodriguez. Wang immediately brought in scabs, locking out all union workers. A three-day strike ensued, including a widely attended May Day picket. On May 2, union workers returned, but Lezama, Maca Gallardo, Rodriguez, Pulidos and Lopez were not allowed back in.

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Warehouse workers walk the picket line in New York City with signs saying "Justice Now."

Colorado to replace immigrants with prisoners

Produce aisles in grocery stores across America may soon be filled with the fruits of prison labor.

Since passing draconian immigration laws last summer, the state of Colorado has suffered from a shortage of farm workers, as many undocumented immigrants left the state.

Colorado now hopes to solve this crisis by replacing immigrants with prisoners.

The state Department of Corrections announced in late February that they hope to launch a new program whereby the Department will provide over a dozen farms with inmates to pick peppers, onions and melons. The program is

reportedly the first of its kind.

"The reason this [program] started is to make sure the agricultural industry wouldn't go out of business," state Rep. Dorothy Butcher told the Los Angeles Times. After the mass exodus of immigrants following last year's crackdown, crops were left to rot in the field. Now prisoners who are considered a low security risk will have the option of working in the fields under the watchful eye of armed guards—for 60 cents a day.

Immigration rights advocates were stunned by the proposal.

"Are we going to pull in inmates to work in the service industry too?"

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UK 'super-union' forming on May Day

British union members recently voted to merge two major unions into what is being called a 'super-union' numbering nearly two million workers.

The Transport & General Workers' Union (T&G) represents 777,000 workers across many industries and Amicus represents 1.2 million manufacturing workers in the United Kingdom. Another big general union, the GMB, with 575,000 members, decided against joining at its conference last year.

Both Amicus and T&G are staunch supporters of the Labour Party government and critics of Prime Minister Tony Blair's efforts to sideline the voice of unions within the party. The only union that rivals the merged union in size will be another general union, UNISON, with 1.3 million members.

Both unions are heralding the merger with feisty rhetoric. T&G secretary Tony Woodley promised that the merged union would be a "progressive, organising, fighting back industrial giant."

Amicus leader Derek Simpson said the merger would unleash "the greatest campaigning force on behalf of ordinary people that has ever existed." Simpson added that the union was a "precursor" to a "single global trade union movement capable of challenging the might of multinationals who seek to play workforces and governments off against each other to reduce jobs and hard won pay and conditions."

In 2005, the merger talks prompted concern by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) that it may lose its role as the single voice of the British trade union movement.

However, the new union – which has no name yet – is more inclined to confront the TUC, rather than abandon it. The T&G's Woodley promised to "take the TUC by the scruff of the neck and turn it into an agent for campaigning change" during a December 2006 speech in Birmingham.

About 27 per cent of T&G and Amicus members voted on the merger.

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International Women's Day Attacks Inequality

March 8, 2007, marked the ninety-seventh annual observation of International Women's Day (IWD). The holiday was first observed in 1909 by the Socialist Party of America, although earlier dates cited by some include a 1908 march of 15,000 women in New York City and an 1857 demonstration of women garment workers in New York against deplorable working conditions.

IWD went international for the first time at a Women's Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1910. Since then it has grown into a global day of awareness and support for women's rights and to honor the contributions of women. The defense of women's economic and workplace rights has long been an important component of the IWD and this year was no exception.

Marches, rallies, conferences and other actions took place around the world on March 8th. Here are just a few examples:

- Brazil: 20,000 people demonstrated in São Paulo, in defense of women and in opposition to the presence of George Bush. Similar rallies took place throughout Latin America.
- Ghana: The Trades Union Congress (TUC) hosted an IWD seminar and called an aggressive affirmative action program to "give women equal representation at all levels in the workplace". Meanwhile, the Organization of African Trades Union Unity held a celebration titled "Generation of Women Moving History Forward", and declared in a press release that International Women's Day "should spark a new interest, ensure maximum promotion of International Labour Standards and women workers' rights for increased productivity and wealth creation that will result in reduced poverty levels in a sustainable manner for a friendlier socio-economic environment"



iYa basta!

Graphic by Ned Powell

- Nepal: The General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions and the Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality and Promotion held a mass demonstration and rally in Kathmandu "demanding equal pay for equal value of jobs, end

of gender based discrimination, ratification of ILO conventions No. 156, 183 and 177 and one third women participation in all sectors of employment," as reported on GEFONT's website. The Nepalese government gave all women paid leave

to observe the occasion.

- Britain: Scottish public service workers launched a "Time to Get Equal" campaign, lobbying Parliament and billing the Scottish executive for money to protest unequal pay for women in public service. Also, on March 10th, prominent unionists from several countries, including the leaders of Zimbabwe's Congress of Trade Unions, spoke at a "Rally for Dignity" on March 10th in London's Trafalgar Square.

- Vietnam: Several unions and nonprofit organizations sponsored an exhibit of over 200 photos and items that told the stories of mothers who overcame serious barriers to raise their children.

- Australia: On the eve of International Women's Day a group of Melbourne cleaners joined Australia Council of Trade Unions president Sharan Burrow outside 121 Exhibition St, a prominent city building, to publicize that impact of the Howard government's workplace laws on working women.

- Canada: SEIU Canada and other unions participated in several events across Canada, including a conference in Saskatoon, a protest march in Halifax and two Women's Fairs in Ontario

The struggle continues...

Despite the aura of celebration, much sobering news has surfaced about the plight of women. Journalists around the world are reporting the persistence of pay inequality and workplace discrimination against women on a massive scale. The group Reporters Without Borders issued a new study for International Women's Day citing an alarming increase in violence against women journalists.

"More and more women journalists are the victims of murder, arrest, threats or intimidation," said the report. Women unionists and human rights defenders are frequently intimidated, beaten, raped and even murdered for their activities.

As we celebrate the gains of women let us keep in mind that we still have a long way to go before we achieve gender equality. An injury to one is an injury to all, and radical unionists of all genders must realize that every attack on women's rights is a serious stumbling block on the road to revolution.

Colorado prison labor for farm work

Continued from 1

asked Ricardo Martinez of the Denver immigrant rights group Padres Unidos asked. "You won't have enough inmates -- unless you start importing them from Texas."

Even anti-immigration groups are skeptical.

"If they can't get slaves from Mexico, they want them from the jails," said Mark Krikorian of the right-wing Center for Immigration Studies in Washington. The current plan calls for prisoners to voluntarily choose to participate. However, the US constitution provides for the possibility of forced convict labor, which has been used in the past. The 13th Amendment, passed after the Civil War, abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."

While immigrants are increasingly spurned and most American workers are unwilling to take these hard and low-paying jobs, the prison population in America continues to rise.

The U.S. currently has the highest number of incarcerated people in the world: 2,186,230 in 2005, according to Department of Justice statistics.

Preamble of the IWW Constitution

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 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

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



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.



Union on-line petition backfires

Lesson learned: Don't promise 1 million signatures if the rank-and-file are not on-board

You know that the technology of Internet-based campaigning has matured when even the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) starts using it.

A group like the ETUC is almost by definition going to be the very last to adopt cutting edge technology. Founded more than 30 years ago, the ETUC represents 81 national trade union centers in 31 different European countries, representing some 60 million workers. Keeping in mind that dozens of languages are spoken by those workers, it is understandable that it took a while for the Confederation to get around to online campaigning.

But in November 2006 the ETUC embraced web-based campaigns in a big way, launching an initiative to support "high quality public services available to all." And they announced the goal of getting one million signatures on their petition within a few short months.

It's now mid-March – nearly four months have passed – and the online petition has gotten just 56,000 signatures. At that rate, it will take another six years or so to reach the ETUC's goal. A lesson all unions should learn from this is to never announce a numeric goal for an online campaign that you are probably not going to reach – or if you do so, don't make public the fact that you're nowhere

close to reaching it.

But there are other lessons to be learned as well, and some of them reflect well on the ETUC. For example, the campaign is available online in twenty languages. These are not all the languages spoken in Europe, but it's a lot more languages than you find on most union websites – even global union websites.

And they reaching out beyond the borders of the European Union – even if the petition is addressed to the European Commission. For example, one of the twenty languages is Norwegian, and Norway is not a part of the European Union. The Norwegians still participate in the ETUC.

The petition is brief and to the point, and signing up requires only a name and email address (some union campaigns ask for all kinds of useless information – the ETUC does not.)

And they've offered an off-line version as well, which is critical to get beyond the core group of those who participate in online campaigns.

They have created a special domain name for the campaign and they've prepared printer-reader versions of campaign posters and logos.

All this demonstrates a seriousness about online campaigning which is worthy of praise.

That having been said, why have 99.9% of ETUC members not signed up to the campaign? Why are they something like 70 months away from achieving their target?

I think part of the reason might be the very nature of groups like the ETUC itself. Workers tend to feel closest to their local union, and somewhat close (perhaps) to their national union, but they are unlikely to know much about their national trade union center.

I've never forgotten the response given to me by a maintenance worker in a New York City apartment building. When asked what union he belonged to, he said "32BJ". And that was all he knew. He didn't know the name of the national union (the SEIU), nor the national trade union center that union was affiliated to (Change to Win).

The ETUC is a federation of national trade union centers, each one of which (like the AFL-CIO or Change to Win) is in turn a federation of national unions.

The ETUC doesn't really have 60,000,000 members – it has 81 members. Whether those members are able to mobilize their affiliates, and whether those affiliates are able to reach down to the

workplaces and mobilize actual workers is debatable.

If it sounds like I'm trashing the ETUC, I'm not. It's a commendable effort and it's great to see the huge investment in multilingual campaigning. And getting nearly 60,000 people to sign up to an online trade union campaign is no mean thing. LabourStart, which has been at this for several years now, has never done a campaign that got more than 8,000 signatories.

I hope that the ETUC is collecting those 60,000 email addresses. If they are, the next time they campaign, they'll be able to write directly to 60,000 activists rather than only to 81 union officials, and the next campaign will be bigger than this.

If that's the case, the ETUC campaign may fail to get the million signatures it was hoping for, but could be the beginning of something much more important: the online mobilization of trade unionists in dozens of countries in support of a common cause.

The petition is available online here: <http://www.petitionpublicservice.eu/>

Australians need direct action, not elections

Direct Action Editorial, IWW Australia

The Australian Council of Trade Union (ACTU) bureaucrats have sold out all of the workers they claim to be serving.

The ACTU led campaign against the Liberal Party's Industrial Relations (IR) reforms, is nothing more than an election campaign for the Labour Party.

Opposition to IR is widespread. There have been hundreds of thousands of workers all over the country protesting on the so-called days of action organised by the ACTU. Workers who take the morning or day of work off - losing pay in the process - in order to show their opposition to IR are tragically subjected to long, boring speeches from politicians and trade union bureaucrats.

The speeches, although coming from different mouths all reek of the same foul odor. One after the other we are told that we are going to fight these laws 'till they are just a bad memory.

This is all well and good but the only solution given by the speakers is to vote Labour at the next Federal Election. The slogan for the campaign has even been changed from "worth fighting for" to "worth voting for"; this is a particularly grotesque abuse of workers' struggle for political gains.

It is disappointing to see so many workers mobilised out in the streets, willing and wanting to fight for their rights achieve so little. Being told to sit

tight and vote in a year or so is very disempowering.

A few important questions arise from this course of action.

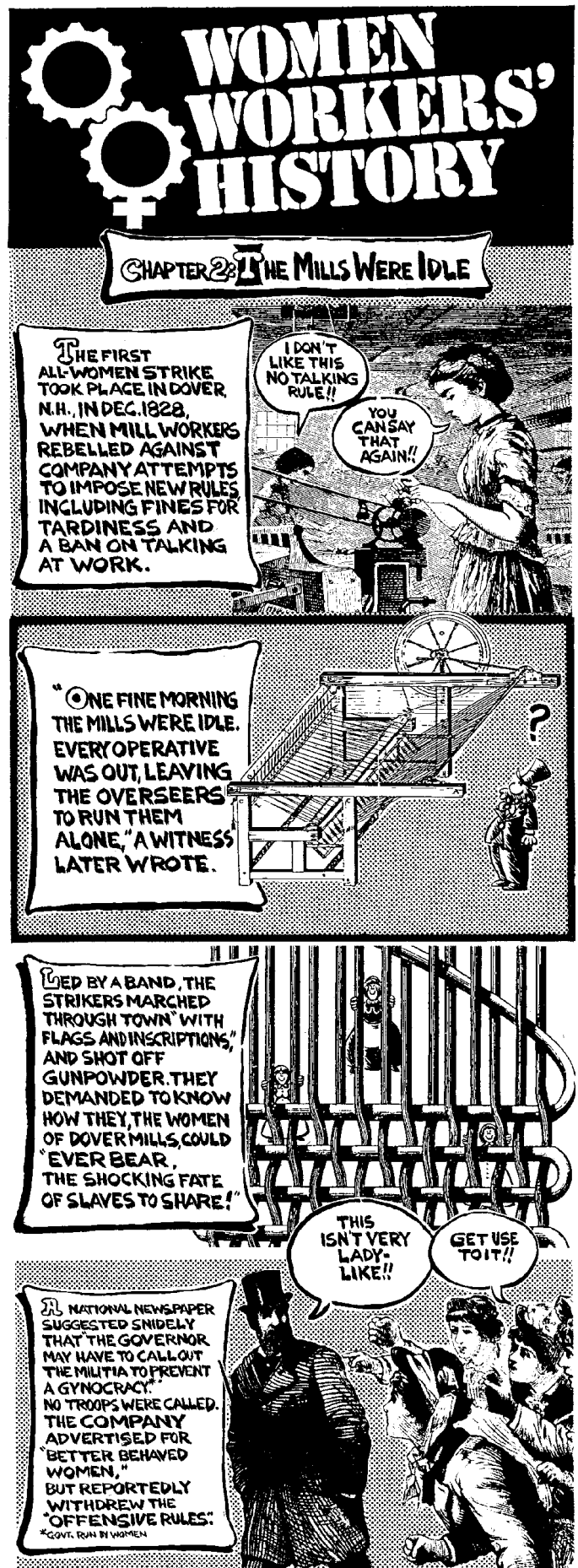
What if Labour doesn't win the next election? Even if they do, will they keep their promises? Why put your faith in politicians to look after your rights and those of your work-mates?

There are other options available to workers. The fight can begin now. We do not need to, nor should we wait for the ALP to save us all. It is likely to never happen.

It is time for us to use direct action as our main weapon against IR and the bosses. Our workplace rights were won by workers before us struggling and employing direct action, not by voting and politicians.

The battle against IR is important but it should not be seen as our ultimate goal. The defeat of IR should be seen as just one battle in the Class War. The destruction of the wage system, hierarchy and capitalism should be seen as the ultimate goal of the working class. We look forward to fighting along side you against all the employing class.

Solidarity Forever.



CUPE vs CUPE: Who's the boss of this union?

The national staff of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) are fighting their own national executive committee on the issue of who controls the union's pension fund. The battle for control started in January 2006 when the union's executive committee piled concessions onto the contract negotiating table. The move shocked the staff negotiators as CUPE had held a "no concessions" line in negotiations with all other employers. "Special measures will be taken to ensure that any group of CUPE members faced with contract concessions, or under attack by government legislation, has the full, mobilized support of CUPE," said the union's negotiating newsletter, *Tabletalk* 2004.

CUPE staff were in a legal strike position as of March 3. The staff workers have used escalating tactics to get the executive back to the bargaining table.

"They want to show they're in control," said picketer Corina Crawley, to explain CUPE's policy contradictions. "They talk like a union, but act like a boss."

Pickers report that most of the concessions were swept from the table over the past 15 months. However, management is now refusing to use the staff pension fund surplus to improve benefits.

"Who controls the pension? Is it the workers or the management?" said Margaret Evans as she picketed the Ottawa office. Benefits, not wages, was the key issue in the dispute. The staff workers have used escalating tactics to get the executive committee back to the bargaining table.

On March 6, CUPE staffers shut down all national offices. Three days later, all staff members in Ontario shut down their offices. Ottawa picketers persuaded construction workers to cease work at the building site of CUPE's new \$20 million office.

CUPE staff went on strike on March 16, less than a day after the union bosses finally agreed to return to the negotiating table. A tentative deal was negotiated but the membership must now vote to ratify or reject it.

About 25 IWWs attending the Canadian IWW assembly in Ottawa joined the CUPE picket line in Ottawa on March 10. Wobbly singers Smokey Dymny and Vicki Guzman belted out sing-along songs including "No concessions" (see page 8 for lyrics). The picket buzzed with laughter, cheers and whistle blasts. Ottawa wobbly John Hollingsworth led the group in a round of "Aristocracy Forever", a biting satire about union bureaucracy.

"That song really touched me," said one picketer, smiling.



IWWs Vicki Guzman (right) and Smokey Dymny (guitar) sing "no concessions" with CUPE pickets in Ottawa

CUPE members have responded to the strike by expressing support for the staff. At least 109 CUPE locals wrote letters of support demanding the executive negotiate with staff and avoid a strike.

"I find what is happening, no matter what the issues are, to be an embarrassment for all unionized workers. End this dispute and give the staff that we rely on the respect they deserve and what you

would expect our employers to give us!" said Kathryn Farr, president of CUPE Local 441.

The executive committee and staff dispute is happening while three CUPE locals, at the University of Toronto Press, City of Cornwall paramedics and care workers in Regina, are on strike. CUPE is Canada's largest union with 500,000 members.

Rail Strike Exposes Teamster Raid

A 16-day strike at Canadian National railway in February has exposed a deep division between Canadian and United States railroad union leaders that played into the hands of the employer, a pro-business government and the Teamsters.

On February 10, conductors, switch workers, and yard service workers of the Canadian wing of the United Transportation Union went on strike. The United Transportation Union, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, objected to the strike, saying that only the International's president could authorize the strike action. The Canadian negotiators found that this check on their ability to strike significantly weakened their bargaining power. As a result, organizers declared, the CN "has not, in our view, started getting serious about negotiating with us."

In a February 9 letter, the four Canadian UTU negotiators pleaded with the International's president, Paul Thompson, to support the strike, citing a membership vote of 96.6 percent in favor and the unanimous support of every local's chair. Thompson replied that the UTU constitution tied his hands and that he had warned them beforehand that the International has the sole power to authorize a strike if negotiations fail.

"[N]one of your General Committees have the authority as required under the Constitution to strike the Canadian National Railroad," he said in a letter February 9. "The choice is yours if you do not desire the assistance of my office. I cannot force that upon you."

The strike started the next day. In response, the UTU International suspended four members of the Canadian bargaining team including chief negotiator, Rex Beatty, and refused to disburse strike pay because the strike violated the UTU constitution. Canadian union members also claim that the International's action was "self-serving treachery" to help the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference raid the UTU Canada members.

CN took its cue from the UTU International and complained to the Canadian Industrial Relations Board that the strike was illegal. The company refused to negotiate, leaving the rank-and-file on the picket line for nine winter days. The board ruled on February 19 that it was a legal strike according to Canadian labor law.

The UTU International, faced with a declared legal strike moved in to take control. It suspended four members of the Canadian bargaining team including chief negotiator, Rex Beatty, and for "self-serving treachery" to help the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference raid the UTU Canada members.

Suspended chief negotiator Rex Beatty responded by saying the allegations against him were untrue, characterizing Thompson's criticism as "deplorable" and an "obvious act of desperation." He said he intended to pursue legal action against Thompson for libel.

The ruling in favor of the union also denied the Conservative government an easy exit from heavy pressure to end the strike by business lobbyists such as the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association and its own Canadian Wheat Board. The government introduced draft back-to-work legislation enforced by binding arbitration on February 23.

In response, CN and the UTU International signed a tentative agreement the next day, under the twin threats of direct government arbitration and a potential Teamsters raid of the Canadian UTU. The government's promise of binding arbitration now hangs over the heads of UTU members who must return their ratification postal ballots by March 26, 2007.

The new contract would give a three percent pay increase and a \$1,000 signing bonus. However, it did not deal with the driving issues of disciplinary procedures, working conditions and

lunch breaks. The ITU International said this agreement was a stop-gap measure, meant to provide the union time to "re-group" and renegotiate a longer term contract. Yet the UTU may never get the chance.

On March 1 the Teamsters filed a certification application for 2,500 UTU members in Canada. "They will finally have the ability to regain control of their union," said Teamster rail President Dan Shewchuk, citing "decisions made by the UTU's officers in the United States" as a motivating factor. The Teamsters represent 1,750 locomotive engineers at Canadian National.

Canadian IWWs talk organizing

Nearly 30 IWW members from the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec met in Ottawa to discuss regional and industrial organizing in Canada on March 10-11.

It was the first time in recent memory that IWWs in Canada had gathered together to improve communications and coordination. Wobblies came from Edmonton, Winnipeg, Windsor, Peterborough, Guelph, Toronto, Ottawa and Montréal.

The meeting addressed many approaches, from organizing the unorganized and unemployed to dual carder strategies to addressing barriers to organizing, such as labor law, racism, classism, and sexism. People spoke frankly and critically throughout the meeting.

Jeff Pilancinski (photo) from the IWW's new Organizing Department joined the meeting and facilitated two sessions on organizing.

"We want people to be in a position to help themselves," he said, emphasizing the need to organize workers and build their skills and confidence.

The assembly took time out to offer picket support to Canadian Union of

IWW members in Edmonton picketing in solidarity with UTU members on strike said they saw Teamsters organizers on the picket line signing certification cards and advertising meetings where UTU members could sign up with them.

UTU International president Paul Thompson said he had heard of Teamster raiding plans early in 2006 and convened a meeting in August to discuss it. In response to the raid rumours, he had proposed transferring the Canadian UTU members to their ally, the Steelworkers. The Canadian UTU is subsidized by the UTU International by up to US\$1.3 million per year. Despite the meeting, no action was taken to discipline Beatty.



Jeff Pilancinski of the IWW Organizing Department

Public Employees staffers who are in a showdown with their own union's executive committee in negotiations for their next contract.

Wobblies also discussed founding a Canadian internal bulletin for improved communications, identifying potential industrial campaigns, and forming a regional organization of the IWW that would help coordinate logistics, translation of IWW materials into French and campaigning.

Tightline Johnson and the SWU: Building the insurrection

FICTION
PART 2

By Joseph Lapp II

In the March Industrial Worker, Tightline Johnson returned to Seattle after a long stint in Alaska. Discovering the current Starbucks organizing campaign, he decides to “salt” and organize on the job. A corporate jargon-happy manager unwittingly gives Tightline a job at the coffee giant. This story is based on a character created by Wobbly writer Ralph Winstead.

I started work the next day. Now, when I say I started workin', that's not exactly true. See, Starbucks has this whole damn system of brainwashin' and indoctrinatin' new workers that they call “training”. I guess I learned a thing or two about coffee making, but mostly they spent the time treatin' me to a sermon on the great goodness of Starbucks and how they was gonna take care of me and in so doing take care of the whole darn world of coffee growers, drinkers, makers, sellers, and buyers. According to them this Starbucks is the best thing that ever happened to the world! Now I've always been of the opinion that the Industrial Workers of the World is the greatest thing on Earth, but I didn't want to tip my hat to management quite yet so I just kept my peace.

I guess I didn't mind the “training” all that much. I was gettin' full wages for my time after all, but I was eager as a hungry hobo to get onto that shop floor. Maybe there's some of you readin' this who can't understand a man taking a low payin' job for no other reason than to cause some problems in the name of the working class, but it's long been my belief that there are only two good and righteous activities to do upon this Earth and that's workin' and organizin'. There's only one way to make a real and lasting difference in this capitalist world and that's gettin' our class together and ruinin' every capitalist's today, tomor-

row, and forever. So yeah, I could have made a bit more money out in a lumber camp but so long as there's strength in my arm I'll use it for the O.B.U. There's some that'll argue that you gotta organize the job you're at, and there ain't nothin' wrong with that philosophy, but there ain't nothin' wrong with doin' a little carpet baggin' neither.

So after I was trained up they put me out there on the floor. I guess I should take a minute to describe what it was like out on that floor. There was three brands of people in the shop at any given time: worker, manager, and customer. Now the managers could be counted upon to do one of two things, either run around like idiots and accomplish nothing other than aggravatin' the workers or else be sittin' around doin' nothing at all (which also did a lot towards aggravatin' the workers). My co-workers were a motley group. Some seemed to think they was somehow profiting themselves by running around like all the slave drivers of Egypt was at their backs. Another group seemed pretty darn unhappy to be there and worked only just fast enough to avoid gettin' hollered at by the managers. Then there were ones at various stages 'tween the two. The third group, the customers, was of all sorts. Some were decent folks, but some deserved nothin' better than to be knocked on their unproductive backsides!

I spent my first couple of days there gettin' to know the ropes of the coffee makin' business and makin' friends with the workers, feelin' out which ones would be receptive to the gospel I was gonna be preachin'. I was especially lookin' for some leaders. Any good organizer knows that the first and most important job you got is tryin' to replace yourself. It's the only occupation where the goal is to work yourself out of a job, reason being that organizers have a one in five shot of gettin' the can for their efforts. They can get some of us; we just got to make sure they don't ever get us all. Also a worker who has been there

awhile is more likely to command the respect of his fellows. Lastly, if every good organizer riles up five or ten other good organizers then, my friends, we'll own the whole damn world in no time!

I picked out a few likely candidates, and set about talking to them about what pissed 'em off about the job and what they thought should be improved. It doesn't take long on any job to figure out what bothers the workers, and generally everybody's got the same list—they just never thought to talk about it before. On this job people was angry about pay, they was upset about erratic and nonsensical schedulin', and they was upset about the fact that the bosses never had enough folks workin' to keep from havin' to run at a breakneck pace. I was familiar with all these troubles. These're the same ones we've been fightin' over since this whole capitalism thing began. Modern folks sometimes have trouble connectin' with past labor struggles, but ask any factory girl in Lawrence in 1912 and you'd likely get a very similar list of grievances.

It can take time to get people's confidence. You may find it hard to get people together after work to talk issues, but you'll rarely find a worker who'd decline the offer of a drink of some kind after you get done with work for the day. That's the method I used, and it worked like a charm. I took out the workers who seemed like promisin' pre-Wobs and talked 'em up on the issues. I didn't get right in on IWW this and Wobbly that; some guys'll go that route, but it just ain't me. My first trick for organizin' a job is to get folks to see that they've all got the exact same list of things that just tick 'em right off, and from there it ain't hard to get 'em to see that the only way anything's ever gonna change is to work together. Now that, my friends, is a union, and you can get it together without ever mentioning the IWW once. Get the dialogue goin', get folks talkin' about change and organization, and then bring 'em up to speed on the Wobbly cause.

So I got these folks together and we spent some time talkin' about grievances, strategy, and so forth. We decided that the first step was to let all the other workers know what we was thinkin'. We knew that some stool would run right to management and fill 'em in on all the lurid details of our insidious red plot, but we also knew that for every stool there'd more folks who'd stand with us. It's always amazin' to me how many workers outwardly seem to be good and willing little slaves until a union is bein' got together and then they turn into the most militant agitators. I don't blame 'em, they're just sidin' with the folks most likely to get 'em better pay. As each of us knows, playin' friendly with the bosses can get you taken care of on the job, but not near as well as union solidarity can! Sure enough, when my new buddies and I started spreadin' the word on what we had in mind we found that all but a few of our fellow workers were willin' and able to lend their support.

After a while, we invited all interested fellow workers to a meeting to officially put together a list of demands to send management's way and to vote on an organizing committee. We had a pretty good turnout. I stood up and did a little speechifyin' on the IWW and in particular the Starbucks Workers Union since they was already set up to help out with our fight. We voted on it, and the workers was all willin' to contact the IWW for support. We also voted up three folks to be on the organizin' committee. These folks, we decided would deliver our demands to old Scissor Bill the manager first thing.

The key to this sort of thing is to try to keep everybody as fired up as you can get 'em and to build up a spirit of togetherness so the workers will support each other in the coming struggle. If there's one thing I've learned it's that bosses rarely give up a single cent at first. Everything the working class has ever got has been got through struggle, sweat, and blood. We ain't never been handed nothin', 'cept low wages and pink slips.

Well friends, we'd just have to see how management took the news of our glorious little insurrection. Worry not your pretty little heads, though, for your Fellow Worker Johnson has a trick or two for convincin' bosses of the wisdom of givin' up the goods!

Read Tightline's story next month...

NYC warehouse workers fight on

Continued from 1

Demanding justice in courts, streets

While the recent NLRB ruling comes as a victory for all of the IWW Food and Allied Workers Union, 460/640, it is just one step in a long struggle.

“The employers can't turn back the clock,” Randel said, referring to the 22 total illegal firings at five warehouses. This, he said, is a “direct assault on workers' rights.”

The NLRB is still investigating complaints filed by the IWW against Sunrise Plus (formerly EZ Supply), Handyfat Trading Company, Top City Produce, and Giant Big Apple Beer over the illegal firings at Handyfat and Sunrise Plus, as well as unlawful reprisals against the workers at the latter two shops, with the possibility of immediate, injunctive relief. Additionally, the Justice Department is opening an investigation against both Handyfat and Sunrise Plus that the companies illegally applied the Immigration Reform and Control Act to crush union activity. Top City's members are represented by the Attorney General's office in their back wage/overtime case. The federal court lawsuits against four of the five shops are also proceeding to deposition stage wherein the companies will be forced to defend their illegal retaliation and open their books.

While workers await the court decisions, support grows from labor unions, community groups, students and activists. With the help of rank-and-file labor unions, Million Worker March and



IWW Bay Area assessment stamp

community group Make the Road by Walking / Se Hacer Camino Al Andar, hundreds of workers and their supporters marched for hours on the morning of February 19 to declare solidarity with those who were fired. On the brisk February morning, marchers started at Sunrise Plus, stopped and jeered at Amersino, and picketed Handyfat. The march concluded with a picket of Associated Supermarket – organized by Make the Road and the UFCW-affiliated Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union—where owners engaged in systematic wage violations that include failure to pay minimum wage and overtime while having other workers paid only in tips. Due to the protest presence, the two striked warehouses shut down their business that day, resulting in an estimated \$30,000 loss per company.

In addition, the IWW has been pressuring restaurants in Manhattan who purchase supplies from EZ Supplies/Sunrise Plus to buy elsewhere. Due to consistent weekend fliering at peak business hours outside of the stores asking for customers to boycott, Baluchi's, an upscale Indian restaurant with locations

throughout the city, told the IWW that it would no longer be doing business with Sunrise Plus. At Columbia University, Students for Economic and Environmental Justice (SEEJ) are calling for a boycott of Tomo Sushi and Columbia Cottage which also purchase from Sunrise Plus.

Fundraising

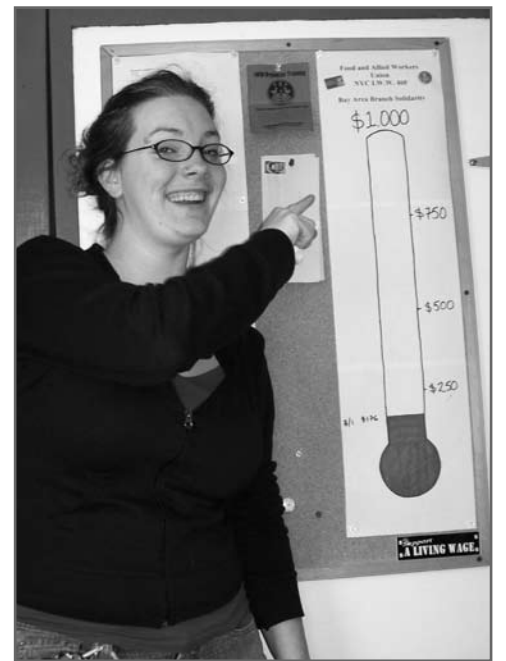
Meanwhile, IWW branches throughout the U.S. continue fundraising efforts to support the workers. The Twin Cities, Providence and New York City GMBs recently held benefit concerts and events for the fired workers. Additionally, the Bay Area GMB is selling assessment stamps which read “I support fired New York warehouse workers” (see graphic, left).

As public attention increases, organizers and workers intend to keep the pressure on the companies legally and financially. “We want to show the bosses that we won't stop fighting,” Randel said.

Support the campaign by sending financial contributions to New York Industrial Workers of the World, P.O. Box 8266, J.A.F. Station, New York, NY 10116. You can contribute on-line, too, through PayPal by paying to iww-nyc@iww.org, at www.paypal.com for one donation or a monthly, automatic payment in any amount that's manageable for you.

Alex Van Schaick, Tom Howard and Billy Randel contributed to this article.

San Fran IWWs raise funds for NYC



Heather Gardner, Secretary of the San Francisco Bay Area GMB points to start of local fundraising efforts.

Members of the San Francisco Bay Area branch are working on fund-raising for the New York City food workers who are currently fired or laid-off from their jobs because of their organizing with the IWW. We have made it our informal goal to raise \$1,000 to send to them by May Day.

Worker Resistance in China Needs Support

By Jason Fults

As most Western workers are keenly aware, China has experienced tremendous economic growth in recent decades, averaging more than 9 per cent annually for nearly the past 30 years. What has this rapid growth meant for Chinese workers?

Since the late 1970s, China has been restructuring its economy: privatizing state-owned enterprises, opening up to foreign capital, and dismantling the welfare state. This restructuring has led to unprecedented economic opportunity for some, but has been accompanied by deterioration of job security and basic economic rights, staggering income inequality, and dangerous levels of pollution. In addition, Chinese factories have become synonymous with sweatshops, and independent investigations have routinely uncovered 90+ hour work-weeks, abusive management, below-subsistence wages, wage arrears, and exposure to occupational diseases such as silicosis experienced by Chinese jewelry workers.

Under this new model, factory owners can rely upon lax enforcement of existing labor laws at the local level, and have done their part to undermine worker solidarity and evade closer scrutiny. Commonly-cited company tactics include hiring workers through employment agencies, pitting workers from different regions or ethnic groups against one another, targeting potential militants, imposing fines, illegally withholding wages, and falsifying records.

Under such conditions, one would hope that workers, especially workers long-inculcated with a Marxist analysis of capitalism, might have recourse in the form of a fighting union. Unfortunately, such is not the case. China's sole union, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), is largely viewed as ineffectual and pro-management, and most private sector workers are not even represented. To make matters worse, neither independent labor organizing nor the right to strike is protected under Chinese law and both have been brutally repressed. A few Hong Kong-based pro-labor NGOs have maintained on-line listings of dozens of Chinese activists who are currently incarcerated (some for 20 years to life) for organizing outside the confines of the ACFTU.

Reeling from economic "reform"

It appears that many Chinese workers are caught in an ever-tightening vise grip between unsympathetic and repressive elements within their own government, a weak and unrepresentative official union, and the forces of international economics. Two groups of Chinese workers have borne the brunt of this assault perhaps more fully than most: migrant laborers (disproportionately young women) and workers who have retired or been laid off from formerly State-Run Enterprises (SREs). As foreign investment has flooded China's manufacturing sector and privately-owned workplaces have replaced the socialist *danwei*, or work unit model of production, up to 200 million rural Chinese have migrated to the cities in search of employment and a better way of life. Many of these workers haven't been provided with legally-required labor contracts by their bosses and aren't officially registered in their new residences; hence they have been more susceptible to abuse and less able to seek recourse or access public services.

Meanwhile, nearly 40 million former SRE workers had been laid off by 2001, often leaving them with only a meager and temporary unemployment compensation package. The dismantling of the *danwei* system and its impact on these workers cannot be understated, as the

former SREs were an essential staple of the pre-reform economy. They provided workers with not only secure employment and a meaningful, well-respected role in Chinese society, but also basic amenities such as housing and health care. In both instances the ACFTU's frequent silence on issues of worker wellbeing while instead "educating" workers to support the government's reforms has highlighted where the union's true accountability lies.

With few other options open to

Workers in both industrialized nations and elsewhere must strengthen and unify our struggles against the bosses, who are working ever harder to realize their own economic vision not only at home, but also abroad.

them, these groups of workers have resorted to the same strategy as beleaguered workers elsewhere: direct action, and at a startling rate. According to official government statistics, 3.76 million Chinese took part in 74,000 "mass incidents of unrest" in 2004, rising to 87,000 "incidents" in 2005. That's 200+ demonstrations per day, and a six-fold increase over the number recorded in 1993. The motivations behind such protests vary widely, including environmental injustices and local government corruption, but many of them are in direct response to employer abuses and other economic concerns.

One factory in Dongguan, which had been criticized by China Labor Watch since at least 2001, was recently "victim" to this worker outrage. Tired of forced-overtime and below-subsistence wages, these workers decided that their livelihood was more important than the Happy Meal toys they were producing and took to the streets. In the open conflict that followed, more than 1,000 workers clashed with security personnel and destroyed company property until riot police regained control of the factory. A separate incident in a Xianyang textile factory in 2004 involved as many as 7,000 former SRE workers. These workers took pre-emptive action when a new majority shareholder of their factory proposed changes that would affect wages, seniority rights, and working conditions. After their initial efforts to form a worker-run branch of the ACFTU were rejected by union officials they waged a six-week, 24-hour a day picket line. This action brought them into direct conflict with local authorities who attempted to forcibly break the strike and arrest its leadership.

Such large-scale and highly-charged direct actions present an apparent paradox with the notion of an authoritarian society. Yet it has been observed that some Chinese authorities exhibit significant "class consciousness" in their responses to worker unrest. For instance, protests by retired and unemployed workers are treated more delicately than those which actually threaten to halt production. In addition, authorities seem much more willing to tolerate unrest when it involves only one factory or industrial sector, but respond with brutal efficiency if these actions begin to draw wider support from the public or other sectors.

Turning tide?

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has genuine cause for concern. The CCP's legitimacy as a tightly-controlled, monopolistic ruling party that supposedly represents workers' interests stems

largely from its ability to deliver the goods in the form of an increasing standard of living for the citizenry. At the same time that it is facing growing, dangerous levels of unrest, the CCP is also in a weaker position in terms of its control over the economy—thanks largely to the very reform policies it has adopted in the name of economic growth. To address these concerns, the government has sought to upgrade its existing labor laws and to strengthen the role of the ACFTU in the nation's workplaces. Recent devel-

opments on these fronts are instructive.

In a move last summer that took many by surprise, Wal-Mart's China division announced that it would facilitate the establishment of ACFTU branches at each of its 60 stores, covering around 30,000 "associates." Why would a company that is internationally-recognized for its labor rights violations and aggressive union-busting voluntarily unionize all of its stores? One of China's many under-enforced labor laws states that if even a single employee expresses an interest in being a member of the union, then a branch must be set up in that workplace. In what some consider an opening bid to unionize all foreign-owned companies, the government apparently decided that the time was right to begin enforcing this law. Despite long-standing attempts to resist unionization, Wal-Mart quickly embraced ACFTU officials as soon as the company caught wind of the new policy. Notably, the changes apply only to Wal-Mart's retail employees and not the Chinese manufacturing companies that make up 80 per cent of Wal-Mart's suppliers.

In another much-publicized development, China's National People's Congress has recently drafted new legislation which will affect important issues such as the ACFTU's collective bargaining rights and job security, among others. Further, the draft legislation could raise the stakes significantly for companies that continue to violate the country's labor laws. This aspect of the legislation is crucial and underlies long-standing difficulties in enforcing central government policies—especially those related to labor and environment—that may be perceived as inhibiting economic growth.

The way forward

There are differing opinions amongst labor scholars as to whether the barriers to a true workers' movement in China are insurmountable, at least for the immediate future. Clearly though, workers need and deserve a greater degree of political freedom in order to collectively advance their interests, and either reclaim or replace existing structures that have failed them. It is shameful though sadly unsurprising that there has not been greater pressure from the West for China to "open up" to more than just foreign capital flows. Yet this strategic inaction reminds us that workers in both industrialized nations and elsewhere must strengthen and unify our struggles against the bosses, who are working ever harder to realize their own economic vision not only at home, but also abroad. As noted in a recent issue of Asian Labour Update: "[T]here is virtually no voice on this issue from any interna-

tional trade union expressing solidarity with the Chinese workers in fighting for better labour rights by denouncing or condemning the foreign business bodies publicly." So we must speak out where others cannot in order to advance both our interests.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the Chinese government is not a monolithic whole and that there are factions which are speaking out ever more loudly on behalf of workers from within the system. Some observers express optimism that these advocates, coupled with the reforms underway, will in fact better the situation of Chinese workers.

Anita Chan, a labor scholar at the Australian National University, suggests that the ACFTU is struggling to re-define its role within an economy and society that is dramatically different from the one in which it was created. She warns that any strategy which further isolates the ACFTU will only undermine genuine efforts to improve the livelihood of Chinese workers and that international unions should instead work with the ACFTU to help build its capacity.

Yet perhaps our most efficacious avenue for building solidarity with Chinese workers lies in forming relationships with the NGOs and independent workers' organizations who are striving to advance workers' rights. Many of the more "radical" of these organizations have apparently found it conducive to locate their offices in Hong Kong; due to the "one country, two systems" approach that the CCP agreed to upon reclaiming Hong Kong from the UK, there is significantly greater freedom of expression there. Most of these organizations also have operations on the mainland and monitor developments there quite closely, produce regular and informative publications, and even organize campaigns against particular corporations or on behalf of workers in specific industries. These organizations not only need our expressions of solidarity and participation in their campaigns, but due to the severe lack of an NGO-infrastructure they also need more direct support.

China is without a doubt a nation on the rise, and what happens within its borders will have profound implications for the entire planet for generations to come. While no one can predict exactly what the outcome will be, a growing number of academics, politicians, and bosses are watching the numbers and hedging their bets. People who hold genuine concern for our planet and its inhabitants have no such luxury, however. For us, the path is clear, and we must heed the simple yet sage advice of Gandhi: "The future depends on what we do in the present."

During the period of writing and researching this article IWW member Jason Fults was a Thomas J. Watson fellow based in South Asia. To obtain a list of works cited or sources for further information or constructive criticism, he can be reached at Sisyphus@riseup.net.

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Iraqi cabinet approves oil privatization

The U.S.-backed Iraqi national cabinet approved controversial new legislation on February 26 that will turn over two thirds of the country's rich oil reserves to foreign corporations.

Now that the 3-member Cabinet has given the policy its OK, Iraq's Parliament is expected to ratify. However, as we go to press, Parliament is only seeing the draft document for the first time. Prior to the Cabinet's approval, the only people to see the proposed law were the drafting committee, nine international oil companies, the British and the U.S. governments and the International Monetary Fund, according to a report from the Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS).

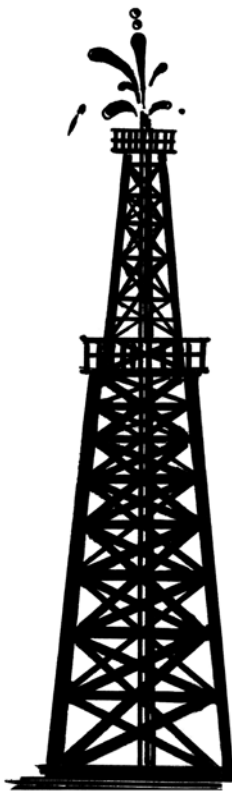
Iraqi officials are praising the proposed law, arguing that it is an important step forward for the war-torn country. "This law will guarantee for Iraqis, not just now but for future generations too, complete national control over this natural wealth," Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani has reportedly said. Proponents point out that the oil revenues would be distributed by population size to all 18 provinces of Iraq and that the legislation provides for a degree of regional autonomy in negotiating contracts with international oil companies, helping to prevent further escalation of inter-regional conflicts. Supporters of the legislation also insist that the Iraqi people will still own the nation's oil resources—they just won't manage them.

However, the bill is facing widespread criticism and indignation from many sources, perhaps the most notable being Iraq's oil worker unions. Union leaders, who were not consulted at all during the drafting of the bill, are expressing grave concern that this decision will put the country on a path toward total privatization of the oil industry, which has been in the public sector for over thirty years. With proposed contract lengths of 15 years or more and provisions exempting foreign oil corporations from the authority of Iraqi courts, unionists and others argue that there are no safeguards in place to hold these companies accountable for their actions. The likely result, they say, is that workers rights will further deteriorate

and unions will become vulnerable to the power of multinational corporations. On February 8, several unions sent a letter to Iraqi President Jalal Talbani urging him to oppose the legislation. "Production-sharing agreements are a relic of the 1960s," said the letter, as quoted by IPS. "They will reimprison the Iraqi economy and impinge on Iraq's sovereignty since they only preserve the interests of foreign companies. We warn against falling into this trap."

Some critics also predict that this law—which will be enforced by the military power of occupying U.S. and coalition forces—will provide the United States with an excuse to prolong the occupation, under the pretext that a continued troop presence will be necessary to protect the property and personnel of American oil companies. They also warn that the turning over of oil resources to American corporations will further inflame the already explosive political situation in Iraq and lead to more violence and instability. Ewa Jasiewicz, a researcher at PLATFORM, a British human rights and environmental group that opposes the bill, told IPS that the policy "will be viewed by most Iraqis as not just illegitimate, but a war crime".

The proposed law, if passed, will make Iraq unique among major oil-producing countries in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Kuwait all retain public control over their oil resources, entertaining only individual technical service contracts for specific services such as building a refinery or laying an oil pipeline. None of these countries allow for the kind of sweeping long-term contracts that the Iraqi Cabinet has put forth. "It's a form of privatisation and that's why those countries haven't signed these because it's not in their interests", explains Jasiewicz.



New Australia IWW pamphlet a laugh and a song

The Australian IWW's Corrosive Press launched a new pamphlet this week.

Its title "Fanning Discontent's Flames: Australian Wobbly Poems, Scurrilous Doggerel and Song 1914 - 2007" sums up the general drift of the thing. It works surprisingly well. Here we find working people expressing their views upon what is happening around them, their hopes for the future, their loyalty to their union.

There is humour everywhere, much exasperation at the "boneheads" of their own class who are the real reason capitalism continues and pain at the suppression of their union and the jailing of the twelve leaders.

Together they succeed in creating a picture of what a vibrant, militant, undogmatic and rebellious workers movement looks like.

Most of the old favourites are there such Bill Casey's "Bump Me Into Parliament" or Jack O'Neill's "Bill Magee".

But there are many that have not been seen and read for many a long year such as Mrs Cow's lamentation of how she, like other workers, had been milked and slaughtered by sectional unionism.

Nor does the volume stop back in the days of World War One and horse drawn aeroplanes. Some are drawn from the organisations that Wobblies used to try to beat their "unlawful associations" status, some from the relaunching of *Direct Action* in the late 1920's and quite a reasonable selection from later incarnations of the IWW spirit in much more recent times and publications.

Some of the writers had or have a real talent for words and language, others less so. Some soar on wings of poetic



whimsy while others do not hesitate to become the raw proletarian. Surprisingly this does not matter too much as the compilation comes together into something much more than the sum of its parts.

"Fanning Discontent's Flames" is an A5 pamphlet of 44 pages.

Members of the IWW in Australia will, as usual, get their copy with the February mail-out of the Australian Members' Bulletin.

Anyone else can get one for \$2 plus postage (\$1 in Australia) from Corrosive Press, Post Office Box 1866, Albany, Western Australia 6331. Contact Corrosive at entropy4@gmail.com for details of bulk orders.

A song for the picket line...

No More Concessions

*Tune: So Long, It's Been Good to Know Yuh" by Woody Guthrie.
New words: Glenn R. Plummer, 1984 with Canadian lyrics by Smokey.*

Chorus
There'll be no more, no more concessions,
No more, no more concessions,
No more, no more concessions,
We've got to take back what they've taken away,
There'll be no more concessions today!

I'll tell you a story, it makes my blood boil
So listen, you workers, who labour and toil
There's something that's happening, a blind man can see
They call it concessions, but it's robbery to me... (chorus)

First I went to my Boss and asked "Please tell me why,
Your salary and bonuses must be so high.
You eat but three meals and just sleep in one bed."
But he wasn't impressed, so I stepped up and said: (chorus)

I wrote to the Premier, he's such a nice man
Said "Listen here, Dalton, are things like you planned?
"They've made lots of changes since you came to town,
"But while profits are up, workers' wages are down." (chorus)

So, it's up to our unions 'cause that's what they're for,
We must take a stand now, before we're all poor.
We've made some concessions and pulled our belts tight,
But enough is enough, now we stand up and fight... (chorus)

Film Review

The Take inspires resistance

By Joseph Lapp II

There is no film that I know of more important to the promotion of the ideas of the IWW than the 2004 documentary *The Take* by Canadian radicals Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein. It was filmed in Argentina in 2003 and documents the struggle of a group of factory workers to re-open as a cooperative their plant which had been shut down by its owners.

The documentary takes place after the 2001 financial collapse in Argentina which resulted from government policies of unrestricted globalization. After the collapse, many factories and businesses closed their doors and large portion of the population faced unemployment and starvation.

Rather than sit back and watch their families go hungry, a movement arose to take back the jobs which rampant capitalism had taken away. The motto and rallying cry of this movement is "Occupy! Resist! Produce!" which is precisely what the workers set out to do. They occupied the factories, resisted any efforts to remove them from the premises, and restarted production.

This movement is known by a number of names: the movement of recovered factories, "autogestion", and workers without bosses. In many of these businesses there are no bosses or managers, all decisions are made by democratic consensus, and workers earn the same amount. These three ideas should seem familiar as they are exactly what our union has fought for since its founding in 1905. A world without bosses, the establishment of industrial democracy, and the abolition of the wage system. A new world is being built within the shell of the old down in Argentina.

The Take is a well-made documentary by two first-time filmmakers. It truly captures the emotion and the determination of the workers as they fight against the police, the system of law, and the capitalist class—which, once the workers make the businesses profitable—decide that they want to take back what they once abandoned.

Beyond its relevance as effective propaganda it also serves as a crash course in the problems of globalization. Argentina was the great experiment in these ideas. Every single business-friendly

policy of the WTO was implemented there all at once and the country, which was nearly on level with the first world, collapsed almost overnight.

Every reader of the *Industrial Worker* should see this film. If you've grown disenchanted after years of defeats, the events in Argentina will inspire you. New IWW members who are not yet familiar with our ideas and cannot conceive of a

world without bosses or wages should be shown this film as an example of what we're all fighting for.

This movement should be studied closely by our union in order to find lessons and methods to apply to our own struggle, for "Occupy! Resist! Produce!" can surely stand proudly beside our own revolutionary slogan of "Abolish the wage system!"

The Railroad Industry Needs One Big Union

By Rail Falcon, X341189

Since the mid-1990s, the major US railroads (“Class Is”) have been steadily hiring new trainmen to staff the nation’s freight trains. Passenger carriers such as Amtrak as well as various metropolitan commuter railroads in cities like New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Chicago are also regularly seeking employees. This offers an invaluable opportunity for young activists to hire out in an industrial setting and make some money, all the while:

- learning about the transportation industry;
- working under and understanding a union contract;
- learning the great history of—and participating in—the class struggle on the railway;
- joining with your fellow workers to build the One Big Union in a key sector of the economy.

The new hire usually begins work as a “brakeman” or “conductor trainee”. After a specified period of time and the requisite tests, the new hire is promoted to Conductor. Then at some point in the future, depending upon seniority and the “needs of the carrier”, the conductor may be selected to attend engine school. Following an extended (6 months to a year) on-the-job training, s/he will be promoted to licensed locomotive engineer.

If “train and engine” is not your scene, the railroads are also hiring—although not as regularly—track maintainers, train dispatchers, signal maintainers, car inspectors, clerks, electricians and machinists.

All “train and engine” (T&E) jobs are union jobs, paying between \$30,000 and \$100,000 per year with full benefits. Union membership is obligatory upon successful completion of a probationary period of usually 60-90 days upon “marking up”. The T&E employee has a choice of joining the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (descendent of the oldest craft union in the U.S.) or the United Transportation Union (UTU), an amalgamation of four old craft unions that merged in 1969—the Switchmen (SUNA), Trainmen (BRT), Conductors (OCA) and Firemen (BLF). Dues usually range between \$70 and \$120 per month. Most Locals (UTU) and Divisions (BLET) hold regular monthly membership meetings.

Railroad workers have a proud and militant tradition. National rail strikes have rocked the US include: 1877, the country’s first nationwide and general strike; 1894, the Pullman Strike and boycott led by Eugene V. Debs and the American Railway Union; 1924, the National Shopmen’s Strike; 1946, the post WWII national strike, which together with the miners, briefly brought the nation to a standstill. In addition, countless other smaller strikes on a single carrier and/or by a single craft have taken place over the last 150 years.

The nation’s railroads are integral to the national economy. While a smaller percentage of the total freight shipped now moves by rail, the actual gross tonnage shipped on the railroad is greater than ever before. With the introduction of new technologies—radio, computer, sensors, satellite, microprocessors, etc—and the elimination of thousands of jobs, US railroaders are now by far the most “efficient” railway workers in the world on a basis of “ton-miles” per employee. Chicago is the rail center of the world, moving more tonnage through its city limits than any other. All large U.S. cities and many smaller ones have large rail terminals located somewhere in the greater metro area.

Railroads move most bulk commodities that are more easily and/or inexpensively shipped by other transport modes

— grain, coal, fertilizer, feed, forest products and paper, chemicals, iron ore (taconite), finished steel, automobiles, heavy machinery, etc. In addition, the fast growing sector of railway goods carried in the last decade or so is containers. Many main lines criss-crossing the U.S. see regular shipments of “stack” trains laden with 200 or more containers. Many of these come off of ships and eventually end up on trucks to their final destination, hence the term “inter-modal”.

In the 1860s and 1870s, the various crafts on the railroad began to organize into “brotherhoods”. These organizations came into existence

initially to assist their members in time of hardship. Railroadings was—and still is—an extremely dangerous and difficult job, and the brotherhoods pooled the resources of their memberships to assist members and their widows in times of disaster. They quickly evolved into fighting organizations to defend their members’ rights, safety and health, wages, benefits and conditions of employment. However, their fragmented nature and narrow vision limited their effectiveness. Eugene V. Debs, a leader of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen (BLF) and other railroaders soon realized the shortcomings of the railroad craft unions, and proposed a new form of union—the “industrial union.” In 1893, they set about the task of building the nation’s first such union—one based upon inclusion of all members of all crafts into its ranks—the American Railway Union (ARU). This inclusion stopped at the color line—blacks were excluded from the industry and its unions.

Within a year, the ranks of the ARU had swelled to hundreds of thousands. Members were joining at the rate of 2,000 per week. In its first test of strength, the new union took on the Great Northern Railway and the powerful railroad tycoon, James J. Hill (whose name is forever immortalized in the song Hallelujah I’m a Bum—“That’s why I’m a boomin’ down Jim Hill’s mainline”). Within two weeks, the ARU had brought

the “Empire Builder” to his knees. The strike ended in near total victory for the workers. The power of industrial unionism had been proven. Just a few short months later, the ARU took on the Pullman Company. In solidarity with the striking workers at the Pullman Works just south of Chicago, the ARU called for a boycott of handling Pullman cars. ARU members refused to handle them in their trains. This direct action was

so effective that the strike was sure to be won. In response, the carriers, Pullman and the U.S. Government conspired to break the strike, destroy the ARU and arrest and imprison its leaders.

With the ARU decimated, the carriers turned their at-

tention to negotiating with the brotherhoods. While most of the robber barons would have preferred to operate in a strictly non-union environment, they began to see the advantages of dealing with the fractured and divided craft unions of the day. By 1926, the Railway Labor Act was signed into law with the support of both craft unions and carriers. The Act institutionalized labor-management relations on the railroad and remains the model in use to this day.

Through mergers and affiliations, the myriad craft unions on the railroad have now been pared down to “only” nine or ten. Some are affiliated with the AFL-CIO while others are now part of the Change-to-Win Coalition. The in-fighting and backstabbing, union scabbing and sweetheart deal-making continues, alternating between periods of truce, merger or attempted merger of the various organizations. In this environment, it is extremely common to hear talk among rank-and-filers of the need for One Big Union, one union of all crafts, one union to represent all railroaders. Even the leadership will invoke such sentiment (between their name-calling, bashing, scabbery, and back-stabbing) from time to time: the UTU’s “Power of One” slogan during the attempted merger with the BLE in 2000-2001; the IBT’s Jimmy Hoffa with the “Teamster Umbrella” notion, and the rhetoric of a “seamless union in transportation.”

All members of the IWW who are looking for work should consider joining the struggle and hire out on the railroad.

Pensacola GMB calls for support of Wobbly with Multiple Sclerosis

“Purest Kind of Guy” on unpaid leave since December diagnosis

By Scott Satterwhite

There is a Paul Robeson song entitled “The Purest Kind of a Guy.” When I hear that song, I think of one person: Fellow Worker Steven Winfrey.

On March 30, 2007, the Pensacola GMB will hold a benefit concert for one of its founding members, Steven Winfrey. Winfrey was recently diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, a disease that affects the nervous system. Winfrey, prior to his diagnosis, worked at a chain grocery store in Pensacola who joined the IWW after a failed organizing drive by the UFCW at his store in 2001.

Afterwards, Winfrey pushed to organize here in Pensacola, not with the UFCW, but with the One Big Union. Winfrey was not only one of the founding members, but was the person primarily responsible for the Pensacola GMB being formed in the first place. Within the GMB, he helped keep the union going after a massive hurricane hit Pensacola in 2004 leaving most of the union (and the city) out of work for months.

After the GMB was chartered in 2004, Winfrey helped build the union in various ways. One of his most notable

contributions was with solidarity food rations. In 2005, Winfrey was responsible for having food rations given to help support immigrant workers after a successful wildcat strike, led by a Fellow Worker from the Dominican Republic with several co-workers from Mexico that were living and working under extreme conditions.

Shortly afterwards, Winfrey helped with more food rations to be delivered to dozens of striking Pensacola Amalgamated Transit Union members, weekly, in an act of solidarity during the 3 months that they were on strike from November 2005 to February 2006.

Since Winfrey’s diagnosis in December, he has been on an unpaid leave of absence. He is now not only struggling with this new condition, but also fighting with disability, company, medical and insurance bureaucracies, all the while trying to pay his bills, support his kids, and keep his dignity.

In recognition of this situation, the Pensacola GMB has organized a benefit concert to help their Fellow Worker out. The event will be hosted by Sluggo’s Vegetarian Restaurant and will feature several bands and musicians who have known Winfrey over the years and want

to show their thanks to a good friend, and a good Wob.

It is in this context—the long and militant tradition of railroaders; the experience of industrial unionism, Eugene Debs and the ARU; the colorful history of direct action; and the glaring short-comings of craft unionism at its absolute worst—that the ideas of the IWW are more vital and relevant than ever on the railroad. The Wobblies’ shunning of electoral politics, reliance on self-help and direct action, the notion of the industrial union, the concept of “an injury to one is an injury to all”, the general strike—all this plays well among workers on the nation’s railroads. Railroaders today are looking for answers beyond the narrow confines of their own increasingly irrelevant craft union. They want an organization with strength and power, one capable of taking on the huge corporations, the modern day “robber barons.”

Corporate profits on the railroad today are at record levels. Yet the Carriers are pushing for expanded use of Remote Control Operations and single-employee operation of through freight. They are making outrageous concessionary demands at the bargaining table in wages and benefits. The craft unions are not able to stand up effectively to this bullying and harassment that the carriers are meting out, not just at the bargaining table, but on a day-to-day basis on the properties of the nation’s Class I carriers.

All members of the IWW who are looking for work should consider joining the struggle and hire out on the railroad. The major Class I carriers are hiring trainmen and others regularly at most rail terminals all across the country. To learn more about hiring out, check out the Railroad Retirement Board Website at <http://www.rrb.gov/>. Click on “Policies & Links”, then “Railroad Industry & Railroad Union websites click here” for a complete listing of all major Class I railroad websites where you can apply for a position. Current jobs are listed on each site with directions of how to submit your application and resume on-line. For more information about the railroad, rail unions, the movement for rail labor unity, hiring out, training, please write to railfalcon@yahoo.com.

The author is a certified locomotive engineer, currently a member of the BLET, and a long-time member of the IWW.

To help out, the Pensacola GMB is asking the union’s membership for contributions, whether you know Steve, know people who have had the bad luck of having MS or have been in similar circumstances yourself.

If you or your GMB would like to help out a good Wob who was given the short end of the stick, any and all contributions will be greatly appreciated.

To date, the GMB has collected money from Fellow Workers in the area and as far away as Boston, from members of the Amalgamated Transit Union, local members of Veterans for Peace, and others in the local activist/punk/anarchist community. The March 30th benefit will be the second event the GMB has organized to help out FW Winfrey.

Donations can be sent to:

IWW Pensacola GMB, Steve Winfrey MS Fund, PO Box 2662, Pensacola, FL 32513-2662.

Checks can be made payable to the Pensacola IWW with “Steve Winfrey MS Fund” written in the memo blank.

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS



The Big Red Songbook
 Edited by Archie Green, David Roediger, Franklin Rosemont and Salvatore Salerno

This is indeed an incredible endeavor. The most comprehensive collection of rebel workers' songs and poems ever compiled in English, *The Big Red Songbook* includes all the songs that appeared in the IWW's celebrated *Little Red Songbook* from 1908 through 1972, plus dozens more. Here are the songs of Joe Hill, T-Bone Slim, Dick Bricker, Ralph Chaplin, Cornington Hall and other Wobbly legends, lesser knowns, but ought to be legends such as Eugene Barnett, Paul Walter, and Henry Hall; for the first time anywhere, a good selection of songs by

women Wobblies: Anna Theda Park, Laura Payne Harrison, Sophie Fagin, Jane Scott, Laura Trane and others; Australians Bill Casey and Harry Hooper, Englishman Leon Rowland, Germans Ernst Ribbe and John Odey, and Scotsman Douglas Robson. A special section focuses on variants and parodies of IWW songs: a Depression-era version of "Halliday's For a Rose," Jack Langley's 1960s version of "Solidarity Forever," an Earth First! adaptation of Joe Hill's "There is Power" by William Jay Smith, and Hazel Dickens' bold update of "The Rebel Girl." And there's the wealth of essays, analysis, references, bibliographies, and discographies, provided by Archie Green, his coeditors, and other collaborators, giving not only historical context, but also a wide range of perspectives on the Wobbly counterculture and its enduring legacies.
 546 pages, \$24.00



The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First One Hundred Years
 by Fred W. Thompson and Jon Bekken
 forward by Utah Phillips

Many histories have been written of the Industrial Workers of the World, often called the Wobblies. Founded in 1905 in hopes of uniting the working class into One Big Union, the IWW promoted industrial organization at a time when craft unionism was the established pattern. The IWW welcomed all workers, regardless of ethnicity, race or gender when other unions boasted of their exclusionary policies. Its reliance on direct action on the job generated much of the strategy and tactics of the modern labor movement. Often referred to as the singing union, Wobblies wrote hundreds of labor songs and published millions of copies of their *Little Red Songbook*. The IWW's theme song, "Solidarity Forever," became the anthem of the entire American labor movement.

The first book on the history of the IWW was published in 1919, just 14 years after the union's founding. Since then, countless articles, novels and histories (an annotated bibliography issued in 1988 lists more than 5,000) have been published on the union — showing that the IWW's influence has extended well beyond its membership and captured the imagination of generations of labor activists, novelists, poets and historians.

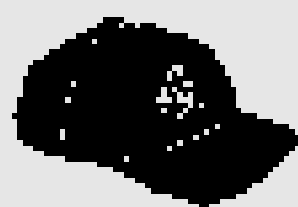
The IWW: Its First 100 Years is the most comprehensive history of the union ever published. Written by two Wobblies who lived through many of the struggles they chronicle, it documents the famous struggles such as the Lawrence and Paterson strikes, the fight for decent conditions in the Pacific Northwest timber fields, the IWW's pioneering organizing among harvest hands in the 1910s and 1920s, and the war-time repression that sent thousands of IWW members to jail. But it is the only general history to give substantive attention to the IWW's successful organizing of African-American and immigrant dock workers on the Philadelphia waterfront, the international union of women the IWW built from 1913 through the 1930s, smaller job actions through which the IWW, Wobbly successes organizing in manufacturing in the 1930s and 1940s, and the union's recent resurgence. Extensive source notes provide guidance to readers wishing to explore particular campaigns in more depth. There is no better history for the reader looking for an overview of the history of the Industrial Workers of the World, and for an understanding of its ideas and tactics.
 253 pages \$19.95

COMBO DEAL: Big Red Songbook & First 100 Years for \$38.00



Horizontalist: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina
 edited by Marina Sitrin

"Marina Sitrin has provided an invaluable service to scholars and activists around the world by compiling the testimonies of the participants in some of the most prominent and original Argentine popular movements. These activists speak of political passion, determination, solidarity, and new forms of horizontal organization. They also speak of frustration, obstacles, and repression. Overall, their voices show in startling detail the stubborn hope of a new generation of workers and fighters."
 —Julio Araya, author, *Construction Lives*
 253 pages \$18.95

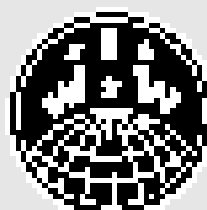


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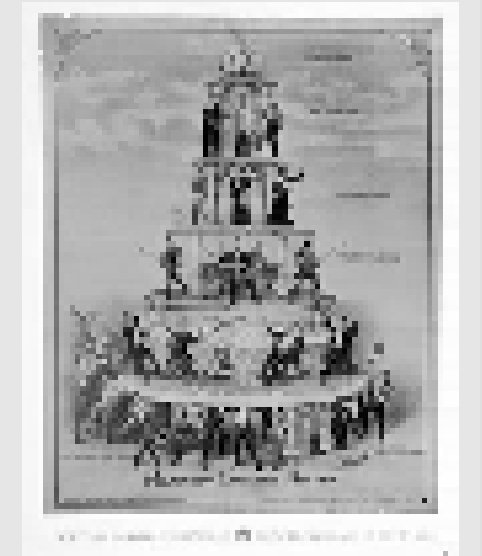


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Day laborers fight for their rights—and win

By Brad Thomson, Chicago General Defence Committee

On February 21, dozens of people joined a group of workers fired for organizing to demand their jobs back. Just days before, seven day laborers had been fired from H2O+, a company that manufactures and sells high-end beauty products, headquartered in Chicago.

The firings, along with threats the company made against other workers, were an act of retaliation against the workers for organizing for better pay and treatment.

These workers are members of San Lucas Workers Center, an organization comprised of workers and day laborers, which has consistently demanded for better pay and working conditions from employers and day labor agencies in Chicago.

On the bus ride from the Workers Center to the action, several of the fired workers told their story, several of them describing how they had worked at H2O+ for as long as eight or nine years without holding permanent positions. Lacking job security, they were terminated after meeting with management to

ask for a pay raise and holiday pay.

Getting off the bus, we were met by other workers and supporters, over 50 of us in all. We were led by the fired workers as we approached the luxurious home of Cindy Melk, described by the H2O+ website as the “visionary, founder and CEO” of the company. As the fired workers approached the front door, the rest of us anxiously waited.

When a light came on in the house, we instantly revealed our picket signs and burst into chants. The babysitter came to the door. We chanted for her to call Melk, while hundreds of flyers were distributed to passersby and to the mailboxes of the neighbors. We continued to

chant and before long, the police came. A supportive priest said a prayer before we left a letter for Melk and departed.

Although she wasn't home at the time, Melk clearly got the message, as two days later H2O+ met with the workers and re-hired all those who had been unjustly fired. In addition, the workers won a raise, holiday pay and vacation pay.

“This is a true success for all of us. The president himself came to shake my hand and welcome me back,” said San Lucas worker-leader Maria Luz Sosa.

The courage of these workers was incredibly inspiring and the victory was a powerful reminder of what we already know: Direct Action Gets the Goods!

Mexican miners remember Pasta de Conchos disaster

Miners and other workers across Mexico observed a one day strike February 19 in remembrance of last year's Pasta de Conchos mine disaster and in protest of the continuing lack of safety standards and accountability on the part of Mexican mining companies.

On February 19, 2006, around 65 coal miners were buried alive by a mine explosion at Pasta de Conchos, in the Mexican state of Coahuila. There were no survivors and only two of the bodies were recovered. The mines were run by Grupo México, the largest mining company in Mexico. Miners and unionists accused the company of having permitted the tragedy to occur by not enforcing safety precautions.

Shortly after the disaster, National Mining and Metal Workers Union (SNTMMSRM) General Secretary Napoleón Gómez Urrutia was mysteriously removed from his position by the Mexican government and replaced with his opponent Elías Morales Hernández, who is reportedly backed by Grupo México. In response, from March 1-3, 2006, 250,000 miners and steelworkers struck 70 companies, demanding Gómez Urrutia's reinstatement and also better safety standards. This wildcat strike was one of the largest industrial actions in recent Mexican history. Since then, a faction of SNTMMSRM has remained loyal to Gómez Urrutia, who issues directives to his supporters from exile in British Columbia, Canada. The banished leader has been accused of corruption and embezzlement, though it is currently unclear whether these charges have any

merit or not. The two factions remain in conflict with each other, with national officers following Morales Hernández and many local leaders supporting Gómez Urrutia.

In addition to the recent symbolic strike, the one-year anniversary of the Pasta de Conchos explosion also witnessed a delegation from the US/Canadian United Steel Workers (USW), who joined with Mexican workers to urge Mexican President Felipe Calderon to resolve the conflict. “Until this government decides to respect the right of workers to elect their union leaders and democratically govern their unions, Mexico will be the focus of international condemnation,” declared Ken Neumann, USW National Director for Canada.

Meanwhile, relatives of the dead miners gathered for memorial ceremonies at the mine and to protest the continued lack of safety standards. “We're asking for more resources from mining companies and the federal government because safety conditions at the mines have not improved,” said Bishop Alonso Garza of Piedras Negras. Family members also demanded that the government recover the remains of their loved ones, a task that has been held up for a year by the presence of methane gas.

Palestinian unions want boycott of Israel

On February 11, Palestinian unions and grassroots organizations called for a boycott of Israel for its human rights violations.

Several Palestinian unions and federations—including the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the General Union of Palestinian Workers—along with the grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign and over 170 Palestinian organizations, joined the call.

They urged labor unions in the Arab nations and around the world to divest from the state of Israel until that nation “stops its crimes against our people and implements international law safeguarding human rights for all.”

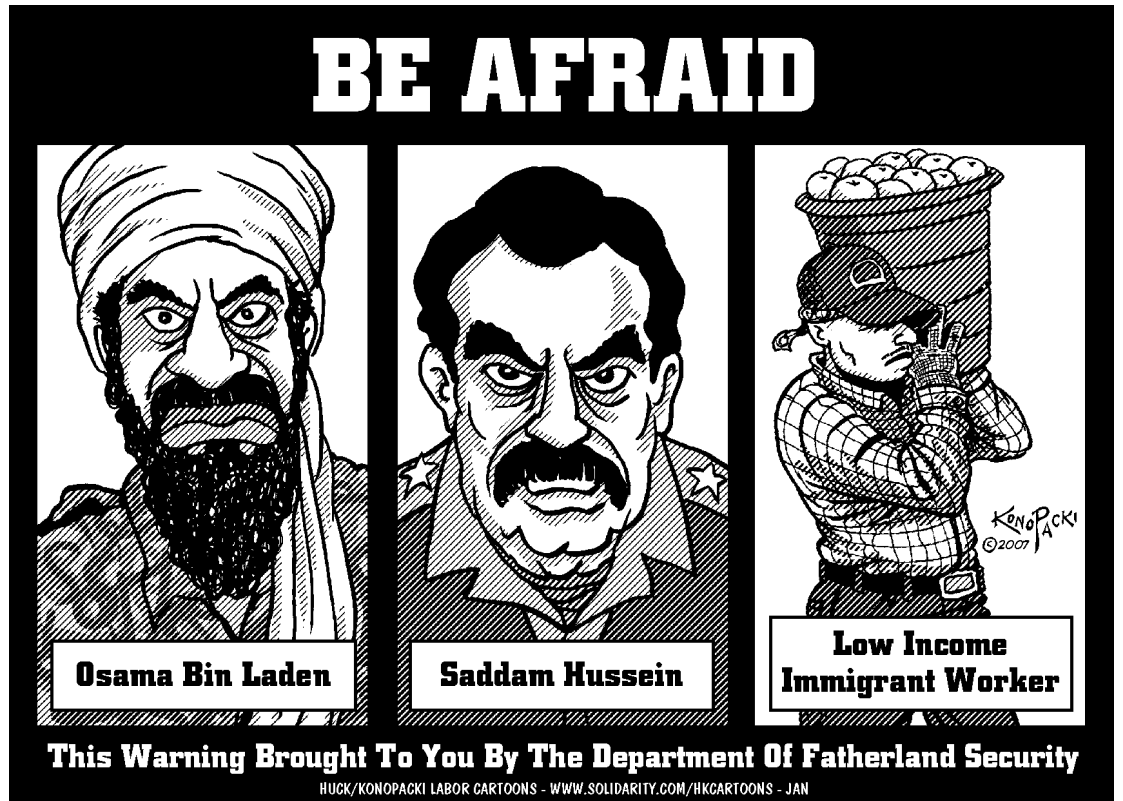
Specifically, the groups called for an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories, self-determination, the Right of Return for refugees, “social justice”, and an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as an end to “racism against our people inside the Green Line.”

The document, which has been circulated over the internet and through other media, states that this is the beginning of a worldwide union-led movement for “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” with the aim of winning justice for the people of Palestine.

Recalling a long list of grievances and indignities, the signers urge unions around the world to support divestment campaigns that already exist, organize their own boycotts, and coordinate internationally to strategically implement the divestment movement.



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Massachusetts latest in immigration raids

350 of 500 workers detained

Less than three months after last December's devastating nationwide immigration sweep at Swift and Co., Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has launched another major raid, this time in the quiet New England town of New Bedford, Massachusetts.

On Tuesday, March 6, 300 ICE agents descended on a leather manufacturing plant owned by Michael Bianco, Inc, a company that had contracts with the U.S. military for leather backpacks and survival vests. The agents arrested the company's owner and three managers on charges of hiring undocumented workers. The agents also detained up to 350 of the factory's 500 workers, largely Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants. Some of the workers fled when agents stormed the building, but most were tracked down by helicopters.

The workers were taken to Fort Devens for “processing,” said officials. Within two days, ICE transported 90 of the detained immigrants by plane from Fort Devens to a detention center in Texas and another 116 to Albuquerque, New Mexico, presumably to expedite their deportation.

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick on March 8 urged authorities not to move any more workers until their children can be located and arrangements made for their care, according to the Associated Press. By the 8th, two planes had already left but a third plane

was temporarily held after Governor Patrick made repeated calls to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

Although Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Julie Myers said that precautions had been taken to protect the immigrants' children, at least one serious case has been identified. A mother of a 7-month-old infant was unable to nurse her child because she was being held by immigration authorities, Massachusetts Department of Social Services spokeswoman Denise Monteiro told the Associated Press. As a result the baby had to be hospitalized for dehydration. Even then, the woman was not released until the night of March 8th, more than two days after the raid. Bigby said.

“We have no idea how many... [children] went home with no one there,” said JudyAnn Bigby, secretary of Health and Human Services.

Federal investigators are now accusing Bianco's owner, Francesco Insolia, of subjecting his employees to sweatshop conditions. Workers had to operate in a filthy environment and were fined \$20 for trivial “offenses” like talking at work or spending more than two minutes in the bathroom. Nonetheless, with over 70 per cent of the factory's workforce in custody, with many under threat of deportation, it is difficult to see how this raid could be construed to benefit the workers.



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.

IWW needs contacts for Mexican border project

Solidaridad, the IWW's new Spanish-language newsletter, recently received a request from an IWW supporter in Mexico City, for contact information of IWW members, branches and allies that are engaged or interested in immigrant solidarity issues.

This information will be used to help organize a border camp in November. If you or your branch is interested in this project or if you have information about other relevant groups, contact the ISC at solidarity@iww.org.

Please indicate if there are any Spanish speakers (native or otherwise) in your branch. These contacts will be forwarded on to our compañeras and compañeros in Mexico.

Vietnamese government arrests independent union leaders

As reported in the previous issue of the *Industrial Worker*, several leaders of Vietnam's United Workers and Farmers Association and the Vietnamese Inde-

pendent Union have been arrested and detained for violating a government ban on independent unions.

The ISC wrote a letter to Vietnamese officials in February demanding the immediate release of the jailed unionists and the end of repression against unions and farm workers. The letter also condemned "the efforts of corrupt local officials to confiscate the land of farmers for their own...purposes."

Iranian Transport Workers need solidarity - sign the petition

The ISC signed onto a petition in support of transportation workers in Iran. About 50 employees of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company for supporting the actions of their union, Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company.

More recently, half of these workers received a letter of dismissal from the Labour Ministry. Iran's government still does not fully recognize the union and the company has refused to sign a collective bargaining agreement with the workers.

The ISC is calling upon the government of Iran to rectify the situation and restore the rights of the workers. Readers can sign the petition online at <http://www.itfglobal.org/solidarity/iranpetition.cfm/formbuilder/38/p/1>.

Steelworkers launch website to coordinate actions against ExxonMobil

The United Steelworkers launched a website, workersatexxonmobil.usw.org, on March 12 so workers at ExxonMobil sites across the world can learn about each other's struggle and coordinate actions.

The site—published in English, Spanish, French, Russian and Japanese—is meant to help workers enforce global labor and human rights standards, stop the out-sourcing of jobs and increase job security worldwide, according to the web site.

Twenty-seven unions across the world are representing or attempting to organize ExxonMobil workers, despite the company's long anti-union history.

"ExxonMobil has a long history of issues being raised relative to its questionable concern for the needs of workers and the communities in which it operates," said Jim Pannell, the chair of the Global Network.

The network's steering committee is chaired by Gary Beevers of the United



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States and includes representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, North America, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (a group of former Soviet Republics).

India

Tirupur tailors strike for higher wages

About 10,000 "power table" workers in Tirupur, India, struck on February 26 and remain on the picket line.

The workers, who stitch banyans and undergarments for domestic brands, are demanding a 30 per cent pay increase to keep up with the cost of sewing supplies, rent, utilities and other charges.

The tailors observed a one day fast organized by their organization, the

Tirupur Baniyan Stitching Section Owners Association.

Thus far, negotiations between managers and workers have failed to yield an agreement.

The workers say the wage/cost imbalance is the fault of several North Indian companies that have neglected to make any rate adjustments over the past four years.

Colombian workers feel flowers' thorns

By Alexandra Early

Every year on Valentine's Day, millions of Americans head to their local florist or supermarket to buy flowers for a friend or family member. Most are mainly concerned about getting the flowers to the recipient on time. Few ever ask where the flowers come from or who helped grow and pick them.

I never thought much about the human beings behind the bouquets either—until I traveled to Colombia last year and talked with a group of "floriculture" workers in a village near Bogota. I learned that our domestic expressions of affection—which reach their largest volume on Valentine's Day and Mothers' Day—require painful, low-paid labor by a global workforce that's largely female.

America's main supplier is Colombia, the second-largest exporter of fresh-cut flowers next to the Netherlands. More than 100,000 workers help grow, sort, and package the nearly \$1 billion worth of flowers produced there each year. Originally spurred by tariff incentives designed to induce farmers to switch from coca cultivation, the industry is now dominated by big local plantation owners and multinational corporations like Dole Food.

The Colombian flower workers I met received little love or appreciation from management—on Valentine's Day or any other. During a visit by a delegation of American labor and student activists, members of a union called Sintrasplendor described the many occupational hazards they face.

Whether young or old, they complained about the lack of protective equipment and clothing, which leaves them exposed to pesticides in the fields and to the fungicides that flowers are dipped in prior to shipment. They say the chemicals cause widespread headaches, asthma, nausea, and impaired vision. The repetitive tasks and long hours in assembly-line jobs have also left many flower workers with painful carpal tunnel injuries.

Like Coca Cola and other foreign firms in Colombia, Dole has taken advantage of the country's weak labor laws and climate of repression. When workers at Dole-owned Splendor Flowers tried to organize two years ago to win better pay and conditions, management conducted an aggressive anti-union campaign. According to the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), this "included bringing in a company-backed union, firing union leaders, challenging

the union's legal registration with the Colombian government, and refusing to reinstate fired union leaders despite court orders to do so."

Moreover, Dole recently announced the closing of its Splendor plantation, blaming the layoff of one-third of its Colombian workforce on lower-wage competition from Africa and Asia. Within a decade, most roses will be "Made in China" because that nation is gearing up to undercut exporters in Ecuador, Kenya, Malaysia, and Thailand, as well as Colombia.

On China's new flower farms, workers are already clipping roses in giant greenhouses, taking them to huge sheds to remove the thorns, and then wrapping them in paper and plastic for shipment to Los Angeles or Moscow. Without any job rights or union protection, young women earning \$25 per month face the same occupational safety and health problems as their South American counter parts.

Human-rights and labor solidarity groups like Witness for Peace, Global Exchange, the Colombia Support Network, and US Labor Education Project in the Americas have all taken up the cause of the displaced Splendor workers.

None of these activists are trying to cast a pall over Valentine's Day. They just want more consumers to choose flowers that have been certified as "VeriFlora" products. VeriFlora growers don't use the pesticides that sicken flower workers and they agree to respect local labor rights and environmental regulations. Unfortunately, only two flower-sellers in the United States—Freshblooms in New Jersey and Organic Bouquet in California—have embraced this higher standard.

A few years ago, American jewelry buyers were still being offered the product of illegal trafficking in precious stones—the "blood diamonds" mined by child laborers in strife-torn Africa. It took years of international campaigning before public awareness was raised and importation of this tainted merchandise was sharply curtailed. If the abundant thorns in the global flower trade begin to prick a few consumer consciences, "floriculture" abuses may someday be censured as well. If enough of us question and complain, more flower importers in this country will begin using suppliers certified as socially responsible and worker-friendly.

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Zimbabwe teachers attacked

Immediately after declaring a ban on protests, police assaulted teachers in front of their students at several schools near the capital city of Harare February 21, forcing some of them to eat chalk, according to independent news agency ZimOnline. The attacks came after a weekend of clashes between police and opposition Movement for Democratic Change supporters who had gathered for a legally permitted rally. In their crackdown on political dissent, police targeted teachers because of the recent announcement of the 96,000 member Zimbabwe Teacher's Association (ZIMTA) that they will soon join the smaller, more militant Progressive Teacher's Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) in their strike for livable wages. A major economic, political and social crisis has exploded in Zimbabwe over the past few months.

Armed police stormed Shiryedenga, Ruvheneko and Chembira schools in the dense suburb of Glen Norah, beating up teachers and causing schoolchildren to flee for their safety. Education Minister

Aeneas Chigwedere tried to justify the attacks, arguing that the strike was designed to serve a "political agenda."

"It's nonsensical for anyone to say the teachers' action is a political issue," said PTUZ secretary-general Raymond Majongwe. "It's a matter of life and death because surely one cannot survive on a monthly salary of Zimbabwean \$84,000." Due to runaway inflation, the poverty threshold for an average family of five is presently Z\$460,000 per month.

Rather than attempting to address the needs of his country's civil servants, President Robert Mugabe—who turned 83 on February 22—and his cabinet are threatening to hire replacement workers or to dock the salaries of striking teachers. Despite the threats and actual physical assaults, ZITMA president Tendai Chikowore told ZimOnline that the union remains undeterred. "The action is countrywide and we won't stop until government comes up with something better."