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Scottish college sacks Unison steward, cuts jobs

By Moira McKim, scotland.indymedia.org

The Edinburgh College of Art sacked Unison shop steward, Eddie Murray, a former secretary of the Edinburgh IWW branch, for his union activity.

Workers said college management fired him for opposing 'modernisation' proposals, which threaten to worsen conditions.

Meanwhile, the hierarchy of his union, Unison, one of the largest unions in the United Kingdom with 1.5 million members, has done little to defend their steward, in effect colluding with college management's suspension and then firing of Murray.

Modernisation or job cuts and concessions?

In August 2006, a new college and university pay agreement came into effect, meaning that all staff would have their "jobs assessed and their pay graded according to the same criteria." The director of the University and College Employers' Association stated that this

"ground-breaking deal is designed to encourage more mobility between new and old universities and to offer equal pay for equal work." All seven unions involved in the Framework Agreement discussions, the TGWU, Unison, Amicus, and others, agreed that low paid workers would score well on this new pay scale. That was the theory.

The practice was more complicated. At Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) a 50-part questionnaire, an interview, a handbook, and computer software called Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) was used. Rather than bring in independent specialists to do the assessments, the college formed a HERA steering committee which would do the assessments in two-person teams. In at least one unit, a human resources staff person 'volunteered' to be one-half of the assessment team.

Staff would have their roles individually "analysed" and, depending on results, would either be 'moved over' (no

change), be 'green circled' (a pay increase), or 'red circled' (the dreaded pay cut). 'Red circled' people were supposed to have a process to appeal the result.

Finally, members of the three in-college unions, EIS, Amicus and Unison, would be balloted on whether the process had been fairly and properly done before their individual HERA results were sent out to staff. However, at many colleges and universities, this ballot was held before staff had seen their results. Many ballots also happened during the summer, with many members on leave or off-campus. In most cases, the union recommended a yes vote.

When the HERA results were released and members saw they were in for a pay cut or job loss, the unions pointed to members' 'yes' vote and said they couldn't do anything because members had voted that the process was fair.

Alarm bells

Confusion about the modernisation process turned into increasing concern and worry as the results of the process rolled in from the University of Edinburgh and other institutions. This 'modernisation' programme had turned out to be little more than a ruse to cut wages and save a fortune on staff budgets.

When outside role analysts were used at one English university, the lowest-paid staff, cleaners and catering workers, did indeed come out much better off. So university management put cleaning and catering out to competitive contract instead of paying the higher rates. At another institution, senior management came out splendidly while most other staff were 'red circled'.

Continued on 9

NYC IWWs win \$350,000 in back wages

By 460 Solidarity, www.wobblycity.org

Six IWW members fired from Handyfat Trading, a food warehouse in New York City, for organizing a union won a court battle for \$360,000 in March.

These workers had previously won a court case that reinstated them to their jobs after the firings of all union members in December 2006 and January 2007 at Handyfat and EZ Supply.

The IWW held a victory picket at Handyfat Trading in Brooklyn, a neigh-

borhood in New York, on March 15 to celebrate the jury award.

Workers from Handyfat Trading founded IWW Industrial Union 460 in December 2005. They were instrumental and active in organizing the ten other food service shops that have joined IU 460 since then.

In addition, Handyfat workers along with the workers from EZ Supply/Sunrise Plus, achieved the first collective bargaining agreements in this part of the food industry.

ILWU declares May 1 day to stop war

The following resolution was passed overwhelmingly by the International Longshoreman and Warehouse Union (ILWU).

Based on this resolution, the ILWU sent a letter to the AFL-CIO President John Sweeney demanding action and solidarity on May Day 2008.

For workers' action to stop the war:

Whereas: On May 1, 2003, at the ILWU Convention in San Francisco, resolutions were passed calling for an end to the war and occupation in Iraq; and

Whereas: ILWU took the lead among labor unions in opposing this bloody war and occupation for imperial domination; and

Whereas: Many unions and the overwhelming majority of the American people now oppose this bipartisan and unjustifiable war in Iraq and Afghanistan but the two major political parties, Democrats and Republicans continue to fund the war; and

Whereas: Millions worldwide have marched and demonstrated against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but have been unable to stop the wars; and

Whereas: ILWU's historic dock actions, 1) like the refusal of Local 10

longshoremen to load bombs for the military dictatorship in Chile in 1978 and military cargo to the Salvadoran military dictatorship in 1981 and

2) the honoring of the teachers' union anti-war picket May 19, 2007 against SSA in the port of Oakland stand as a limited but shining example of how to oppose these wars; and

Whereas: The spread of war in the Middle East is threatened with US air strikes in Iran or possible military intervention in Syria or the destabilized Pakistan;

Therefore be it resolved:

That it is time to take labor's protest to a more powerful level of struggle by calling on unions and working people in the U. S. and internationally to mobilize for a "No Peace No Work Holiday" May 1, 2008 for eight hours to demand an immediate end to the war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and the withdrawal of US troops from the Middle East; and

Further be it resolved:

That a clarion call from the ILWU be sent with an urgent appeal for unity of action to the AFL-CIO, the Change to Win Coalition and all of the international labor organizations to which we are affiliated to bring an end to this bloody war once and for all.

IWW Organizing Summit agenda set

The April 18-20 IWW Organizing Summit in Toronto, Canada, will kick off with a panel on Alternative Worker Organizing on the Friday, followed by a social.

The Saturday agenda includes a talk on "Why We Fight" and sessions from the Organizer Training Committee, on contracts or dual card organizing, identifying obstacles in organizing such as race, gender, sexuality and immigration status, as well as how to run "sustainable and winnable campaigns."

The Sunday will include industrial, corporate campaign, and regional strategy sessions.

The summit will also serve as a means for bodies of the union such as the Organizer Training Committee, the Organizing Department Board, the Women's Caucus, and Regional Organizing Committees, to discuss issues face-to-face.

A wrap-up session will bring ideas and plans made to the fore for follow-up after the summit.

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Israeli baristas unionize The Coffee Bean

By John Kalwaic

In Tel Aviv, Israel, baristas at the US-owned international chain, The Coffee Bean, have won their strike.

The struggle began in July 2007 when a worker was sacked for trying to form a workers committee at his store. Histadrut, the Israeli labor union central, successfully challenged the firing in court.

However, The Coffee Bean company refused to negotiate with the workers. Coffee Bean workers as well as youth and labor activists took their demonstrations to different stores of this coffee chain.

The workers have now joined the Histadrut union. On January 22, they went out on strike against the union-busting management.

Management decided to negotiate.

On March 11, The Coffee Bean signed an agreement with Histadrut that will affect 300 workers in 14 outlets.

The Coffee Bean has agreed to recognize the union and pay its workers 10 per cent of its annual profits.

The agreement also gives employees that have worked for at least one year a bonus and low-cost meals.



Prisoner wants more US coverage, subscription renewal

Because I cannot afford membership or the IW, I have had a prisoner sub, which I want to continue. Please renew my prisoner sub. I have been in the IW newspaper in the past.

There are some pluses and minuses with the "NEW" IW. The IWW is making a good and strong reputation concentrating on Starbucks and Direct Action; and others are taking notice, whether they want to or not. That is excellent.

At the same time, because the US is the dog that wags the globalization tail of capitalism, I think the IW should concentrate most of its news on the US, while simultaneously helping IWW groups in other countries to build their organizations.

Don't let up.

Thank you and best wishes,

Robert J. Zani
Texas

Buy a prisoner subscription to the *Industrial Worker*. Send a cheque for \$18 to IW Prisoner Subscription, c/o IWW, PO Box 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223 USA with a note on the cheque: 'prisoner subscription.'

Wobbly trucker refuses to cross UAW picket at American Axle

Well, the strike at American Axle & Mfg. has its first casualty. I refused to cross the picket the United Auto Workers (UAW) set up at an off-site warehouse in Three Rivers, Michigan.

Went round and round with the outfit I was hauling for... even spoke with the apparent number 2 guy in the company. Interesting conversation, which truly reinforced the notion that we have nothing in common with the employing class.

I ended up dropping the truck and trailer in Indiana and quitting. UAW was very appreciative. They got a Three Rivers car dealership to loan them a van, so they could give me a ride back to my home in southwestern Ohio, about 250 miles one way. Loaded all my gear from the truck into the van and we had a fine ride all the way home. Makes you feel all warm and fuzzy inside when you do the right thing. I got them to give me one of

the "UAW On Strike" signs they had with them. Good souvenir. I can put it with the stuff I kept from the AK Steel lockout I endured in 2006.

The American Axle workers are being told to take probably a \$14/hour cut plus loss of benefits, etc. Same old song sung by GM, Ford, et al.

Frankly, I expect the UAW to eventually cave, as they just aren't structured to beat the boss. As I explained to my captive audience as we rolled through Ohio, "The UAW scabs itself!" Not being organized industrially, having different expirations for their contracts, UAW being an agent rather than a member-run union, etc., it explains why the UAW plants will always receive and assemble parts from other UAW plants that are on strike.

Always have, always will. There can never be any solidarity there as long as they eat their own. The Janesville, Wisconsin plant is assembling scab parts as I write this. They are UAW.

Apparently, the old company will deduct cost of retrieving their truck from my pay. Abandonment, I believe it is called. Company couldn't believe I didn't care about that. Hey, I told them when they hired me, I wasn't about money.

Will start new job search on Monday. UAW guy gave me a contact to call about a trucking job. We'll see. Won't take just anything. A guy has to have some standards. Actually, may not be able to stay in trucking due to the abandonment. Oh, well. Ya gotta take a stand somewhere, sometime. It's lonely at the top. Heh heh.

Don't let the bastards wear you down,
Terry, x360160

Remember Triangle Shirt Fire

We are approaching the 100th Anniversary of the Triangle Shirt and Waist Fire. I think there should be a worldwide general strike to commemorate this crime against working people.

Many of the young women died because the sweatshop owners locked the exit the doors.

The New York Fire Department did not have ladders that could reach up to the floor levels the women were on. Many jumped to their death.

In solidarity,
Reuven Solomon

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Metro Lighting remains a scab business

By J. Pierce with Bruce C.

Up was down and night was day. Lies were truth and the Berkeley Commission on Labor couldn't tell the difference.

Metro Lighting workers and IWW members squared off against Metro bosses and their lackeys at the January 23 commission meeting. Despite eloquent words from the union, a majority of commissioners swallowed the tripe of Metro Lighting owner Lawrence Grown, who claimed he was the victim of a group of lying, ungrateful employees, that there was never any 'union' or 'unfair practices'. The commission, with notable exceptions, couldn't trust these workers to know their own experiences and feared upsetting Berkeley's 'liberal' exploiters. The upshot is that we didn't put enough energy into communicating with these proto-bureaucrats and thus they believed the boss' lies.

The strike was lost and the campaign is all but over. We hit Metro hard economically but Grown withstood the work slowdowns and the picketing. As a normal 'return to work' became undesirable and nearly impossible, given the acrimony, IWW Metro workers quit picketing, both to get new jobs and to restore their emotional well-being.

A year of struggle

The struggle was thick and justice scarce. Immediately after sticking up for their co-worker, back in Spring 2007, the bosses retaliated by changing the work rules and getting nasty.

The bosses negotiated with one worker, Bruce, regarding back pay for three years of age discrimination, offering him an insulting monetary sum and a T-shirt.

After months of disrespect and stalling on union demands, workers initiated a few concerted activities. Production suffered as workers became familiar with their safety manuals and inspected

for violations, took special care on their lighting fixtures, and crafted and installed an IWW flag and pole to the wall of the shop.

In the meantime, Grown and his wife and business partner, Christa Rybczynski retreated to fantasy land, where there was no union, no issues, and where bosses are good people.

After returning to work from a week-long lockout over unsafe working conditions in early August, the same six pro-union employees were told that the business was closed for three weeks due to a 'family emergency'. Meanwhile, the bosses had hired scabs to replace IWW union workers. Six of seven employees were locked out or struck during the course of the campaign.

The remaining seventh worker, Steven Richter, is the only original employee. He was rewarded with a promotion for stabbing his co-workers in the back and became a scab foreman for scab workers.

The chair of the organizing committee, Gabe, was illegally fired, and a restraining order was placed against him, due to his leadership in organizing the IWW at Metro. (The fraudulent restraining order was thrown out and Grown was ordered to post a National Labor Relations Board notice.)

When Gabe was sacked, the remaining two union workers, Mike and Bruce, struck in solidarity, joined the three IWW sales staff who had voted with their feet during the original lockout.

Successes

The single outstanding gain that these workers achieved was getting the bosses to back off on firing one of their fellow workers, Frederique. This win was their first collective action. They approached the boss as a group and demanded Frederique keep her job.

The other success was that this group of workers finally stood up to their parasite bosses. Former Metro employees came by to help picket and were proud to finally see someone take on Grown. The embattled Metro workers and the IWW helped all of Grown's former employees get a fleeting taste of satisfaction after having experienced only smug disrespect.

Unfortunately, we did not achieve the gains that we originally fought for. Those included: \$35,000 in back wages for three years of age discrimination for Bruce; a pay raise of \$2 per hour plus a raise in commission percentage for the

show room workers; safe removal of all toxic chemicals; and improvements in the attitude of the owners.

There are rumors that the latest Unfair Labor Practice complains might be upheld in our favor. But we've learned not to hold our breath for capitalist court justice.

Many of the practical and theoretical lessons of this fight still need to be analyzed. Metro Lighting has their own story to tell at metrolighting.com/our-side.htm, which includes asking for donations. Thanks to everyone who donated your wages or supported the true fighters in the Metro Lighting struggle!

Barcelona workers end occupation 98 lose jobs at Frape Behr

Workers in the occupied Frape Behr auto parts factory in Barcelona, Spain voted to return to work on January 23.

Returning to work comes at a price. Ninety-eight workers, instead of nearly 300, will lose their jobs, with severance pay of €4,000. Before the vote, the employer had initially promised €7,000.

The union had pressed for voluntary resignations, but the employer refused.

Workers involved with the occupation belonged to several unions including the mainstream UGT, syndicalist CNT, and independent left union, FTC-IAC.

The struggle about a restructuring plan proposed by the German-owned company intensified in December 2007 with the company firing six workers for allegedly promoting discord in the workplace. The dispute escalated and led to the workers occupying the factory on two separate occasions, first for six days, then for 12 days.

The workers are worried that this fight may not be the last.

"We must be very watchful to see if the current conflict was only a first step toward shutting the factory in the near future," said a contributor on the CNT Frape Behr blog.

Syndicalists in Europe rallied around the factory occupation.

In Germany, the FAU-IAA (Free Workers' Union) picketed Frape Behr locations. The Norwegian Norsk Syndikalistisk Forbund (NSF-AIT) wrote a letter of protest to the Catalan government, while Canadian Auto Workers Local 199 also sent a letter of support.

One worker said that the experience was a good one because it brought him closer to people.

"I got to know many people who have gone from being simply co-workers to close friends that I know would give everything for me; people who aren't connected, who are fighting for some principles. I'm always going to cherish them."

Guest workers replace US farm workers

By United Farm Workers

In March, the United Farm Workers (UFW) filed a complaint with the United States Department of Labor charging that Salinas-based Tanimura & Antle, one of the largest vegetable growers in the US, violated federal law by denying jobs to qualified US farm worker, including its own laid-off employees.

Salinas filled the jobs by hiring temporary foreign workers under the H-2A guest worker program. Tanimura & Antle had received approval from the Department of Labor to bring in workers for the 2007-2008 lettuce season based on their claim that they faced a shortage of labor and needed to hire guest workers.

This is a prime example of the problems with the current H-2A program. Rather than enforcing the laws currently on the books, the new proposed law would weaken enforcement standards and make it easier for growers to break the law by not attempting to hire US workers first.

The Department of Labor already does little to stop employer abuses under the H-2A program. If violations like this are happening under the current law, just imagine the difficulties local US farm workers would face if the changes proposed by the Bush Administration go into effect.

Last month, 5,000 UFW supporters faxed the Department of Labor to stop these changes.

The United Farm Workers is calling for an email action to stop the changes to the H-2A program.

Visit www.ufw.org for more information and to take action.

Preamble of the IWW

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. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

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

I agree to abide by the IWW constitution

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



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Post Code, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

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

A global union photo album

A few years ago, LabourStart started featuring a photo of the week (sometimes, of the day), just to liven up its front page a bit. As its editor, I'd see photos of strikes or picket lines or jailed union activists and put them in a little corner of the front page.

As with most things, after a while it became more work than I had time for, so I asked one of our senior correspondents, Derek Blackadder from Canada, to take on the job of ensuring that we had fresh photos on our front page, at least once every week.

Little did I know that Derek would turn this little project into what may be the largest collection of union photos on the web.

As a result of his initiative, we now have our very own movement photo album with over 2,400 photos and some 286 individuals contributing from all over the globe.

We're using the photo-sharing service Flickr and the collection is located at flickr.com/groups/union/

Anyone can contribute photos, though Derek has asked that all submissions should be photos "of work, trade union actions, and trade union members." He also invites those submitting photos to let him know if they would be appropriate as a LabourStart photo of the week. We may have to go daily if we're deluged with suggestions.

This week's photo on LabourStart is typical of the kinds of things we've shown recently. It's a photo of Arab and Jewish women celebrating International Women's Day in Tel Aviv. In a march organized by WAC-Maan they wanted to draw attention to the 81 per cent unemployment rate amongst Arab women in Israel. They're carrying a banner reading "Open Jobs for Women in Agriculture." That's not the kind of photo you'll find on the cover of *Newsweek*, but it's exactly the kind of image—trade unionists leading the fight for a better world—that we want to see.

You might say that getting 286 trade unionists to contribute their photos and amassing a collection of over 2,400 images is not really that impressive considering that LabourStart regularly mails tens of thousands of people and does huge online campaigns in support of workers' rights.

But here's the thing—we never publicized the Flickr group to our list. We never asked people for help. People have been joining the union group on Flickr probably because they have

seen our photo of the week and clicked on the link. Or maybe they were already using Flickr and stumbled on our group. After all, millions of people use Flickr for their personal photos.

In other words, the growth has been spontaneous and unplanned. People wanted to share their photos, and wanted others to see, not just read, what their unions are doing.

A glance at some of the work submitted to the group reveals this deep desire to spread the word using photos. The biggest contributor is someone at the NDU, a union in New Zealand, who has posted no fewer than 692 photos to the group. Another New Zealand union, Finsec, is responsible for some 124 photos. Blackadder himself has contributed 130 photos.

A user calling himself "Karl Marx" is responsible for 153 photos. And no, I don't think it's that Karl Marx; this one is based in Taiwan.

The potential of this group is enormous. If, without any real publicity, it has already grown so large, what happens when we start talking it up?

We'll have at our disposal a fantastic resource for anyone doing trade union work: for education, communication, campaigning.

Need a photo for the newsletter, leaflet or web site? You'll find something here.

I encourage all those who read this to check out the group, and to submit their own photos.

Spread the word!



Picketing builds skills, solidarity

By x356748

One day I told a friend of mine about an action our IWW branch did where we got someone a few shifts' worth of wages after he got fired quickly from a new job. We called for a picket, but it didn't actually happen. The boss caved as soon as the first two guys showed up with a stack of signs. Another former employee who had left town, after trying for months to wrestle her

last two weeks pay from the boss, caught word of it. She talked to the boss and said, "Heard there was a picket, shame if there was another one." After mentioning the picket, she got her backpay.

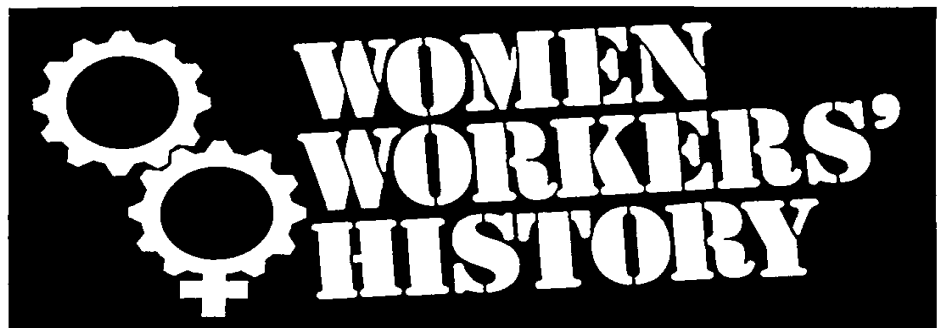
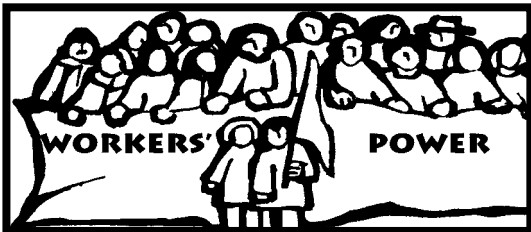
My buddy said, "Hey I know someone in a similar situation." He passed on our IWW contact details. His friend had worked at a club for a few weeks. She was fired because the boss couldn't afford all of the staff he had. She had already contacted the employer to ask for her back wages, but he stonewalled her.

She joined the union and asked for help. I volunteered with another Wobbly to meet with her ex-boss. I was initially reluctant to be a representative because I'd never done it before. But it needed

doing so I put on a suit and went to the business. We waited for the boss to come and open up. He didn't want to talk to us. The other fellow worker gave the boss his cell phone number. We told him we were going to have a picket but he could phone us if he'd like to reconsider. We left and a little while later the boss phoned us. He said he would call later with a meeting time. He didn't.

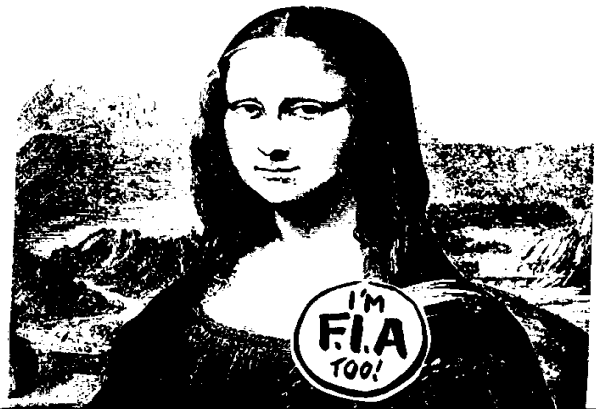
We learned from this action not to do everything for the worker. In planning the next steps, we made sure she was involved. We aren't a service union after all. We tried to help out with what she couldn't do. This way we did a better job of helping the worker be the organizer. Still, it's hard to teach what you're just learning. Neither IWW representative had much experience.

A picket was called for 9:30 pm one night. The worker invited a bunch of her friends. I sent out a Facebook invite. A bunch of People's Global Action folks came by after a meeting. Over the night, about 35 people were coming and going, with about 20 on the line at any one time. It was a solid picket.



CHAPTER 12 NEW YORK AND PITTSBURGH

THE NEW ENGLAND "MILL GIRLS" WHO SET UP THE FEMALE LABOR REFORM ASSOC. WEREN'T THE ONLY WORKING WOMEN ORGANIZING IN THE 1840S. FOR EXAMPLE, THE FEMALE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION ESTABLISHED IN NEW YORK IN 1845 REPRESENTED A CROSS SECTION OF THE CITY'S WOMEN WORKERS: CAP MAKERS, STRAW WORKERS, CRIMPERS, LACE MAKERS AND SEWERS.



LED BY THE ARTICULATE YOUNG ELIZABETH GRAY, THE FEMALE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION FOUGHT EMPLOYERS LIKE THE BOSS WHO THREATENED TO SEND HIS WORK TO CONNECTICUT IF WOMEN DIDN'T ACCEPT 20¢ A DAY WAGES, AND STRUCK FOR HIGHER PAY FOR SEAMSTRESSES.

WHEN PENNSYLVANIA PASSED A 10HR. LAW IN 1848, COMPANIES TRIED TO FORCE WORKERS TO ACCEPT A LONGER WORK DAY. IN THE PITTSBURGH MILLS, WOMEN WORKERS REFUSED, DESPITE THREATS THAT THEIR LOOMS WOULD BE MOVED OUT OF STATE.



THEY STRUCK EARLY IN JULY 1848. ARMED WITH AXES, WOMEN WORKERS ATTACKED FACTORY GATES AND FORCED THEIR WAY INTO A MILL TO SUCCESSFULLY EVICT STRIKEBREAKERS. ALTHOUGH MANY WERE ARRESTED, THE STRIKERS HUNG ON UNTIL AUG. 28 WHEN THE COMPANIES GAVE IN. TEN HRS. WOULD BE THE LAW IN FACT AS WELL AS ON PAPER!!

The guy I was working with made up a little leaflet briefly stating that the business didn't pay its staff. The headline was "FREE DRINKS", explaining that if workers aren't paid, the owner shouldn't be charging. Most folks got the joke but one woman apparently went in, ordered a drink and presented the flyer, thinking it was a coupon. She came out angry, screaming and swearing. I felt bad that someone had to get upset but the leaflet had worked well. The boss called the cops, saying we were starting fights with customers, but the police ignored him and left.

At first the employer wouldn't meet with us unless the picket left. We said no. Eventually he came out to talk. In addition to the three negotiating, one of the burlier members of the branch was also present. There was a feeling that we needed a physically imposing presence on the picket "in case of trouble." As our big friend had no experience with the boss, he said something that upset the

boss and ended talks. As the picket wore on and we had subsequent conversations with the owner, I became more firm that we only needed three wobs negotiating. Bringing machismo to negotiations seemed like a bad move. It was too difficult to deal with strategy-wise.

As his nightclub stayed empty, the owner wanted to talk again. The picket was obviously hurting him. This time just three of us went upstairs with him. We won half the wages owed in cash and a written statement promising to pay the remainder next Saturday. If he didn't pay, there would be another picket with support promised by the local labor council (a first as far as I know). And the boss paid up.

This type of action may not directly lead to any organized shops, but it helps people and the IWW. We gained valuable skills for when there are bigger fish to fry. It built real solidarity. When someone asks "What does the IWW do?", we can point to these actions.

Puerto Rican teachers defy government, AFL

By x355910

The Puerto Rican teachers union (FMPR), the largest public sector union with 42,000 members, marched in San Juan on February 8 to kick off a strike and protest decertification. The Public Sector Labor Relations Commission of Puerto Rico had decertified the union in retaliation for the union's strike vote.

On November 2007, at a meeting of the union's delegate assembly, over 1,200 teachers voted to authorize the union leaders' call for a strike in response to the Puerto Rican government's refusal to negotiate a new contract, a situation that has lasted two years. The strike vote was ratified by the general membership.

The FMPR membership voted to authorize the strike to force the Education Department to raise salaries from less than \$20,000 per year and to limit class size to 15 students. Other issues included school privatization and demands to implement a diverse curriculum, to use professional support from counselors and social workers, to provide libraries in every school, to improve health and safety plans, to hire more substitutes, and to return to a more democratic, participatory school organization process.

The FMPR has negotiated with the Department of Education of Puerto Rico for the last two years without reaching an agreement. In May 2006, teachers and students were locked out of the school houses for two weeks awaiting funding approval.

Shortly after the strike vote, using Puerto Rican Law 45, Rafael Araguinde, the Secretary of Education, filed the

decertification charges. Using provisions in the Puerto Rican constitution that guarantee the right to strike, the FMPR challenged the government's case for decertification. The appeals court issued a temporary injunction against the government's decertification plans a week after the strike began.

Governor Anibal Acevedo called out the national guard along with local police to confront the strikers. Teachers attempting to picket were assaulted and abused by police and national guard strike breakers. Retired teachers and students were asked to replace the striking teachers who refused to cooperate with the government.

This hardline approach is typical of the government. On January 29, eight teachers were arrested and abused by police at the Luis Munoz Rivera High School in Utuado. Previously in October 2007, 17 Utuado teachers were fired for protesting curriculum changes made without their approval.

In the teachers' defense, electrical workers, health care workers, communication workers, higher education faculty and staff, and members of the Teamsters union expressed solidarity for the strike and participated in the February 8 march.

AFL-CIO backs government

The AFL-CIO and Change-to-Win affiliates, however, opposed the strike plans and indicated support for government-organized unions. The United States union federations claimed that FMPR challenges to the labor law,

known as Law 45, which prohibits strikes by public employees, also contains statutes authorizing collective bargaining rights and the right to organize. By challenging Law 45, the US unions said that these rights would be threatened.

However, the Puerto Rican Senate has considered an amendment to the labor Law 45, that would protect collective bargaining agreements should the court, on appeal from the FMPR, rule it unconstitutional.

Relations between the FMPR and the US union federations are poor. In 2005, the FMPR voted to disaffiliate with the US American Federation of Teachers (AFT), a member union of the AFL-CIO. The AFT had taken money from the teacher's health and welfare fund. In retaliation for the FMPR leaving, the AFT sued the FMPR in federal court to seize its assets.

The FMPR is concerned that the US union federations may be laying the ground to raid its members. The Governor of Puerto Rico has met with leaders of US unions, such as SEIU, and encouraged them to work with the Puerto Rico Teachers Association (AMPR) whose members include school principals and supervisors. Should FMPR be decertified, its members would be open to a raid by other unions.

As the strike progressed, the Education Department publicized statistics of students and teachers crossing the picket lines to give the impression of disunity,

even though more than half of the school system wasn't working.

Nevertheless, the strike drew solidarity from teachers from as far away as New York City, where the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) published a resolution in support of the FMPR struggle, and marched in the February 9 snow storm to raise common concerns against privatization, class size, curriculum, and wages in New York City. Over 80 education workers, held a picket in front of the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration (PRFAA) in New York City on March 4.

On March 5, at the Roberto Clemente Coliseum in San Juan, more than 10,000 members of the FMPR overwhelmingly supported union president Rafael Feliciano's recommendation to suspend the February 21 strike actions in order to answer offers from the Education Department. The FMPR membership resolved to continue opposition to Law 45, and also protested interference by SEIU.

Education Secretary Rafael Araguinde has agreed to six of nine conditions the union set for returning to work: no penalties for striking teachers; agreements against privatization; a \$150 per month pay raise to \$1,750 as of July 1, and a promise to ask the legislature for more pay increases. The government has not stopped the decertification effort, however, and the union may still return to the picket lines should the government once again stall negotiations.

Alberta teachers face divide-and-rule offer on pensions to aging workforce

By X361858, *Wobbly Dispatch*, Edmonton

A dramatic shift in focus occurred in late 2007 within the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) in Canada.

Prior to November, speculation about whether teachers would strike in February 2008 was the central theme of labour discussions. Attention had turned to strike votes at various school divisions. Teachers at the Annual Representatives Assembly voted unanimously on issues in a show of solidarity with their professional organization.

Suddenly, the Alberta government made a surprising announcement: if all 62 collective agreements were ratified by January 31, 2008, the government would resolve the long-disputed 3.1 per cent unfunded liability in teachers' pension plans.

Unfortunately, the agreement would also have the result of legally preventing teachers from taking any job action for the next five years.

The move would create "labour stability" and "labour peace" between the ATA and the government, said Conservative Premier Ed Stelmach, a concept we should all be wary of. As worker concerns increase to the point of job action, the government is offering to settle an old and contentious issue in exchange for an agreement not to demand further workplace reforms.

Under no circumstances should teachers consider "labour peace" a fair trade for the resolution of this unfunded liability issue. With mounting anxieties about working conditions, curriculum demands, and reduced agency, a 3.1 per cent unfunded liability is a cheap price, indeed, for the province to pay for our compliance with an agreement that would paralyze teachers from making change over the next half-decade. Rather than see the government's offer to the ATA as satisfactory, teachers should view this offer as evidence of their power.

The issues that face teachers are not resolved by the agreement. If teachers accept it, we will have little legal recourse to do anything.

With large numbers of 'baby-boomer' teachers retiring over the next few years, the concerns over the unfunded liability are certainly valid and immediate. The overwhelming majority of teachers would like to see this issue resolved prior to receiving their pension money from the ATA.

However, to settle with the government means that teachers entering the profession are facing a precarious work situation. Employers understand these new teachers as reluctant to organize as they do not have permanent contracts and are instead signed on a yearly basis by school boards. They fear making demands will mean not getting re-hired.

Yet, these new teachers should look back to the history of education organizing in the province. Prior to 1935, teachers had no job stability whatsoever. They could be fired at will without due process, and received no pension or guarantee of wages. It was the result of organizing and job action that enabled teachers to win positive concessions from employers; the present situation calls for similar tactics.

Instead of allowing the interests of new teachers to be set against the interests of those leaving the profession, it is possible for teachers to act in solidarity and win reforms which will benefit both. We should not permit ourselves to be forced into a position where we are willing to choose a single government concession at the expense of all other issues that face us as workers. It is possible to refuse to enter the bargain and still demand that the government settle the unfunded liability issue, as well as organize for change around all other concerns which confront teachers. The government knows this: it's why they offered the agreement in the first place.

"Flag 3" sues Seattle for false arrest



Photo by Jeff Berryhill.

Left to right: The "Flag 3": Jake Erwin, Brendan Maslauskas Dunn and Ryan Tompkins.

After their acquittal, three activists calling themselves the "Flag 3" have filed a civil suit against the City of Seattle and several Seattle Police officers for the false arrest, false imprisonment, excessive force, and malicious prosecution used against the three.

Larry Hildes from the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is their attorney.

Jake Erwin, Ryan Tompkins and IWW delegate Brendan Maslauskas Dunn, are anti-war, media and labor activists from Olympia, Washington. They were arrested when they demanded police return their confiscated anarcho-syndicalist flag during a protest in Seattle's Cal Anderson Park on October 5, 2006. In custody, they were interrogated for information about their "anarchist" affiliations. One of the arresting officers alleged that the flag was going to be used as a signal device to start a riot and encourage violence.

Erwin and Tompkins were charged with resisting arrest and obstruction, while Maslauskas Dunn was charged with felony for assaulting an officer.

The Flag 3 filed the lawsuit after a judge presiding over the Erwin and

Tompkins trial dismissed the charges due to inconsistencies in police testimony. It was completely within the defendants' rights to resist, refuse and obstruct an illegal and unconstitutional arrest, said the judge. Three prosecutors tried to make Dunn's case stick, but they each failed to do so, with the last dropping the charges last spring. Despite the acquittal, the police refuse to return the flag.

Wobblies, including the IWW's General Defence Committee, and members of Students for a Democratic Society from across the United States helped raise money for their defense.

Even though Dunn's charges were dropped, they remain on his criminal record with the now discredited police version of events. He has since been detained three times: at a June 2007 anti-militarization rally in Tacoma, Washington, at Evergreen State College in an incident about racial-profiling, and during day travel to Victoria, Canada in September 2007. Dunn believes this case is part of a larger effort by police in the Pacific Northwest to track and target anarchist, student and anti-war activists.

Green unionism: saving the world and the union

By Dan Jakopovich

The biggest hope for the greening of the labour movement lies in the revival of green unionism as a decentralised, grassroots movement.

There is little hope for the leadership of mainstream trade unions to be converted to green unionism. The parochialism, corruptibility and ingrained authoritarianism of union officials are evident time and time again. Thus, a bottom-up, rank-and-file approach to unions can make a serious contribution to environmental protection and wider social change.

A basic tenet of green unionism is that labor struggles and ecological struggles have the potential to be mutually reinforcing. The basis for a working relationship between workers and environmentalists is the 'unity-in-diversity' approach to organising, a mutually respectful and supportive alliance.

A dynamic understanding of 'people as workers' and 'workers as activists' is also necessary, but currently missing. The concept of oppression has shifted from production relations as the material basis for exploitation to consumption. Thus, many mainstream Greens would have people confined to their roles as consumers, inherently powerless and almost always disorganised, rather than take into account the power of the worker as a producer in the workplace.

This consumer advocacy approach, as commonly understood and implemented, produces an individualistic and moralistic substitute for sustained political change.

"One cannot assume that the job site will simply wither away with the flowering of a new identity," said Jeff Shantz, a former IWW member, on the North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) web site.

Workplaces matter

Class and the revolutionary implications of class struggle at the point of production must be recognized as important.

People are in their most powerful material roles as producers of goods and services, capable of withholding labour, and also democratically taking over the means of production and distribution.

"The questions of ownership and control of the earth are nothing if not questions of class," said Shantz.

Building the new society in the shell of the old entails changing who controls production, what is produced and how it is produced. This can be achieved only through democratizing workplaces and empowering communities to make the changes required to preserve and sustain the environment.

"Green syndicalists insist that overcoming ecological devastation depends on shared responsibilities towards developing convivial ways of living in which relations of affinity, both within our own species and with other species, are nurtured," according to Shantz.

"They envision, for example, an association of workers committed to the dismantling of the factory system, its work discipline, hierarchies and regimentation all of the things which [Murray] Bookchin identifies. This involves both an actual destruction of some factories and their conversion towards 'soft' forms of small, local production."

Democratic unionism can fit with this vision of a conversion of a 'bioregional structure' of people, environment and land to become a self-governing, socialized unit of producers and consumers that produces for need, not profit. Democratic, rank-and-file unions might be able to provide the necessary infrastructure necessary for decentralised decision-making, production and distribution, at least in the transitional period from a 'production for profit' system.



Graphic: radicalgraphics.org

Green Bans

A green ban is a strategy used by workers who refuse to work on projects that harm the environment or endanger public lands or property. Green bans have protected historic eighteenth century buildings from being demolished to make way for office space and prevented public gardens from becoming a car park for an opera house.

They are a working class response to clashes of interest between public and private interests.

"The interests of home buyers and architectural heritage lost out against

A revolutionary ecology movement should also organize among poor and working people. For it is the working people who have their hands on the machinery.

—Judi Bari

often purely speculative construction. At one stage, there was ten million square feet of vacant office space in Sydney's business district, while people looking for their first homes or flats could find nothing," said Verity Burgmann, a professor at the University of Melbourne in Australia.

In Australia, green bans frequently occurred in the context of gentrification ("regeneration") of working-class areas, which is common today. The Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) first used a green ban to protect Kelly's Bush, the last remaining bushland in the Sydney suburb of Hunter's Hill. The union went on to impose green bans wherever community support for the ban was expressed in the form of an enthusiastic public meeting by the people concerned. Between 1971-74, there were 42 green bans in New South Wales. It is estimated that these green bans held up approximately AUS\$18 billion (in 2005 money) worth of development.

In response to the green bans by

their local unions, the federal branch leadership of the BLF, with wholehearted support from the politicians, the media and the property developers, dismissed the union branch leadership "on the grounds that the New South Wales branch had overstepped the bounds of traditional union business," according to Burgmann. Norm Gallagher, the national union boss, was later convicted of accepting bribes from developers.

One of the BLF's last green bans, conducted to prevent gentrification of the King's Cross suburb, led to

forced evictions of residents by the New South Wales Police and the disappearance (alleged kidnapping and murder) of alternative journalist and publisher Juanita Nielsen. A Joint Committee of the Australian parliament formed in 1994 to further investigate her disappearance concluded that corruption obstructed the police investigation.

Although the local initiative of the BLF workers in New South Wales was suppressed, the movement spread to other unions in Australia and other countries.

Jon Bekken summed up the spread of this movement in an article pub-

aboriginal people.

In Britain during the Eighties, rank-and-file seafarers boycotted the dumping of nuclear waste at sea, forcing the government to abandon the policy. In Brazil, rubber tappers forged an alliance with aboriginal peoples and environmentalists to oppose the massive deforestation of the Amazon rainforest by big landowners and business interests. Their success led to the murder of union activist Chico Mendes by hired assassins in December 1988, but the struggle continues.

These experiences are particularly relevant to workers and environmentalists as companies and the British government are calling for new nuclear plants in Britain.

The example of Australian workers' effective use of green bans demonstrates that, where the necessary educational and organizational work has been done, workers are willing to take action in defense of the environment, even when that action involves short-term financial hardship.

Strategically, direct industrial action of this sort is far more effective in defending the environment than lobbying and symbolic actions favored by mainstream environmentalists.

We need to focus our efforts on organizing in our workplace and in our communities to build a better environment ourselves. This can entail campaigns as seemingly mundane as organizing against toxic chemicals in the workplace, a campaign which, if properly conducted, explicitly goes far beyond the right to a safe work environment in order to question the link between the workplace and the environment, who has the right to control work processes, and the need for different modes of union organization and activity, according to Bekken.

Jack Munday, one of the leaders of the local branch of the Builders Labourers' Federation, argued recently that "the political significance of the green-ban movement, while it lasted, was that it forged a winning alliance between environmentalists and trade unionists. As 90 per cent of the population resides in urban areas, success in preserving the

built environment is vital, and trade unionists are especially well placed to influence the construction of the built environment. The task of achieving a sustainable society, with a human face, an ecological heart and an egalitarian body, requires a massive joint effort by environmentalists and the organised working class."

Judi Bari: building a movement

Author David Pepper suggested that a surge of libertarian unionism might revitalise the Green movement in North America just as syndicalism revived the labour movement in the early 20th century. The late IWW and Earth First! organiser, Judi Bari, came closer to that objective than anyone else.

Starting in 1989, Bari initiated an alliance between the exploited timber workers and radical environmentalists committed to the protection of redwood forests of Northern California. To meet this goal, she organised an Industrial Workers of the World Local 1 with environmentally aware workers and eco-activists as members. Originating from a working-class background herself, she was fully aware that the alliance she envisaged was only possible if environmentalists educated themselves about workers' concerns, and realised that they can only work together on the principle of mutual aid and respect. It meant "rejecting ecological moralizing and developing some sensitivity to workers' anxieties and concerns." She also aimed to help transform Earth First! from a narrow-minded conservationist move-

Continued to 7

FBI arrest Marie Mason, 3 others for 'eco-terrorism'

Marie Mason, a member of Earth First! and of the IWW in Cincinnati, Ohio, was arrested on March 10 in a raid by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), supported by local police.

Mason, Frank Ambrose, Aren Burthwick, and Stephanie Fultz, are alleged to be adherents to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). They are charged with the arson of the Agriculture Hall at Michigan State University on December 31, 1999, causing \$1.1 million in damage. The Grand Jury indictment said that the motive for the alleged arson was that the university was conducting genetic research on plants and animals.

The four were also charged with burning lumbering equipment, including a John Deere Hydro-Ax Shear and a flat-bed trailer in Wexford County, Michigan, on January 1, 2000.

The case is supported by an anonymous source identified only as "a person known to the Grand Jury" in the indictment, a fifth person who supposedly participated in many of the alleged activities but is not named.

Of the four arrested, Frank Ambrose has since signed a plea agreement on March 19, in which he pled guilty to conspiracy to commit arson, in exchange for not being prosecuted for three counts of arson or other ELF activities. His deal is conditional on full disclosure. Ambrose is expected to face 5-20 years imprisonment, a special assessment of \$100 to be paid before sentencing, and a fine of \$250,000.

Mason appeared at the US District Courthouse for the Western District of Michigan in Grand Rapids, MI on March 21, 2008, for a preliminary hearing.

Redefining direct action as terrorism

The indictment in effect tries to redefine direct action as a form of terrorism. Direct action is "a term that denotes acts of politically-motivated violence designed to force segments of society, including the general civilian population, private business, and government, to change their attitudes about environmental issues and/or to cease activities considered by the movement to have a negative impact on the natural environment," according to the indictment, adding that "ELF adherents carry out such direct actions in order to intimidate or coerce civilian populations and/or to influence the policy of government through such means."

Terrorism is frequently defined as politically-motivated violence designed to coerce people to change their views and behavior.

The IWW's General Defence Committee published a statement denouncing the fear-mongering tactics of the state for describing the defendants as terrorists.

"Terrorism is not vandalism and it is not arson. The use of the word 'terrorism' and the use of federal 'terrorism watch lists' or federal resources dedicated to the 'war on terrorism'... discredits whatever case is being made against Frank, Aren, Stephanie and Marie.

"The General Defence Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World is committed to ensuring that those indicted are treated fairly and given every opportunity to defend themselves."

Under surveillance before

This is not Marie Mason's first encounter with the FBI, according to midwestgreenscare.org.

On February 7, Mason's daughter, 16, discovered a plainclothes officer under her mother's car. He claimed to be looking for "proglers" and walked away. A short time later, the same officer and a uniformed officer walked in her front door without knocking. They were told to leave and did, saying they were going to get a warrant.

When Mason and a friend looked under her car, they found a device labeled 'GPS' attached to the car by magnet. Immediately, four plainclothes officers drove up in a pickup truck, guns drawn, and confiscated the device by force. They then interrogated Mason, her daughter and a friend for 30 minutes, before leaving. No warrant appeared and no arrests were made.

Rallying the defence fund

Mason's defence committee is trying to find a human rights lawyer and raise between \$20,000 and \$60,000 to represent her and her co-defendants in court.

In response, the GDC passed a motion urging IWW members and supporters to donate to her defence. The GDC is raising money for Mason and her co-defendants by selling an assessment stamp and encouraging people who join the GDC to donate their full annual membership fee, \$25, to the campaign. GDC secretary Tom Kappas called on IWW members to consider sending Marie a letter to show she has support. "It would really help," he said in an email to members.

To donate money, visit freemarie.org or send a check or money order made out to "Books for Prisoners" and write in the notes section that it is for Marie Mason's defence. An anonymous donor will match dollar for dollar up to \$1,000

for Marie's legal defence fund, an offer that is good until April 15, 2008.

Donations to:

Friends of Marie Mason, P.O. Box 19065, Cincinnati, OH 45219, United States, freemarie@riseup.net

Letters to:

Marie Mason, Newaygo County Jail, P.O. Box 845, White Cloud, MI 49349

Regular news:

midwestgreenscare.org



Right: Marie Mason cuddles her cat in a photo published in a leaflet supporting her case.

Be an eco-worker: walk!

By X362483, Japan

The spectacular miracle of the survival of our human evolutionary line is threatened in a real way by climate change.

When it comes to climate change, you can count on your politicians and elected officials to do exactly nothing about this issue. Even signing the Kyoto accord, a very basic step aimed at only slowing the trend of global warming, is not on the agenda for the United States in the near future.

Instead of politely asking our bosses and rulers to do something about this problem, we should be acting directly to achieve results.

One of the simplest and most effective things we can do is walk to work.

There are some good things—not many, but some—to be said about walking.

Walking takes longer than any other form of travel except crawling. Thus, walking stretches time and prolongs life. Walking makes the world much bigger and thus more interesting. You have time to observe the details.

The utopian technologists foresee a future for us in which distance is annihilated. I have a friend who is always in a hurry; he never gets anywhere. Life is too short to waste on speed.

"To be everywhere at once is to be nowhere forever, if you ask me," said Edward Abbey in *The Journey Home*.

Four reasons to walk

So here are just a few reasons to make walking to work part of your daily routine:

1. Walking to work doesn't contribute to oil wars. One way that you can demonstrate your disapproval of United States foreign policy is to stop purchasing gasoline. Just think of what those

dollars that go toward America's oil wars could do for the working class in America.

2. Walking to work helps you think outside of the box. Every day, many people wake up in their apartment (box), go to work and sit in their cubicle (box), and stare at a glowing box.

Then they go home and stare at another glowing box.

Hierarchical structures have a lot to gain from this arrangement as the boxes serve to separate people and ensures that they won't communicate to organize and fight oppression. When you walk to work, you are a visible part of your community. You have the chance to interact with and reach out to people in your community more.

3. Walking to work is good for your health. It is great exercise and you can feel the presence of the unique ecosystem in you area and the changing of the seasons.

4. Perhaps, most importantly, you can pay up your IWW dues with all that gas money you're saving.

I'm sure that you can think of more benefits that you would get from walking to work.

I think this simple action, walking, is an effective way for working class people to address climate change and make the world they live in a better place. Happy trails.



Graphic: www.radicalgraphics.org

Green unionism

Continued from 6

ment into an allied social force aiming to By Dan Jakubovich

The big green barrier for the greening of the nations is not the suffering of timber workers with ecological destruction, but the history of workers' struggles become part of the history of cities and said Shadw. Bari was determined to fight the polarisation of workers and people, within communities, while addressing the class work on and industry which are usually protected under the same IWW Local 1 creatively engaged the neighborhood population. Workplace issues such as health and safety were used as a pretext to demand that logging companies be held responsible for pushing back. Bari's strategy was to use the direct action and non-violent approach, and another tactic that could support the logging and mill workers, fighting against the "eco-terrorism" charge that played into the hands of the companies' activists' is missing. This system cannot be stopped, there for a better vision of the concept of

the capacity of any people's resistance movement. The only way I can even imagine stopping it is through massive non-cooperation," said Bari.

Consistent with the IWW tradition, workers, like most all the rest, do not come to the consumption, especially in the main, to maintain the production of logging have people who are not in the green. The industry, who are mostly responsible, and acting always in the interests of the industry (as the only understood, and jobs will be good, produce an individualistic and this is the substitute for the political activity.

The workplace matters.

Bari is supported up to the green, this is the basis of the class struggle. The IWW is a union of workers, and the struggle against the production: "A revolutionary ecology movement should be a job site galvanizing throughout the people. It is the working people, said Jeff Shantz, a former IWW member, who said that the best part of the North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communist is this madness."

People are a big part of the struggle, and

Wobblies observe International Women's Day

IWD marchers brave Toronto blizzard

By Rachel Rosen

The Toronto IWW branch had a small but noisy contingent on March 8, as we joined approximately 500 other marchers to brave an unexpected blizzard during the International Women's Day march (IWD).

We marched from St. George and Bloor to Ryerson University at Yonge and Dundas. The 40 km/h wind was not enough to deter our chanting and demands for the rights of workers and immigrants, and an end to war and violence against women.

The official slogan of International Women's Day 2008 hailed from Wobbly history: "The rising of the women is the rising of us all!"

Many, though, seemed to prefer the day's unofficial chant targeting Canada's conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper: Women marching in the snow, telling Harper where to go!

Red & Black in NYC

By Diane Krauthamer

Despite the pouring rain and widespread flu outbreak, the red-and-black contingent joined in the 2008 International Women's Day march from New York City's Union Square to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

While there were fewer than expected, people's spirits remained high as we reclaimed the day's radical roots. Individuals from the IWW marched with the red-and-black contingent, which included the NorthEast Federation of Anarcho-Communists of New York City.



This IWD marked the 100-year anniversary of the bold protest by 15,000 immigrant women workers in New York City, against their exploitation. These

women of the needle trade industry took to the streets on March 8, 1908, demanding better working conditions, higher wages, shorter work days, voting rights and the overall improvement of women's lives in the United States.

Inspired by these events, three years later women observed the first International Women's Day around the world. A few weeks after this momentous occasion, 140 immigrant women workers of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City were killed in a fire caused by

the boss' negligence. These women had previously inspired a strike of 20,000 workers.

Edmonton screens Live Nude Girls Unite!

By Kirsten Mayoh

In celebration of International Women's Day, the Edmonton GMB Women's Committee held a film screening of Julia Query's "Live Nude Girls Unite!" on March 7. The film showed workers from The Lusty Lady, a peep show club in San Francisco, undertaking a union drive through SEIU. Approximately 30 people attended. Members of the IWW Women's Committee made their buttons and a pamphlet outlining some historic women workers of the IWW available to the participants. A short, thought-provoking discussion took place after the screening.

The National Labor Relations Board has announced that the Labor Board's election processes have been modified to incorporate the display of an American flag...



Flying the flag upside-down is signal for distress!

US flag no guarantee for union democracy

By Erin Johansson, www.americanrightsatwork.org

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced a new policy in February that the American flag will be displayed at every union representation election.

"The display of an American flag will impress upon all the participants to elections —employers, unions, and most importantly voters— the solemnity and importance of the Agency's election process," said the press release.

In reality, NLRB elections bear no resemblance to political elections and fall short of the democratic process Americans envision elections to be. Union organizers don't have equal access

to the media or to voters and their free speech is restricted. Voters also lack free speech and face coercion from their employer. There are no limits to what a business can spend to bust a union drive. After all that, should the workers vote for the union, the employer can delay implementation of their decision for years, and stall negotiations longer still.

If the NLRB was actually concerned with the integrity of its elections, it would level the playing field for workers and employers. Instead, the agency hides behind this symbol of democracy. Neither the American flag nor the secret ballot can overcome the wholly undemocratic nature of union elections in the US today.

Poem

Sedition

By Tony van der Meer

Sedition.

Shhh. . . . , be careful what you say and tell no one what you think.
Criticize our government an' you'll end up in the clink.
'cause freedom's just a trademark brand, blind justice but a lie.
Do not be bold, do as you're told, shut up consume and die!

Review

End of America offers no alternatives, ignores unions

Naomi Wolf, *The End of America*, Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont, 2007, paperback, 178 pages, \$13.95.

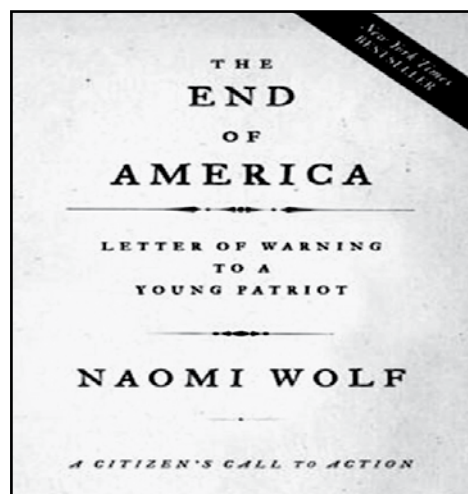
Review by John Gorman

Naomi Wolf's book is subtitled, "Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot" and written "because I could no longer ignore the echoes between events in the past and forces at work today."

She sees post-9/11 America following the path laid down by Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, Pinochet's Chile and several other countries where democracy has been stamped out and replaced by dictatorship. She believes it is naïve to imagine that "it can't happen here." The evidence she marshals in support of her thesis is impressive, indeed.

A careful study of twentieth century tyrannies has led her to see a common methodology, irrespective of ideology, in efforts to subvert a working democracy and install a dictator. It is this ability to see beyond ideology that makes Wolf's book so useful to those wanting to understand what is really happening now.

As Wolf points out, neither Mussolini nor Hitler came to power in a coup. There were no pitched battles, no bloody purges, and no mass executions. Life, unless you were an enemy, real or imagined, of the new regime, went on quite normally. The theaters and movie houses did not close. Nightclubs remained open. Books still came out.



Newspapers and magazines were still on the stands. People went to work as usual with no troubling strikes to disrupt their day. There were no more raucous demonstrations.

Stalin, Wolf reminds us, also succeeded to power by legal means and made the Soviet Union a very quiet place indeed. His actions were more brutal, but his methods of ending dissent were essentially the same.

As Wolf tells us, it took a sharp eye to tell the difference between the "bad old days" of democracy and the glories of the New Order, as prominent entertainers, scholars, journalists, scientists and other "troublemakers" slowly became "unpersons" and vanished from public view, sometimes into concentration camps, but more often into poverty and

unemployability, as they were replaced with more compliant colleagues. Those lucky enough to have international reputations and/or relatives or friends abroad could escape into exile. The less fortunate would serve as "horrible examples" to anyone thinking of following in their footsteps and talking out of turn.

Wolf is no conspiracy theorist, and she makes no claim to connivance among Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and other dictators. She makes it clear, however, that they were well acquainted with one another's "play book" and employed the same 'Ten Step Program' in their plans to end democracy and install themselves as rulers of the land. All were quick to 'Invoke an External and Internal Threat', a process she sees in action in the United States. The President's description of al-Qaeda as a universal yet invisible menace against which America must wage eternal war is such evidence. Like Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, the United States will be on a "war footing" forever due to this threat, making the loss of freedoms permanent. All three rulers were prepared to 'Establish Secret Prisons', a pattern copied at Guantanamo Bay, where America has set up its own gulag. It may be possible to argue about some of the details in these points and the other eight steps Wolf cites, but her scholarship is overwhelming, with more footnotes than most Master's theses and an excellent bibliography.

Wolf's warning has three drawbacks. The first, the absence of an index, is a minor one, although such a wide-ranging work would surely benefit by the reader being able to return easily to persons or places of interest. The second and third drawbacks are far more serious.

While the book will supposedly "shock, enrage and motivate" us "to save our liberty and defend our nation," Wolf is woefully short on specific suggestions regarding what an individual should do or refrain from doing to aid this cause. Her three pages of advice oscillate between the melodramatic and the platitudinous. Perhaps because of her *petit bourgeois* background, the idea of collective action is also not in her intellectual vocabulary. Unions are not seen as having any part at all in this struggle.

What I missed most in Wolf's book, however, was even one example of how a campaign to end democracy was defeated. Are there none? Did this Ten Step Program ever fail? It is succeeding in today's Russia, even as the world looks on in dismay. What, besides a quasi-mystical faith in American exceptionalism, makes the author think we can frustrate it now? I am sure Wolf did not intend to spread pessimism, but it is hard to come away from her book with hope for the future.

If "resistance is futile," as Star Trek's Captain Picard is told, should we not then reconcile ourselves to rule by the Borg?

Scottish college sacks Unison steward

UK education modernisation a smokescreen for job cuts, union complicity

Continued from 1

At yet another, as soon as the HERA results were sent out, employees lodged 350 appeals.

As the controversy grew, the Edinburgh College of Art delayed publishing the HERA results for more than a year. People suspected that the HERA results were going to be bad news for many. Fears were magnified by the secrecy in which the HERA committee union negotiators operated due to confidentiality agreements. Were holiday leave entitlements really to be cut? Would manual staff overtime rates be cut?

Local negotiators asked for more support from Unison, but received little or none. One local negotiator, 'blue collar' shop steward Stevie Watson, claimed to have phoned Unison's City of Edinburgh Branch no less than 26 times in one week asking for input and support, but got no response. He has since resigned from the union.

The college's proposals were at last signed off by Unison's Regional Officer in July 2007 and sent to the union's London headquarters. They were returned in August and Unison prepared to do a postal ballot during the summer break, when many members were away on leave or had ended term-time contracts.

Determined that Unison would not 'do an Edinburgh University' on them, Unison shop steward Eddie Murray conducted an email referendum of college Unison members, many of whom he had personally recruited into the union, to delay the ballot until October 2007, when all staff would be available to discuss and vote.

Within days, 31 members, a clear majority, had replied to say they agreed with the proposal. Murray sent the referendum results to Unison's City of Edinburgh Branch who replied that on the basis of this vote, they would postpone the postal ballot deadline to October 19. The ballot papers would contain no voting recommendation.

With that change in place, Murray then went on a month's annual leave on September 5. The HERA results were set to be sent out before September 24, so the postponed ballot meant that Unison members at the college would, unlike most education workers, get to see their HERA results before voting on whether the process was fair or not.

The axe falls

Two weeks into his annual leave, Murray received his HERA results on September 22 in the post. "I'll never forget it," he said, "I had been double red-circled. Doom and despondency set in, but worse to follow. In the same ECA envelope was the Unison ballot paper bearing the advice in bold letters that 'If you vote No, you may have to take industrial action.' Not quite a Yes recommendation, I suppose."

There was another ECA envelope. Inside it was a letter from the college's head of Human Resources informing Murray that he was suspended from duties on full pay pending investigation for "inappropriate use of the college email system" and behaviour that was "liable to put individuals at risk."

"I was also banned from contacting anyone on the college email system while their 'investigation' into the allegations was conducted. I knew right away it was a stitch-up. What a coincidence, being suspended on the very same day that my doubly depressing HERA results arrived.

"I wasn't suspended," he said. "I was removed."

Phone calls to and from colleagues quickly revealed that the red circling had been extensive. All but two (whose status stayed the same) of the library staff had

MODERNISATION MEANS:

PAY CUTS

JOB CUTS

FIRING TROUBLEMAKERS



Graphic from riniart.org

been red circled (marked for cuts) as had admin staff. Janitors' salaries stayed about the same though they faced a cut in annual leave and overtime rates. Cleaners ended up only slightly better off.

Amicus technicians reeled at their HERA results when they all saw red. Their union told them that nothing could be done as they, unlike Unison members, had already voted Yes in the ballot. Amicus eventually did send in the lawyers to discuss the extent of the red circling with the college. No one owned up to being green circled. Morale plummeted.

Murray realised that he had been suspended on the day the HERA results were sent out for more than simply delaying the ballot to October. He turned to Unison for help and support.

"I contacted the union as soon as

suspended steward was held on October 16, three days before the ballot's conclusion. The meeting was reportedly well attended and lasted for over an hour, with a general feeling of opposition to college proposals for cuts in annual leave and overtime rates and the manner in which the HERA Committee had operated. Murray's suspension was mooted and the meeting agreed that he had been "stitched up to get him out of the way."

The missing ballot

In mid-October 2007, the Unison members at the college held a union vote on the 'modernisation' proposals after more than two years of negotiations. On October 19, the votes were counted in-college by shop stewards and are said to have shown an overwhelming No response to the employer's propos-

They suspended me halfway through my annual leave and ruined my holiday, then sacked me in the run-up to Christmas. And Unison never lifted a finger to help me.

—Eddie Murray

I was suspended, but after two weeks of ignored letters and phone calls the penny dropped, and I knew then that the union would turn a deaf ear to my pleas until after the ballot was over."

Not so the rank-and-file. As soon as they heard of his dubious suspension many phoned or sent messages of support and expressed their anger at his treatment. He produced a sheaf of cards and letters from college Unison members.

"I'm shocked, but not surprised to hear that you've been suspended by HR — clearly you're wanted out of the way at present. I can't see any other motive. Very malicious... The axe has finally fallen... Anyway don't let them get to you Eddie. We're all behind you 100 per cent," said one card.

"If it wasn't for these members' support, I would have been completely isolated," said Murray.

The October postal ballot was stopped due to a postal strike at Royal Mail, so a secret ballot was held in the college. The Unison members' discussion meeting organised by the now-sus-

als. Murray voted by postal ballot. The ballot papers were then taken to the City of Edinburgh branch by a Unison senior official. The ballot results, a powerful No vote, disappeared, and were never officially announced.

"I thought the union would publish it right away," said June Cormack, library assistant and long-time Unison member. "So did the other members. Every morning I came to work I checked, and every morning, nothing."

"Where's our missing ballot?" demanded the members. The silence from Unison led to the widespread belief that Unison had wanted a Yes vote and managed to 'lose' their negative ballot result.

Unison finally responded to Murray's pleas for help on October 22, a month after his suspension and three days after the ballot finished.

"I was a Unison member for over a decade and in my three years as shop steward, I recruited about 20 staff — cleaners, library assistants, admin workers — into the union. But evidently Unison was as eager as ECA to get a Yes vote, so they flung me to the wolves, and

stood by."

Unison's City Branch Service Conditions Coordinator, John Mulgrew, eventually advised him over the phone to request a face-to-face meeting to confront the allegations, so the suspended steward complied. A disciplinary hearing date was set but had to be cancelled when the Unison rep couldn't make it. Another was scheduled for December 4 and Murray wrote to Mulgrew with the new time and date, and asked if he could represent him at the disciplinary hearing.

"He never replied, so I gave up. By then the farce had dragged on for nearly three months and I was sick and tired of begging Unison for help and either being ignored or messed about. So I was accompanied by a colleague from the college library, Janice Marshall. She was splendid, a tower of strength," said Murray.

That hearing was adjourned for a week through the college's failure to show him their proof first so he could prepare. When he returned home the same day, he found the documents in his mail box, mailed too late to be any use for the hearing. Among the documents, he found a letter that "on the face of it seemed to point to a senior Unison branch official giving advice and information to be used against a member at a disciplinary hearing." Murray filed a formal complaint against the human resources advisor and wrote a critical letter to the union officer who had provided the college with evidence against him. He heard no reply from Unison.

At the next hearing on December 11, the panel focused on union emails and ignored concocted evidence by college management. Murray was dismissed for gross misconduct on December 14, after three months suspension.

"They suspended me halfway through my annual leave and ruined my holiday, then sacked me in the run-up to Christmas. And Unison never lifted a finger to help me," said Murray. Three days after he was sacked, Murray received a letter from Unison asking him to tell them about the next hearing's date.

In the absence of Unison's official response, nine fellow library assistants agreed unanimously to leave Unison on December 18 and seek to join another trade union together as both a mark of their disgust at Unison and an act of solidarity with their sacked colleague. Most manual staff Unison members announced plans to resign and their names are being collected. More than a few 'white collar' administration members were equally keen to get out of the union that had done nothing but take their monthly dues.

Meanwhile, many members are refusing to sign the college's new contracts. Calls to the union for advice and support are still ignored.

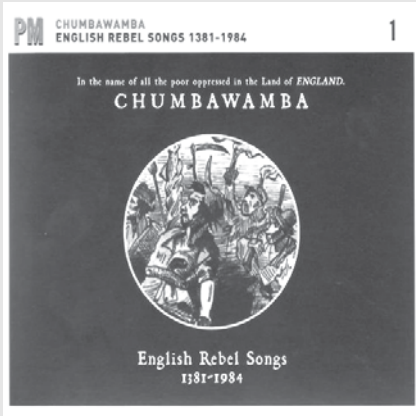
Murray is planning to take the college to an employment tribunal for victimisation and unfair dismissal.

"Unison won't be there," he said. "I sent my union card to John Ross at the City branch. It would be good if it could be laid to rest in the same grave as our ballot papers," he said. "That's where it belongs."

"Perhaps instead of sucking up to their cronies in New Labour and implementing their policies, including pay cuts, they might actually start doing what they're supposed to do: look after the rights, pay and conditions of the members who pay their wages."

Demand the reinstatement of Eddie Murray. Send a letter to Human Resources at the Edinburgh College of Art, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9DF Scotland or jobs@eca.ac.uk.

OFFERINGS FROM THE I.W.W. *Literature* DEPARTMENT



Chumbawamba: English Rebel Songs 1381-1984 CD

English Rebel Songs 1381-1984 is Chumbawamba's homage to the men and women who never had obituaries in the broadsheets; those who never received titles or appeared in an entry in "Who's Who." This is an album that conjures up the tragedies and triumphs of the people who shaped England: its citizens. The songs were discovered in songbooks, in folk clubs and on cassette tapes, chopped and changed and bludgeoned into shape with utmost respect for the original tunes. Originally released in 1988, this new

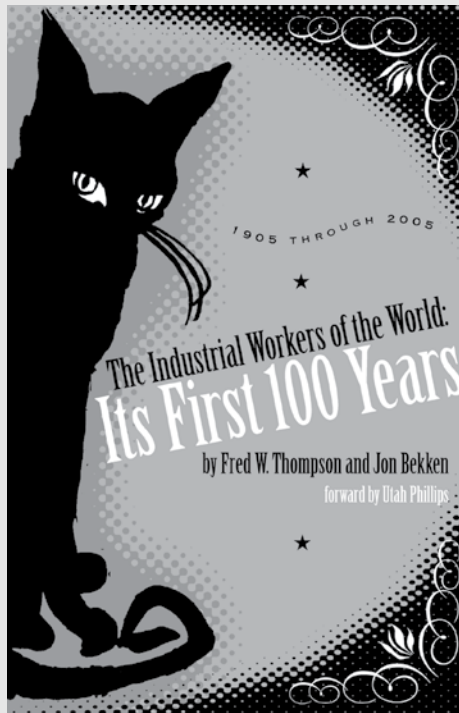
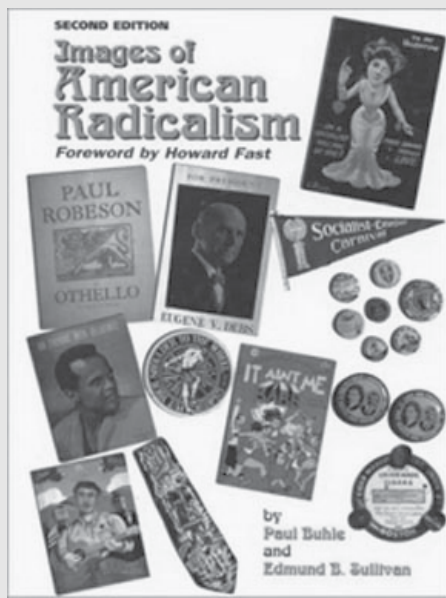
CD version is fierce, sweet and powerful, and contains ballads not included on the original album. It's guaranteed to sway the listener, break hearts and encourage hope...just as those who inspired the songs by changing history. **13 tracks, \$14.95**

Images of American Radicalism

BY PAUL BUHLE AND EDMUND B. SULLIVAN

Historians Buhle and Sullivan engagingly document here the history of American radicalism. The more than 1500 illustrations provided – 72 in color – are paintings, drawings, cartoons, photographs, lithographs, posters, and other graphics depicting religious visionaries, Shakers, abolitionists, suffragists, anarchists, socialists, Wobblies, feminists, Civil Rights workers, gay and lesbian activists, environmentalists, and others in their quest for a cooperative society overcoming a competitive capitalism. Richly illustrating the history of American radicalism, Buhle and Sullivan write about limitations and failures, racism, sexism, and repression as well as the accomplishments and successes of the many radical movements. A dual index lists subjects in the text and illustrations. This handsome book is a superb visual approach to an important but little discussed aspect of American social, political, and cultural history.

42 PAGES, \$20 PAPERBACK, \$25 HARDCOVER



The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years by Fred W. Thompson & Jon Bekken forward by Utah Phillips

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 seamen the IWW built from 1913 through the 1930s, smaller job actions through which the IWW transformed working conditions, 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 IWW, and for an understanding of its ideas and tactics.

255 pages, \$19.95

Static Cling Decal

3.5" black and red IWW logo, suitable for car windows \$2.50 each



Embroidered Patches

3" circle with IWW logo and "An injury to one is an injury to all" embroidered in black, red, white and golden \$3.50 each

Wobblies on the Waterfront

BY PETER COLE

This long-awaited book tells the history of the IWW on the Philadelphia waterfront. Wobblies built the first integrated longshore union in the U.S., winning better wages and shorter hours than any other American port until the employers, federal government and ILA came together to crush the union in the early 1920s. With IWW job control that lasted nearly a decade, Philadelphia proved both the practicality of the IWW's approach, and the union's commitment to racial equality. Cole's book is a sympathetic look at a vital chapter in IWW history.

227 pages, \$40.00



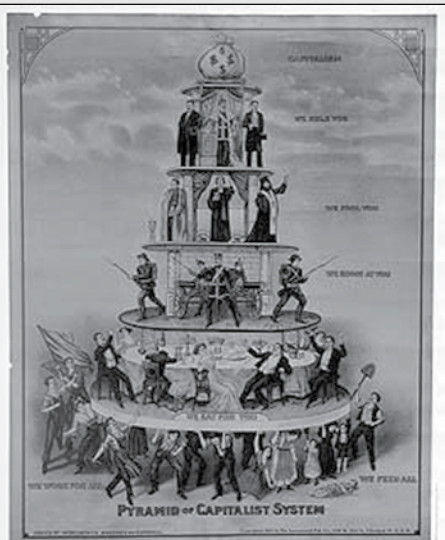
Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora

EDITED BY NANCY GREEN

Documenting the history of the Jewish working class from the 1880s through 1939, this draws upon contemporary newspaper articles, letters, memoirs, and literature to give voice to the workers who left Eastern Europe for the West - and in the process, played a key role in building the modern labor movement as they battled intolerable conditions in their new jobs and communities. This book chronicles those struggles in major cities around the world, and also looks at the cultural and social institutions the Jewish workers built. **256 pages, \$10.00**

A Century of Writing on the IWW 1905 - 2005: An Annotated Bibliography of Books on the Industrial Workers of the World Compiled by Steve Kellerman

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Mexican maquila workers denounce NAFTA

By Rachel Rosen

They produce air bags, seat belts, and other equipment that millions of North American motorists depend on for accident protection. But working and living conditions are anything but safe for more than 3,500 workers at Key Safety Systems' (KSS) factories in northern Mexico.

Workers at the company's four plants in Valle Hermoso face poverty wages, exposure to toxic and carcinogenic chemicals without the required safety equipment, and deplorable housing conditions in communities poisoned by the factories' output.

Israel Monroy and Perla Cruz, who work at KSS plants, are both activists with the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), which is struggling to form an independent union at the automotive parts manufacturer.

The CJM's demands are straightforward: They want a living wage, health and safety protection, and the right to organize. In support of the campaign, Monroy and Cruz have embarked on a North American tour to raise awareness about their struggle for dignity and justice.

From March 16-18, they spoke to people at the Concord Café at an event hosted by the Toronto IWW branch and presented their story to students at two local high schools.

On paper, Mexico has some of the best labor legislation in the world. But since the early Eighties, when the government brought in structural adjustment programs designed to privatize key sectors of the country's economy, workers' rights and environmental protection have suffered. The removal of legal recognition of communal land from the Mexican Constitution in 1992 allowed transnational companies to purchase large amounts of land, paving the way



Perla Cruz speaks at one of many presentations in the United States and Canada on the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras KSS justice tour.

for the establishment of maquiladoras, a foreign-owned factory that produces goods only for tax-free export.

Neoliberal reforms, and the signing of NAFTA in 1994, were devastating to Mexican peasants and workers. Between 1993 and 2002, the agricultural sector lost 1.4 million jobs, and the unemployed were forced into the new maquiladoras, the only source that promised new jobs and decent wages.

Workers at KSS work 48 hours a week for 616 pesos, equivalent to about \$60. From that wage, 227 pesos (about

\$25) are deducted for payments to the company-owned union, the plant cafeteria, the national health care service, and housing. The CJM estimates that a worker would need to work 147 minutes to afford a quart of milk.

The workers, most of whom are in their teens and early twenties, and the majority of whom are women, are exposed to chemicals that severely damage their health. Pregnant women are particularly at risk for complications that include miscarriages, premature births, and respiratory illnesses and brain disorders in children.

"Workers at the factory make 350 airbags a day," said Cruz. "They sell for \$900 each, while we earn a

weekly wage of \$50. Because of the work we do, they're making profits, while we don't have enough to eat."

The company regularly lays off workers with no notice, cutting their pay to \$25 a week.

Monroy described the issues as international in scope. "The problem is not just one bad employer. Exploitation is built into the maquiladora system. Companies set up maquiladoras so they can push workers to produce more and more while keeping wages as low as possible. It's a model that's part of capitalism."

Between October 2005 and January 2006, GM cut 100,000 jobs in the US and Canada. Recently, Monroy and Cruz visited American Axle workers in Detroit who were striking over a cut in pay from \$27 an hour to \$12 an hour. The plant threatened to close and move to Mexico if the union refused to accept the cut.

The devastation wrought by NAFTA and transnational corporations is global, but resistance also crosses borders. Paul Bocking, an organizer with the Toronto IWW, said: "As a labour activist, I'm incredibly inspired by the courage and determination of workers at Key Safety Systems. They face huge obstacles to their struggle, yet have already accomplished so much with the limited resources they have. That's the power of grassroots workers' organizing; we have a lot to learn from them here in Canada."

The CJM have built alliances across North America with progressive unions, workers' organizations, and social justice movements.

On March 13, they led a day of coordinated actions, which included a slowdown and rally at KSS plants in Valle Hermoso, protests at Ford and GM factories, and a visit by a delegation of workers to the KSS headquarters in Sterling Heights. (See below for an account.)

The CJM has published a book, *NAFTA From Below: Maquiladora Workers, Campesinos, and Indigenous Communities Speak Out on the Impact of Free Trade in Mexico*, on their struggle.

Since the Justice in the Maquiladoras speaking tour began on March 4, ten workers have been fired for organizing in KSS plants. The CJM has added the reinstatement of these workers to its list of demands.

"We know the struggle is difficult and we face many obstacles," Cruz says. "But in the end, we know we'll win."

Maquila justice campaign rallies for day of action throughout North America

By Mike Pesa with the CJM and Jim Abbot

A delegation of Mexican factory workers from the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM) came to the US and Canada in March on a truth-telling tour about their struggle for justice in the factories and slums of northern Mexico.

The CJM delegates spoke, picketed and met with hundreds of people in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Toronto, Canada.

The delegates, Israel Monroy and Perla Cruz, went to Detroit for a day of action to highlight abuse by automotive parts manufacturer Key Safety Systems (KSS) and convince its corporate customers, including Ford, General Motors, and Hyundai, to pressure KSS into respecting workers' rights and improving conditions.

"We make thousands of seat belts every day," said Cruz. "That means every day we save thousands of lives. Yet we are sacrificing our own lives to the factory. They are killing us."

Chemicals, known to have caused cancer, miscarriages and birth defects such as children born with brains outside their heads, continue to be used without adequate safety equipment. Air filters that have turned solid black from paint vapor are simply "shook out" instead of replaced.

Gender discrimination is rampant. Women are forced to take pregnancy tests and sometimes even forced to show managers their used tampons.

Meanwhile, workers are paid poverty wages (*salarios de hambre*) that require a factory worker to spend three hours to earn what an undocumented immigrant worker in Los Angeles makes in 12 minutes.

Day of Action

On March 13, the KSS day of action, the delegates and supporters demonstrated at the headquarters of the major auto companies in Detroit and at KSS global corporate headquarters in Sterling Heights, Michigan. The Interfaith Support Committee and the Centro Obrero provided support to Cruz and Monroy.

For Cruz, it meant an opportunity to finally confront the decision-makers of the company that unjustly fired her for trying to improve conditions in her workplace. The receptionist told the delegation that CEO Jason Luo would not meet with them and said she would call the police. Elena Herrada, from the Centro Obrero, said that Cruz and Monroy had traveled all the way from Mexico to meet with Luo. "We're staying and that's it!" said Herrada.

Eventually a Facilities Manager, Mr. Erwin, came and spoke with Cruz and Monroy. A minister from the Interfaith Support Committee said "an injustice to one is an injustice to all" when Erwin attempted to exclude their supporters from the meeting. Erwin listened to the workers' testimony and accepted a packet of documents from them on behalf of the company.

"When I was chosen by my co-workers to come and represent them I was not sure I would do a good job. I was pretty nervous," Cruz said, recalling the beginning of the international tour. "But this morning I was so determined to tell the people we make huge profits for about the conditions we work in back home."

Workers in other North American cities held protests and did phone and email drives to drive the point home to KSS. The IWW's International Solidarity Commission wrote a letter to KSS and another letter to its corporate custom-

ers, including Ford and General Motors, demanding respect for workers' right to organize, work safely and for the reinstatement of the illegally fired workers.

The struggle in Valle Hermoso

In Valle Hermoso, Mexico, the same day, workers in KSS' Valle Hermoso plant organized a work slowdown as well as a protest outside the plant. KSS security failed to prevent the media from interviewing workers. Workers were joined by students and residents from the local *colonias* as they marched to the mayor's office to demand accountability.

KSS responded with intimidation and attempted to mislead its corporate customers, specifically Ford, by sending a management-picked "delegation" of workers to be interviewed about working conditions. Some of these workers were close to the fake *charro* union that

serves to protect the company. These workers assured KSS and Ford that there were no problems with the factory. Most of the others stayed silent for fear of retaliation, as management monitored their answers.

Since the tour began, KSS had fired another worker for organizing, and a worker was badly injured performing a new work routine for which he had inadequate training.

"Decent jobs are what workers need and that these workers are not alone," said CJM Director Martha Ojeda. "If capital does not have borders, neither does international solidarity."

The CJM is urging all supporters to write letters, emails, send faxes, and telephone Key Safety Systems and its customers. All information is available online at www.coalitionforjustice.info/CJM_Website/Home/Home.html.

Slovenia has 1-day general strike

More than 145,000 workers and brought Slovenia to a standstill on March 12 in a one-day general strike over inflation.

A deal to match salary increases to inflation between the largest private sector trade union federation and employer associations was struck. Then employers refused to comply and demanded workers give up their right to strike.

Workers in waste disposal, water utilities, retail, manufacturing, and energy answered the call for a general strike by Alliance of Independent Unions of Slovenia (ZSSS), in support of wage increases to match higher inflation, which rose by six per cent in January. The ZSSS has also pressed demands for a €50 increase on all minimum wages and an agreement to further increases wages,

if inflation continues to rise.

The broken agreement that sparked the general strike was for a 4.7 per cent pay increase in the private sector. Public sector workers had agreed to a 3.4 per cent pay hike, which is half of the actual increase in inflation. However, the employers refused to keep their side of the bargain and began to demand workers give up their right to strike.

The ZSSS is now asking for 5.6 to 10 per cent increases in the different industries.

Slovenia's inflation rate has nearly tripled since it adopted the Euro, the European Union currency at the beginning of 2007.

A similar one-day protest on November 17, 2007, had brought out 70,000 people in this country of two million people.

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

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

By Mike Pesa

ISC rep exposes US spying in Bolivia

ISC representative Alex Van Shaick, who has been meeting with workers' organizations in Bolivia on behalf of the IWW since October 2007, recently made headlines by exposing attempts by an US Embassy official to illegally recruit Peace Corps volunteers to spy on Cuban and Venezuelan visitors doing humanitarian or political work in Bolivia.

Van Shaick, who is volunteering with the Peace Corps as part of a Fulbright research scholarship, was approached by Assistant Regional Security Officer Vincent Cooper at the US Embassy on November 5, 2007 and asked to report on the presence of any Cuban or Venezuelan doctors or field workers he encountered during his visits to rural villages. Van Shaick immediately alerted the media and the story was reported by the *New York Times*, ABC News and other major media outlets around the world. The impact was immediate. Cooper was recalled to Washington, the US Department of State promised a serious investigation, and Bolivian President Evo Morales denounced the spying, while thanking Van Shaick for speaking out.

Iran global day of action

The ISC issued a statement declaring support for the March 6 global Day of Action for Iranian Workers, which featured major protests, meetings, video screenings and more around the world in solidarity with imprisoned union leader Mansour Oshanloo and many other Iranian unionists who are facing serious repression. The statement is available online at www.workers-iran.org

International Women's Day

The ISC issued a statement on March 8, commemorating International Women's Day, highlighting its historic and current relevance to the work of the IWW and its international allies. The statement is available in English and Spanish. If you would like a copy to read or distribute, email solidarity@iww.org.

Condemning violence against unionists in Cambodia

The ISC sent a letter to government officials, international agencies, factory owners and non-government organizations condemning an ongoing wave of violence against union organizers in Cambodia. At least three members of the independent Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUKC) have been brutally murdered in the past four years, the latest occurring in 2007. On February 28, another FTUKC organizer was attacked in an apparent attempted murder. The ISC demanded that the notoriously corrupt Cambodian government seriously investigate these unsolved crimes and take action to protect union members. The ISC also called upon the factory owners to guarantee an environment of safety, respect and freedom of association for all their workers.

Haiti delegation takes shape

The ISC has solidified its plan for an official delegation to Haiti. The delegation will take place April 23-May 5. With the addition of Nathaniel Miller of Philadelphia, there are now five delegates prepared to go. They will meet

with the Confédération des travailleurs haitiens (CTH, Confederation of Haitian Workers), the Batay Ouvriye (Worker's Movement), and possibly other labor and activist groups, to document their experience through a variety of media. The trip will include an observance of Haiti's annual May Day demonstrations, which are expected to be large and energized this year.

The ISC is collecting material aid for the two aforementioned unions, which will be presented in person by the delegation. If you or your branch can contribute money, computers, cameras, labor organizing books in French, megaphones or any other useful materials, please email solidarity@iww.org immediately.

Free 8 Palestinian organizers jailed for 9 years

The ISC signed on to a statement demanding the release of eight Palestinian union organizers who are being unjustly detained by Israeli authorities on charges related to a series of industrial actions and protests that took place in 1999. The ISC also signed on to a statement written by the Twin Cities IWW branch condemning the severe repression of working class Palestinians by the Israeli government in the wake of recent attacks by Palestinian militants. The statement further denounced repression and violence toward working class communities everywhere by any government.

Suchitoto 13 win, El Salvador drops all charges

On February 19, 13 political activists arrested last July in the town of Suchitoto were set free, with all charges against them dismissed.

This victory for the "Suchitoto 13" comes on the heels of the initial charges of "acts of terrorism" being dropped on February 8, following a drawn-out, seven-month long investigation. The terrorism charges, under El Salvador's 2006 Special Law Against Acts of Terrorism, were universally denounced by human rights organizations in El Salvador and around the world. The charges carried a potential sentence of up to 60 years in prison.

The ISC supported the Suchitoto 13 campaign by publishing articles, writing letters and participating in a protest in Philadelphia.

Holding Disney accountable

The ISC signed a letter to Disney shareholders written by SACOM, a Hong Kong-based non-government organization that operates in solidarity with workers in mainland China. The letter, written for Disney's upcoming shareholder meeting and the announcement of plans for a major Disney theme park in Hong Kong, criticized the multinational corporation for failing to follow through on pledges to improve terrible working conditions and violations of international and Chinese labor law at the factories that produce Disney toys and apparel. The letter called upon shareholders to demand accountability from Disney.

Supporting KSS workers in Mexico

The ISC wrote a letter and supported a tour of Mexican maquiladora workers. See the report on page 11.

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ExxonMobil sacks 100 Nigerian unionists

By ICEM, www.icem.org

Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc. has fired over 100 workers in an anti-union campaign that seeks to use non-union staff in its technical and white-collar work units.

The union is an affiliate of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM).

The company, fully owned by US-based ExxonMobil, refused to attend a mandated mediation meeting called by the Nigerian Labour Ministry, on March 3, to resolve differences on work practices and severance procedures with the white-collar oil workers' trade union, PENGASSAN. The union, government and other oil companies showed up, but ExxonMobil did not.

In the days following the meeting, ExxonMobil unilaterally sacked PENGASSAN branch leaders, including the zonal Financial Secretary and the union's National Treasurer. The company has now fired all PENGASSAN bargaining committee members who represent workers in collective negotiations.

The firings are not just of the top leadership but has extended to shop stewards and others identified with the union, with more than 100 full-time workers sacked.

In last year's talks, PENGASSAN and Mobil Oil Nigeria had agreed to staff cuts

of just over 40, mostly to accommodate a new data processing system. The company employed about 400 white-collar staff permanently, but that number has now decreased, with contract and agency workers now taking many of those jobs.

"Mobil Oil Nigeria has betrayed our trust," said Bayo Olowoshile, PENGASSAN General Secretary. "These recent actions are pre-meditated attempts to victimise and harass union officers, frustrate legal justice, and they amount to a serious breach of our existing labour agreement, national industrial law, and global labour standards."

Olowoshile said Mobil has violated terms of the 2007-2008 labour agreement; breached Section 40 of the Nigerian Constitution, which grants rights to membership in trade unions, ignored Section 9 of the Nigerian Labour Code, and disregarded ILO Convention 135 on the rights of workers' representatives.

In 2004, the company replaced all its permanent blue-collar workers in the downstream sector with agency workers, said the Global Union Federation. Those full-time staff had been represented by ICEM affiliate, NUPENG.

PENGASSAN and the ICEM are backing the illegally sacked leaders at Mobil Oil Nigeria, and will work toward reinstatement.

French retail workers hit streets in 1-day industry strike

By John Kalwaic

A major one-day retail strike hit France on February 1, with workers from three of France's main unions, the CFDT, FO, and the CGT, striking supermarkets and hypermarkets throughout France.

The unions reported that the strike was especially strong among cashiers, claiming up to 80 per cent of cashiers were involved. However, the bosses' Retailers and Distributors Federation countered the union claim, saying only four per cent of the shop floor staff and two per cent of overall retail workers took part in the strike. The country's second largest supermarket said the strike took place in 110 of its 226 branches, but the largest supermarket chains refused to release the statistics of workers who struck.

Many of France's workers were demanding larger raises than the 1.6 per cent raise they had been given last year. Other workers were demanding a 35 hour work week, which would make

them full-time, gain benefits and allow them to claim overtime pay. A second retail strike is being called for on Easter weekend.

G20 protester sentenced

Akin Sari, 29, a protester at the G20 economic summit in Melbourne, Australia, who threw objects at police and stormed a city office, was sentenced to jail for at least 14 months. Sari pleaded guilty to the charges.

"The common purpose of the riot was to gain access to the G20 summit," said the presiding judge.

The judge sentenced Sari to 28 months in jail with a non-parole period ensuring he serves at least 14 months.

As of the sentencing, Sari had spent 215 days in custody, much of that in solitary confinement.

Sari is the first Melbourne protester convicted of rioting, with another 20 people facing pending court cases.