

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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Photo: www.shopstewards.net

London Shop Stewards Network rallied against the bailout in front of the Royal Exchange and Bank of England in the United Kingdom. See page 7.

## Economic meltdown global

By Marc B. Young

As the initial effects of the US financial sector's over-exposure to the sub-prime mortgage business made themselves felt and Washington found \$700 billion in bail-out funds, Europe seemed to react with a nervous, "It's your problem." At first.

On October 2, Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the Eurogroup club of finance ministers, declared himself "very relieved" by the American initiative, but added that he didn't see the need for a similar scheme at the European level. Yet national EU governments had already begun to act, led by the Irish who in September guaranteed all deposits in their banks.

### A convergence of factors

Economic factors other than the mortgage crisis were at play as well, as the spectre of trans-Atlantic recession grew from fear to near-certainty. Consider the dramatic climb in oil

prices in recent years, drawing cash from the pockets of North Americans, Europeans and Japanese alike. Then there were those hundreds of billions of dollars in military expenditures due to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, likely to grow into the trillions, money largely but not solely dispensed by Washington – a sum promising inflationary pressure, still-higher deficits, fewer resources for investment in infrastructure, and continued global instability.

By the middle of October, the countries forming the Eurozone had changed their tune, coming up with a collective plan to offer state guarantees for inter-bank loans to encourage nervous financial institutions within the EU to keep extending credit to each other. The plan also included promises of ample public money to reinforce European banks' capital.

"It won't be a gift to the banks, but help so that they can function" in an

Continued on 6

## G20 defends capitalism

The Group of 20 (G20) heads of state meeting on November 14-15 in Washington, DC, United States, was hailed as a landmark meeting in international cooperation to deal with the global financial crisis. However, the country's joint statement was little more than a defense of capitalism and the international financial institutions, free trade and free market domestic and international policies that led to the crisis in the first place.

The G20 membership is a who's who of the global economy: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

While the inclusion of major developing countries such as Brazil, China and India was hailed as a victory and advance for these countries traditionally excluded from the Group of 8 (G8) summits, this resettling of geopolitical lines made little impact for these countries' working class and certainly did not limit the meeting's decidedly pro-capitalist joint statement.

"We recognize that these reforms will only be successful if grounded in a commitment to free market principles, including the rule of law, respect for private property, open trade and investment, competitive markets, and efficient, effectively regulated financial systems," said the statement, which contorts between taking action and upholding the *status quo*.

While the G20 countries agreed to place more oversight and restraints on financial systems and markets, it cautioned against regulation because it could decrease growth.

"Recognizing the necessity to improve financial sector regulation, we must avoid over-regulation that would hamper economic growth and exacerbate

the contraction of capital flows, including to developing countries."

Similarly, while the statement recognizes the sovereignty of each country to make its own economic decisions, it vaguely recommends establishing more international oversight by expanding the G7's Financial Stability Forum of national financial and banking authorities. It also recommends giving more money and resources to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, despite these institutions' poor track record and their much-criticized policy of imposing structural adjustment plans that undermine governments' abilities to provide healthcare and social supports to their populations.

The statement also limited the scope of national economic action by committing each of the G20 countries to keep their markets open over the next 12 months, in the name of "rejecting protectionism and not turning inward in times of financial uncertainty." Each country "will refrain from raising new barriers to investment or to trade in goods and services, imposing new export restrictions, or implementing World Trade Organization (WTO) inconsistent measures to stimulate exports."

Protectionism was a heated issue in the recent US presidential election campaign, with US President-elect Barack Obama often being referred to as a "protectionist" that would isolate the US from the world.

While executive salaries and compensation tied to risk-taking is listed as up for review, redistribution of wealth and fortifying human and workers' rights is notably absent from the G20 statement. Lip service is paid to poverty reduction through the mention of foreign aid and the Millennium Development Goals. The International Trade Union Confederation tried to lobby for a union voice, but its demands were ignored.

## Ontario farm workers win right to unionize

Canadian farm workers in Canada's largest province won the right to organize unions in a Court of Appeal ruling on November 17. About 32,000 farm workers, including an estimated 16,500 migrant workers from Latin America and the Caribbean, can now organize unions.

The decision overturns the 2002 Agricultural Employees Protection Act brought in by the Conservative provincial government after its 1995 legislation that stripped farm workers of the right to organize and cancelled all existing union contracts, was ruled unconstitutional in 2001.

"Finally, workplace democracy has reached the agriculture workers of Ontario," said Wayne Hanley, the National President of the United Food and Commercial Workers Canada (UFCW). "Most importantly, it gives agriculture workers a fundamental right which all

other Ontario workers have had for over 60 years—the right to bargain collectively. Agriculture workers in Ontario will finally be able to negotiate with their employers without fear of penalty or reprisal."

In 2003, the majority of 300 workers at Rol-Land Farms Ltd., a commercial mushroom farm in Kingsville with sales of \$50 million, voted to join the UFCW. However, the provincial labor board refused to issue a certificate of union representation and the employer refused to negotiate, saying the law did not require the company to do so. Three UFCW members then fought the case through the courts and through appeals.

UFCW represents farm workers in British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec and has eight support centres for agricultural workers across Canada.

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# Minneapolis Starbucks baristas join IWW, demand guard

On November 12, baristas from the Starbucks Coffee shop located on Nicollet and Franklin Avenues in Minneapolis walked off the floor, declared their affiliation to the IWW, and presented a 500 signature petition to management. The petition demanded a security guard be hired to ensure safety of the patrons and workers. Customers and community members as well as baristas signed the petition.

This is the first Starbucks in Minneapolis and the second in the state of Minnesota to join the IWW Starbucks Workers Union.

Violent crime is a problem in the area around the store. Since the beginning of 2008, the immediate area around that Starbucks location had more than 500 police reports filed. On August 3, the McDonald's restaurant located two blocks south of Starbucks was robbed at gun point. On November 3, the Money Exchange less than one block from Starbucks was robbed at knife-point at 8:30 AM.

Concerned for their safety, the workers had first tried to raise the issue with a petition signed by most of the store's employees to demand a meeting to discuss security in the store. After receiving no productive response from either the store or district manager, the employees turned to the customers with a petition for action.

"We hoped management would recognize the need to discuss these concerns with us, but when they refused to even hold a meeting, we knew more action was needed," said Aaron Kocher, a current store employee. "We can't work when we are constantly being harassed, threatened, and intimidated or trying to protect our customers from the same mistreatment."

Nancy Athanasselis, a regular customer known to everyone at the store, was gratified to see someone finally doing something about the problem.

"The baristas are very busy running the store. It shouldn't be up to them to take care of security problems, but that is what ends up happening. If Starbucks is not going to look at the human aspect, they should at least look at how much time they spend dealing with security," she said.

Christa worked for Starbucks for three years, but she was forced to choose

busting, the right for baristas to join the Starbucks Workers Union, and for predictable schedules.

The conference was the company's first such conference outside of its home base in Seattle, Washington, and the first since founder Howard Schultz returned to the CEO post. New Orleans residents joined the protest to demand respect for the work of Starbucks baristas and coffee

ment highlighting and challenging the dominance of large corporations in our economic, social, and political life is all but assured," said Daniel Gross, an organizer with the IWW Starbucks Workers Union.

## Black Friday protest for better pay

The IWW will soon announce a day of action for Black Friday, November 28, 2008, the busiest shopping day of the year. The action will call attention to one of the workers' core demands, a cost of living pay increase for all Starbucks baristas. See [www.starbucksunion.org](http://www.starbucksunion.org).

## Labor Board backs fired barista

The Detroit office of the US National Labor Relations Board filed another complaint against Starbucks in September 2008, alleging that the coffee chain's firing of a Michigan barista Cole Dorsey was an unfair labor practice.

Dorsey was fired on June 6 from his job at Grand Rapids, Michigan, after receiving a third disciplinary warning by his manager. Starbucks contends that Dorsey was fired for being late to work, but Dorsey said he was being fired for support of the IWW Starbucks Workers Union.

"We have reasonable cause to believe there may be a violation here," Stephen Glasser, regional director at the labor board's Detroit office, told Associated Press. The labor board is asking Starbucks to give Dorsey his job back, pay lost wages, remove disciplinary warnings from his file and post a notice in the store that says workers have the right to join a union.

Starbucks made a similar settlement that reinstated Twin Cities IWW barista Erik Forman who worked at a Starbucks in the Mall of the Americas in August. The complaint will go to trial in November.

## I'm not going to risk my life for \$8.50 an hour. —Christa, ex-barista threatened with death on the job

between self-preservation and her job.

"I loved the people I worked with, but there were problems. I can't tell you how many times we had to clean up feces, urine, blood, or vomit from customers who came in drunk.

"One time a guy didn't want to pay an extra four cents for his coffee. He started screaming at me. He came back later with a friend and started photographing me, saying, 'That's the one. I'm going to kill her.' I'm not going to risk my life for \$8.50 an hour," she said.

The customers and baristas at the Franklin and Nicollet Starbucks create a dynamic, diverse community in a changing neighborhood. Yet, the security conditions at Franklin and Nicollet have made performing the essential job duties nearly impossible. It is unacceptable for Starbucks to ignore the demands of its customers and workers, said a Starbucks Workers Union statement.

## Union protests managers meeting

On October 26, a surprise storm of union protesters hit Starbucks's national conference for managers in New Orleans, demanding an end to union-

farmers who are bearing the brunt of the downturn while company executives continue to rake in millions of dollars.

"We sent a strong message to Starbucks that New Orleans residents are thirsty for workers' human rights all across the country," said Travis Richey, a participant in the demonstration. "Howard Schultz must face the fact that workers have the right to join the IWW Starbucks Workers Union as the company seeks to make baristas' jobs even more precarious."

Protesters confronted arriving buses of Starbucks managers at the Sheraton hotel with a banner reading, "Starbucks Stop Your Union Busting Now", and handed out flyers to passersby. The demonstrators then marched to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, which hosted the conference and chanted in front of a Starbucks store across the street. The union said in a statement that the police "unlawfully arrested" one protester for allegedly interfering with officers who were detaining another demonstrator without cause.

"As the corporate sinking of the economy continues, an aggressive move-

## IWW Constitution Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

## Join the IWW Today

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

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

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

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

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

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

## GDC to fight SLAPP lawsuits

By Tom Kappas, IWW General Defense Committee

A new tactic of union busting has come upon us. Civil lawsuits are being used against union organizers and workers exercising their rights at work.

These lawsuits—called Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP)—are designed to shut up workers and are springing up like flies all over the United States. Employers are suing workers for just telling the government what we think, want or believe in. It happened to me when I filed a labor complaint against my boss in Ohio and it could happen to you.

While many states have laws prohibiting such lawsuits, these states do not: Alabama, Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Montana, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, North and South Dakota, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. IWW organizers in these states and states that do have anti-SLAPP laws need to build a network of support to deal with them the minute they are announced.

To this end, I am compiling a list of sympathetic lawyers, IWW members with legal knowledge, students, and others to help our membership when it is in legal trouble.

Since our union would be broke if we had to defend a civil suit to the end with lawyers, many preliminary steps can be taken by this network that would save the union and our members from costly legal fees.

If you can help, please contact me by email at [gdc@iww.org](mailto:gdc@iww.org), telephone 513-541-2095 or by mail through IWW headquarters.

For more information about SLAPP lawsuits, visit [www.slapp.org](http://www.slapp.org).

# The Internet didn't make Obama win

One of the stranger things being said about Barack Obama's election victory is that part of the reason for his success was his use of the Internet.

Obama, we are told, "got it", while John McCain did not. The young guy was clued in, and old geezer couldn't use a keyboard. Not only did the pundits say this, but the Obama campaign itself used McCain's inability to send an email in one of its campaign ads. It was a way of saying that McCain was out of touch.

Much has been made of the fact that Obama raised a tremendous amount of money using the Internet, and that his website made effective use of cutting edge technology—including social networks like Facebook.

The danger of all this is that campaigners are going to believe it is true. My concern is that unions are going to buy into this as well.

The fact is that long before Obama faced the technologically-illiterate John McCain, he faced a field of other Democratic candidates. Did Obama have the best website of the lot? Did he make the most use of cutting edge technology?

The answer is no. The guru of online campaigning—the guy who turned Howard Dean's abortive 2004 bid for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination into a serious campaign—didn't back Obama. His name is Joe Trippi and his candidate in early 2008 was John Edwards.

The consensus of pundits early in 2008 was that Edwards had by far the best website of any candidate. He had a presence on every social network, not only Facebook and MySpace, but dozens you never heard of.

There were so many little icons on the Edwards website pointing to obscure networks and social bookmarking services that you had to begin to wonder if they were making some of this up. It was overkill.

Trippi used every trick of the trade to energize the Edwards campaign with the new technology. Massive fundraising efforts were made, the Edwards website was entirely opened to bloggers, it was all extremely cutting edge stuff.

But after an initial decent second place in the Iowa caucuses, the Edwards campaign stalled. It didn't matter that Edwards had the best web team and the best website. Obama ran a better campaign.

In fact, if you look over the US presidential campaign of 2008, the candidate who made the best use by far of the Internet turned out to be Ron Paul, who, despite tremendous online enthusiasm (and real success in online fundraising), actually placed last among the Republican candidates.

Part of what happened in 2008, I think, is that the web matured. In other words, back in 1996, if a presidential candidate had a website, it had to be built from scratch. There was no template. No one knew what best practice was.

By 2004, Trippi and the Dean campaign were laying down the rules for how you use the new tools—including blogs, meet-up, RSS feeds and so on.

These days, we're beyond the experimentation and the result is that most politicians' websites look pretty much like everyone else's. If early in the year you'd looked at the Edwards, Obama

and Clinton sites, you'd have been hard pressed to notice a big difference. Even the splash pages looked almost identical. They all built giant mailing lists, they all raised tons of money online, and they all used blogging and social networks.

It was a bit like those short Olympic races where athletes are so well-trained that the difference between first and second place is a tiny fraction of a second. In other words, they're all pretty much working at the same level. That's what presidential campaign websites are like today. They were all pretty much the same professional operations—at least among the Democrats.

Obama didn't win because unlike the others he raised money online or used Facebook. He won above all because he personally energized a tremendous number of people, especially young people. Edwards may have had the better website and the best Internet team early in 2008, but he wasn't the more charismatic candidate.

## Lessons to learn

There are lessons here for campaigning organizations, including trade unions.

As the web matures, and as our understanding of online campaigns grows, unions and employers are going to operate on what is pretty much a level playing field online.

We'll create great campaigning websites with viral videos and Flash games to promote things like the Employee Free Choice Act. The US Chamber of Commerce, Wal-Mart and McDonalds will create equally professional, cutting-edge online campaigns to fight back.

It should not be forgotten that the most successful political website of the 2008 campaign—the one belonging to Ron Paul—represented what was probably the most anti-union candidate in the field. In other words, the opposition is just as good as we are at using these tools. Maybe it is even better.

Of course we should all study the Obama campaign. Anyone interested in campaigning—and winning—learns from the victors. If McCain had won, we would have learned lessons from his campaign as well.

But we should not learn the wrong lessons. And the idea that Obama won because he understood the web better than his opponents is simply not true. Unions that think that adding a Facebook icon to their home page or organizing avatars in virtual three-dimensional worlds are somehow going to reverse a decades-long decline in union membership are in for a real surprise.

There are no such things as 'virtual strikes'. The only ones that really matter are the ones that put a dent into corporate profits. That is the only language employers understand. No 'virtual picket line' is going to compel an employer to do what they don't want.

Online campaigns only work as part of a broader effort that includes real world activities—such as strikes and picket lines, boycotts and political campaigns.

The real lesson of Obama's campaign is that an inspiring leader can still mobilize millions—and that the candidate with the most links to the very latest cool tools is not necessarily the one who will win.



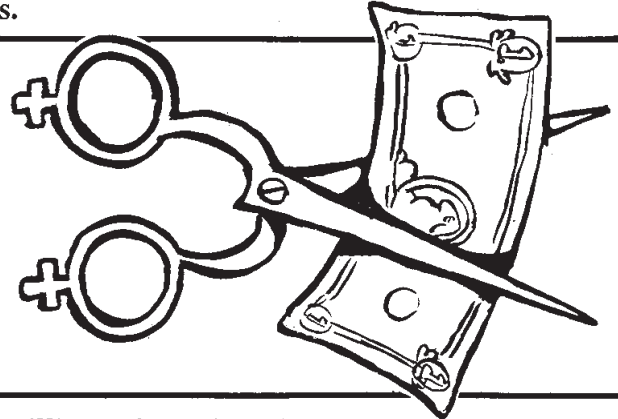
# WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

## Chapter 19 Civil War: New Jobs, Old Story

The Civil War (1861-1865) had a direct impact on tens of thousands of women, with many working out of the home in jobs never before open to female labor. By the end of 1862 -- due to wartime industrial expansion and a shortage of male workers -- more than 100,000 new jobs had opened for women in the production of clothing, boots, shoes, saddles, munitions and supplies for the army.



"A woman can use scissors better than a man, and she will do it cheaper," said the Treasurer of the U.S., who for the first time hired women to cut U.S. treasury notes -- but at half the salary men received. Private employers took the hint, and for the first time hired women in print shops, telegraph offices, department stores and light manufacturing -- always for lower wages.



With millions of men in uniform, the clothing industry boomed. But there was no prosperity for the sewing women who made the uniforms. Increasing numbers looking for work depressed already low wages. It was not uncommon for women to work 15 hours a day and earn only 17 to 24 cents. They had to pay for their own thread and for lost or damaged goods. Unscrupulous bosses sometimes refused to pay them. "At the height of the war-time industrial boom, there were working women throughout the cities of the North close to starvation," wrote historian Barbara Wertheimer.



## Reader's Soapbox

# Ideas to replace the wage system

Continued from 2

upon their contribution to the community. Private property is limited to certain things. Money is not used.

Many other options exist, and, of course, there are many details in each of these to be worked out (like how order and organisation are created in each).

Many great thinkers and writers have contemplated these questions. A great book touching on these questions is G.B. Shaw's *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, which leads the reader to think through

the problems for him or herself. My thinking is that since it is so unbelievable that Capitalism can keep running in this cruel chaos, any of these other options are certainly possible!

Don't let the media tell you it's a black-or-white question when there is a rainbow of possibilities.

In solidarity,

X364060  
New Delhi, India

# Colorado right-to-work campaign defeated

## Campaign backer Coors has long history of union-busting

By Ildiko Sipos, IU 560

It is 1:45 AM, November 5. My husband just checked the news. The Right-to-work Amendment 47 had failed.

"Phew, praise God!" I said, turning over sleepily in my bed.

"God had nothing to do with it, babe," said my husband.

The official ballot measure read: "An amendment to the Colorado constitution concerning participation in a labor organization as a condition of employment, and, in connection therewith, prohibiting an employer from requiring that a person be a member and pay any moneys to a labor organization or to

any other third party in lieu of payment to a labor organization and creating a misdemeanor criminal penalty for a person who violates the provisions of the section." The ballot would make it illegal for union contracts to require mandatory union membership, thus undermining the union itself.

This has been a tough battle for many. Countless late nights on the phone with fellow workers, face-to-face discussions, walking the neighborhoods, handing out flyers and putting up signs, arguing with family, feeling the frustration that even some of those closest to us

were ignorant enough to actually think Amendment 47 could be good.

All the while, we know that, win or lose, the company behind the push for this initiative, Coors Brewery in Golden, Colorado, would not stop their attacks on labor in the years to come. Given Coors history in labor relations, why should any of us have been surprised to learn that the ballot measure's major backer was Jonathan Coors.

On April 5, 1977, 1,472 members of Brewery, Bottling, Can and Allied Industrial Union Local No. 366 walked out. The conflict was over human rights. The union believed that Coors was not an equal opportunity employer. The questions Coors asked on its mandatory polygraph tests were highly discriminatory. This was not just the workers' imagination either.

Adolph Coors Company had been approached by Equal Opportunity Employment concerning its hiring practices. They claimed they had to be selective to protect the company and the family against malicious intent by workers.

When they were accused of asking irrelevant questions on their lie detector

tests (questions like: Are you a homosexual? Do you get along with your wife? What is your sex preference? Are you a communist? Are you concealing any information about subversive, revolutionary, or communistic activity?), Coors changed their tune. They said it was an outside polygraph company that compiled the questions for them and they had no idea what questions were asked. At the same time they openly admitted that they did not support the union and wanted the company to become a non-union shop.

In support of the union workers and union supporters the Coors Boycott and Strike Support Coalition of Colorado was formed. A boycott was called, a list of supporters for this boycott from around the country included the Raza Unida Party of Texas and Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers of America.

The strike ended badly and in December 1978 the workers at Coors voted to decertify the union. As the strike was more than a year old, the striking workers could not vote in that election (as employees) and Coors succeeded in

**Continued to 8**



## Pinchpoint target

By Nate Holdren

Some people think the IWW should pour all of its resources into organizing in an industry which is particularly important to the economy, to maximize our impact on capitalism.

I call this the "Pinchpoint Target" idea. Pinchpoint Target is the idea that there is one key sector or a few key sectors of the economy where organized workers could shut down capitalism. This means workers in that sector or sectors have a certain level of objective power, at least potentially.

For instance, if every dockworker in the United States went on strike, the global economy would stop. Dockworker strikes stop an incredibly valuable amount of machinery and goods. Every minute of the strike costs the bosses of the world a great deal of money. This analysis is correct. It does not mean that the IWW should focus only on organizing dockworkers.

The problem with Pinchpoint Target is that it takes a correct objective analysis of the economy—some sectors are more important to the global economy than others—and argues that the analysis should dictate organizational strategy. The mistake is that Pinchpoint Target advocates say that we'll organize that key sector or sectors and then be able to end capitalism. The idea is that workers in one sector or several sectors will lead the charge for everyone else.

There are at least three problems with this idea. One is that workers in other industries need unions, too, because their jobs also suck. Some of those workers are currently IWW members; not all of them can change jobs to work in some key industry. The IWW needs to support and train and develop those members too. To do otherwise would be undemocratic.

A second problem is that the current level of training, experience, and dedication in our union is insufficient. The procedures for educating new members and developing a sense of Wobbly culture and community need to be better. I don't mean to put down the hard work of my fellow workers. I simply think that we still have a lot of work to do in this area. If we're talking about key sectors where we want to not only build unions but push forward revolutionary transformation, then we will face tremendous repression.

We must be prepared for this repression. We must develop better networks of solidarity and union infrastructure and a stronger Wobbly culture. The union-busting we face when we organize image-conscious restaurant chains or in the public sector is nowhere near as fierce as union-busting in manufacturing. We still have a hard time handling this employer response in our campaigns. If we organize dockworkers or oil refinery workers, the union-busting we face there will be much more intense than anything we have seen before. We need to get better at winning smaller campaigns in less important sectors of the economy before we charge up the mountain.

The level of repression which workers in a pinchpoint industry face is an argument for not prioritizing those sectors for a third reason. If workers in those industries are isolated, they will be more easily defeated. If organization and revolutionary consciousness is spread throughout the working class across different sectors, then we will have a better chance at defeating that repression. If it is not, then the struggles in the pinchpoint sector or sectors will be more likely to lose—and the workers in other sectors may be less likely to unite with the workers in the pinchpoint sectors.

The experience of class struggle on the job can have a radicalizing effect. I've argued that we should organize in a way that maximizes this effect. This is important to counteract divisions between parts of our class. More important sectors of the economy are more likely to be well paid. One response to major unrest is to improve conditions. The difference in income between the pinchpoint and non-pinchpoint workers can lead the latter workers to be less disposed toward solidarity.

The Pinchpoint Target idea is motivated by a sense of urgency. The idea is that prioritizing one sector or some key sectors will move the abolition of the wage system along faster.

That is a worthwhile goal and impatience is totally understandable; the world is a bad place in many ways and it needs to change. I respect and share the sense of urgency of the fellow workers who hold to this idea; however, I'm not convinced that the Pinchpoint Target idea will help us.

## Proposition K fails, sex workers continue to organize

By Carol Leigh

Organizing around Proposition K to decriminalize prostitution in San Francisco was a milestone in the struggle for sex workers' rights. One of the most inspiring and beneficial aspects of this process were the alliances formed to advance the long-range goal to decriminalize our communities.

The IWW led the way with support for our struggle as it has with the struggle of workers who have been ignored by mainstream movements. Other labor activists in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and India, among other countries, also demonstrated their support. This support contrasted with the tepid response sex workers' rights activists have had in the past from the US labor movement.

There are many issues that activists addressing sex work struggle with in the context of labor movements. As sex workers our status as workers is illegal, which, to say the least, places us in a position of extreme vulnerability. It is said that prostitution is not a "status crime" (which would violate the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution), but the effect of the laws, particularly enforcement practices, make it one.

Our illegal status severely inhibits our ability to organize. This is clear when we hear the stories of women, especially women of color and transgendered women, as well as young people detained, threatened by police and sometimes arrested with flimsy 'evidence' because they are assumed to be prostitutes. That being sex worker organizers may even be considered a felony and organizing for workers rights in the context of this criminalization of the labor itself is a unique challenge.

Acquiring support from labor activists has been a challenge. Sex worker rights are ignored by anti-capitalist movements as prostitution itself is categorized only as "a symptom of capitalism," which relegates the vulnerable populations involved to a social justice limbo and reinforces sexual morality. Yet, the institution of prostitution as it exists is inextricably intertwined with capitalism.

Many activists who disavow the electoral system, including sex workers, have found reason to support Proposition K as one route to the decriminalization of our communities. Long-time decriminal-

ization advocates also invoke the pitfalls of this route for change but look toward this process and law reform as one of many strategies.

Certainly, it is clear to many of us that changing our legal status brings up new questions. Governments and some people argue that sex workers should pay society for the right to sell sexual services. This is conceived as a "luxury tax," and the tax is placed upon the workers.

The sex workers' rights movement has long taken a stance against models such as the Nevada model of regulation which places the power squarely in the hands of management. This 17th century approach presumes that sex workers are subhuman and must be strictly controlled by society.

This idea is spread through the media. Contemporary journalists also adopt this presumption, without understanding the root of these prejudices as exemplified in an opinion piece in the *Examiner* newspaper by Matthew Nelson where he advocated to "impose a heavy annual fee on every aspect of prostitution and require weekly and surprise inspections. I would also impose enormous fines on those who do not register and/or are found to not be adequately sanitary."

Even one influential member of the Labor Council explained to me that he voted in opposition to Proposition K because he favored the Nevada-style regulations. This attitude on the part of mainstream labor can only come from much confusion and prejudice.

The entrenched fear of sex and the historic presumption of social control of women's sexuality means the discussion about prostitution is unsophisticated. The Proposition K result was 58 per cent opposed and 42 per cent in favour. The result was due to the highly sensationalist campaign by the opponents of K which many who might otherwise claim to be critical thinkers accepted at face value.

The IWW's brave support for Proposition K empowers those who have dedicated our lives to this struggle, understanding that, despite the many barriers, the IWW has once again taken the lead in the US to support our struggle for sex workers rights.

# Unemployment is the economic policy

By Richard Myers

The meteor hits the earth every day for those on the receiving end of our unemployment system.

There is an economist's expression for the "optimum" percentage of workers who wish to work but have no jobs: NAIRU, or the Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment. Under capitalism, NAIRU is "a steady state unemployment rate above which inflation would fall, and below which inflation would rise." For many decades, through various incarnations, the NAIRU principle has guided economic policy in the US.

The common use of esoteric language by mainstream economists tends to disguise the true nature of capitalist theory. Working people who feel the impact of such policies are rarely informed about them in our public school system. One probable explanation for this omission is that NAIRU requires a certain number of workers to have no jobs. The unemployed play a specific role in the capitalist scheme. Unemployment in capitalist society exists by design.

In the United States, the unemployment rate has been intentionally kept in the range of four to six per cent. In 2008 so far, 1.2 million people have lost their jobs, with more than half of those jobs lost between August and October, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate rose from 6.1 to 6.5 per cent this year, too, when it was 4.7 per cent last year.

In more human terms, that means 10 million people are out of work with 2.3 million of them classified as long-term unemployed because they haven't found work in the last six months. That is a lot of human suffering, much of it intentionally inflicted by this NAIRU economic policy.

How about a simpler example of this vile economic construct called NAIRU? If

a boss has 20 workers that he would like to employ to dig a ditch, he could hire all 20. But in the present system he will find it more efficient and profitable to hire just nineteen of them to dig. Fellow Worker 20 is kept at the edge of the construction project—hungry, poor, and eager to take the job of the first fellow whose back is not strong enough or whose "work ethic" fails to satisfy the boss.

If we examine this scheme closely, it becomes apparent that all 20 workers are adversely impacted. The eagerness of Worker 20 to scab on any one of the other 19 hangs over their heads like a sword. If the employed worker should dare to ask for a wage that corresponds

to a larger portion of the profits than the boss is willing to provide, she is immediately forced to trade places with Worker 20.

In many capitalist societies, Worker 20 is easily found among the masses of starving families who must scrape to survive. In more "civilized" societies, Worker 20 will be allotted a starvation wage (just to keep her alive and

in play) via welfare or "the dole," which is typically financed out of taxes paid by the 19 workers. The 19 are thereby easily led to believe that Worker 20 is a social leech, a pariah with whom they should never find common cause.

For capitalism, the unemployed are labeled as victims, villains, and scapegoats. These roles for the unemployed are absolutely vital to the success of the capitalist con job. Such divisions help to perpetuate a political climate in which NAIRU can thrive. Propaganda focuses the attention of the nineteen on that "welfare cheat" hanging out at the edge of the ditch, distracting them from asking why Worker 20 doesn't have a job or dwelling upon the ditch-digging profits of the boss.

Is there a "kinder and gentler", perhaps more liberal and inclusive alternative to NAIRU available under capitalism?

Full employment is one such idea, but employers say this would cause inflation. If exactly 20 workers were available and necessary to the project and if all 20 had jobs, capitalist economic theorists claim that each worker would demand a raise in pay without fear of dismissal. With no unemployed worker as an alternative source of labour, the employer would give the raise, overall wages would rise, resulting in inflationary pressures on the system.

Why is this situation inflationary? Because economic rules and regulations

tainer prices there have reportedly fallen sharply in recent months; on October 20 it was announced that Singapore's economy had recorded negative growth in the third quarter.

## Post-capitalist alternative?

What would a global, genuinely working-class response to this situation look like, assuming that workers' moods and organizations were up to the task?

North American, European and Asian labour might begin by asserting that casino capitalism has proven itself a failure, rewarding the greediest and least competent members of society, first with exorbitant profits, then with bailouts.

Then they might demand a new direction that really is innovative. Workers and their organizations could call for the expansion of a different sort of financial institution, one socially-owned and democratically-controlled, not driven by the quest for profit but by a mandate to responsibly extend credit to productive development. They could call for a massive, public sector-driven channeling of resources into green initiatives. A demand to end expensive and murderous wars would be part and parcel of such a package.

With equal ambition, they could (respectfully) advance a vision for China and India that doesn't entail those countries' duplication of the automobile, high-energy consumption lifestyle. More clinics, more schools, more trains, more streetcars, more bicycles, more secure

are intended to shield the boss from eating unanticipated expenses by giving him the power to hire and fire, and to establish wages and prices for his business. The boss has the ability and the inclination to pass the cost of higher wages on to his customers.

But the idea of "full employment" is also obscured by capitalist economic terminology which is flagrantly deceptive. Workers may perceive "full" to suggest that when a society reaches full employment, everyone who wants to work has a job.

The capitalists ensure that it doesn't work that way. According to mainstream economic theory, "full employment" exists when enough workers remain unemployed to keep the inflation rate stable. The full employment rate, allowing for the NAIRU unemployed, is also referred to as the "natural" rate of unemployment. In short, workers may demand that everyone have a job, but economists quietly evaluate that such a goal is injurious to economic stability. Politicians can appear to deliver on a false promise, thanks to misleading terminology. These theories have real world consequences.

Economist Milton Friedman has argued that policy-makers should manipulate interest rates to stabilize prices (with a low or even a zero inflation rate), whatever that may do to workers' jobs. As interest rates are increased, businesses will have less money to hire workers. If such a policy is sustained, Friedman believes, then the economy will automatically gravitate toward its "natural" rate of unemployment.

Modern capitalist economic policy is aimed at maintaining the "reserve army of the unemployed" at just the optimum size, and for one purpose: as a club to use against the active workforce.

If you are a worker who derives your income from the wage, then your opportunities to obtain the real value of your toil have been narrowed by the NAIRU scheme, which forces someone to always be looking over your shoulder, coveting your job. That system can be overcome through working class solidarity. Please join the struggle to abolish such a rotten system.

rental accommodation in place of hare-brained homeowner schemes that have proven to be economic dynamite, more distribution of available work, more access to culture, more worker control and less disposable junk made and sold—these could constitute the main elements of a labour response.

That sort of program, though not about to see the light of day tomorrow, has more potential than what Washington (even the "new Washington" of President-elect Obama), the EU or the Chinese government are likely to offer.

In Spain today, where unemployment has been climbing for months, the government is unveiling a scheme whereby those who have lost their jobs can postpone half of their monthly mortgage payment over a two-year period. Beginning January 2011, they'll have to start repaying the favour; the banks get a government guarantee for their short-term inconvenience.

In short, aid schemes unveiled so far are primarily for the powerful, even those dressed up as help for the poor.

On November 26, just 11 days after its representatives argue at the G20 Summit in Washington for more stringent controls on global finance, the EU is slated to come up with its own package to "help citizens faced with the crisis." Is there reason to think that in the absence of serious class ferment and radical alternatives that aid will be more than a few flimsy bandages and some modest economic stimuli?

## Economic crisis global

**Continued from 1** environment where their health is linked to that of US institutions, said French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"We've decided to maintain [the banks]. Their collapse would put in danger the solidity of the system," Sarkozy added on October 12.

Meanwhile, European governments were busily buying up impressive stakes in sickly financial institutions. In Britain, for example, the second week of October saw steps to partially nationalize Barclay's, Lloyd's, HBOS (top mortgage provider in the country), HSBC, Royal Bank of Scotland, Nationwide, Standard Chartered and Abbey Bank. Previously, Northern Rock and Bradford & Bingley had been brought into the government fold.

Iceland, soon on life support from Russia and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), nationalized three banks. The Dutch government, for its part, took over the operations of the Fortis group in the Netherlands, while pumping €10 billion (US\$12.6 billion) into its biggest bank, ING. In Belgium and Luxembourg, national governments also got into the Fortis rescue act. Bank nationalization was on the agenda in Portugal for the first time since its democratic Carnation Revolution in 1974, as the state acquired Banco Português de Negócios.

Germany also promised a package in excess of \$600 billion to bail out troubled players, which included the requirement of a salary cap of some \$670,000 for top managers from institutions participating in the rescue operation. Deutsche Bank declared itself healthy and not in need of public money; its CEO Josef Ackermann had earned almost \$19 million in 2007, so the motives behind his readiness to forgo assistance, if at all possible, weren't hard to imagine.

### What it means for workers in the real economy

When it comes to overall growth in the Eurozone, the IMF has lowered its forecast to 0.2 per cent in 2009. Less optimistically, the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation

(OECD) is predicting economic contraction of 0.5 per cent.

Looking at matters still more broadly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that the number of unemployed worldwide could climb from 190 million in 2007 to 210 million late next year. "The number of working poor living on less than a dollar a day could rise by about 40 million and those at \$2 by more than 100 million," said Juan Somavia, director general of the ILO.

In Asia, the potential effects of the crisis are also clear. China has adopted a thoroughly globalist approach to development, supplying capital to the West and serving as the workshop in which so many of those goods North Americans purchase (often on credit) are manufactured. Beijing has, as commentators have repeatedly stated, a vested interest in propping up US debt and ensuring that American consumers keep shopping. But a substantial decline in US buying power will likely close factories in China, causing workers there to increasingly question the straw-like foundations of the globe's trading system.

In the wake of a mid-October meeting, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party announced measures to dramatically increase internal demand so that domestic consumption can begin to pick up some of the slack left by a depressed West. Party bosses mentioned a 12-year plan to double the income of the country's still largely impoverished rural population. After all, if Europeans, North Americans and Japanese can't buy what pours forth from Chinese factories, who is left? In a shorter-term vein, in November, Beijing also announced a \$586-billion stimulus package of spending on infrastructure and services for the 2009-2010 period.

Then there is prosperous Singapore. One of the world's busiest ports, sitting strategically on the Straits of Malacca through which passes more than 25 per cent of global maritime trade, the city-state is also feeling the pinch — although official unemployment remains below three percent for now. Shipping con-

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**For capitalism, the unemployed are labeled as victims, villains, and scapegoats... roles absolutely vital to the success of the capitalist con job.**

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# Debt, exploitation and the crisis in Canada

By Peter Marin, linchpin.ca

Canadian government officials and business people claim that the Canadian economy is well placed to outride the the US economic turmoil. We could hardly expect them to say otherwise, especially during the recent federal election. Post-election, that rhetoric has changed; there is more than a good chance that Canada will follow the US into economic crisis.

For sure, financial deregulation, new high risk ways to play the global casino, and so-called “free trade” shoulder a lot of the blame for this mess. But the fundamental source of the problem goes beyond these policies. We are about to reach the limits of the economic model that has been imposed on us for the past 30 years.

This model can be called the “low wage/high debt” economic model. Beginning in the early 1980s it replaced the old “high wage/high production” model, with which companies sought to turn big wage gains made by workers’ struggles into profits by: a) demanding a faster pace of work (higher productivity), and b) by encouraging a culture of consumerism so workers would use their high wages to buy the vast amount of goods being produced. This came to be known as the productivity deal.

At the end of the 1970s, workers began to break this cycle by demanding and winning both higher wages and social services (a higher social wage), while refusing to increase the pace of work which had already reached super-human speeds. Thus, companies found their profits under attack as the better quality of life for workers came to clash with the needs of bosses to make a profit.

In response, governments all over the world and of all political stripes began to attack the wage and social service gains made by workers. In Canada, this began with the Conservative Mul-

rooney government and continues to be largely successful to this day, regardless of which party holds power. A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows that real wages today (when inflation is taken into account) are at the same level as the 1970s. At the same time, spending on social services has been drastically cut. This is the “low-wage” part of the new economic model.

But low wages present a major problem for profits. If wages are too low, then workers cannot afford to buy the increasing number of goods being produced. The misery that this means for workers is not the problem from the point of view of business. The problem is the loss of a market to buy goods and generate profits. This is a classic problem of overproduction. The low-wage model is thus inherently unsustainable.

One way that big business and big government have tried to get around this problem is by pushing through free trade policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the upcoming Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), that let companies sell their goods globally. In this way, companies can reduce their dependence on the wages or consumption power of their Canadian workers.

But it has not really solved the problem of overproduction since the wages of all workers everywhere are under attack. In the case of Canada, the wages of the American worker, the consumer in our biggest export market, have been reduced even more than Canadian workers. At best, free trade only delays the day of reckoning.

Another business strategy is to lower the price of goods consumed by one group of workers by reducing the wages of another group of workers. This is the true meaning of Wal-Mart. By super-

exploiting workers in China and other countries, companies can lower their prices to a point where workers in Canada can afford them, despite their lower wages. In this way the sweat and blood of workers overseas is used to tap the wages of Canadian workers for profits.

This strategy is also unsustainable. For one, super-exploited workers always resist, driving up wages. For example, China is brimming with workers’ struggles. For example, the *China Labour Bulletin* reports tens of thousands of strikes and other workplace stoppages per year. These have recently forced the Chinese government to pass a new labor law that is supposed to allow some gains for workers.

Further, the prices of key goods, such as houses, cars, and education, cannot be reduced because they require such high levels of work and technology that, no matter how low wages get, they will always cost thousands of dollars. If workers cannot afford to buy these key goods, a crisis should be on its way.

This brings us to the second part of the “low wage/high debt” economic model. The availability of cheap credit has allowed workers to borrow large sums of money and consume way past their means. This access to low interest credit explains why the low-wage economy has not yet come to a grinding halt. Low mortgage interest rates, zero-percent car financing, credit cards in every wallet and a “pay day” loan shop at every corner have allowed high levels of consumption to continue even as wages are reduced. For companies this is the best of both worlds. Low wages combined with high sales mean big profits. For workers this has meant insecurity at work and anxiety over soaring debts. But you don’t need a PhD in economics to figure out that eventually people will

not be able to make payments on their loans with decreasing wages and rising interest rates.

This is precisely what is happening now in the US housing market where millions of Americans have had their homes taken away because they cannot pay their mortgages. That banks and investors turned these loans into stocks and gambled with them on the financial markets, losing trillions in the process, is a serious issue. However, in the long run, these high risk gambles are not as serious as millions of workers in the US defaulting on their debts. Apart from mortgages, credit card debt in the US totals nearly \$1 trillion. Auto financing debt is also in the hundreds of billions.

No taxpayer bailout, no matter how big or how helpful to rich investors, will solve this problem. In other words, the “low wage/high debt” US economy is imploding. Canadians, according to a recent report by investment firm Merrill Lynch, are only slightly less in debt than the average American.

What are the chances that Canadians will also start defaulting on their mortgages, credit cards, student debts, auto financing and a myriad of other debts which we have been forced to take on because our wages do not stretch far enough?

Even without increasing food and oil prices, the scene in the US is like a frightening preview of things to come in Canada. Part of that preview will be seeing how leaving the solution up to the same people who got us into this mess with trillion dollar bailouts for the rich and increased repression for the rest of us, does not work.

We must start now to self-organize and struggle for a better alternative and make the outcome of this crisis a radical change for the better.

## Conservative workers ready for exploitation

By Y., www.iww.org.au

Most workers have bought the conservative line that socialism will make them poorer and even more alienated from power than they are.

The conservative line in the United States, replicated throughout much of the world, says that the American people are taxpayers that pay for government, so they deserve as little government as possible.

In practice, this boils down to cutting government-provided social services and leaving the lean, mean part of the State intact (police, fire, military, prisons) and help like roads for commerce. The rest of the conservative line is that Americans should not have to pay higher taxes to fund the parasitic poorer workers who can’t pay their own way in the free marketplace because they’re too lazy to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. The conservatives would have people believe that the government should let the free market rip without bothersome interference by bureaucrats.

The conservative analysis has no class perspective. Conservatives say there is no alienation from power because we’re all equal under the law and have the same number of votes—one—as every other individual citizen. We have democracy, which is only possible where free enterprise reigns. This analysis ignores where wealth comes from and where it ends up. There is no extraction of wealth and by extension, power, from workers who sell their time and skills for wages to the employing class.

Instead of power and wealth, workers get nationalism, an ideology which assumes that the employing class and the working class have interests in common. It’s kind of like the old African joke about colonialists: “When they came, they had the Bibles and we had the land.

After they established themselves, we had the Bibles and they had the land.”

Indeed, conservative workers worldwide, see their world in upside down terms, a world in which corporations create wealth; poorer workers rob them by demanding social services like healthcare which raises their taxes; and that workers should just try to keep as much of their individual wealth (wages and savings) as they can and avoid Big Government Bureaucrat taxes.

The identification of their interests with the interests of their bosses’ businesses appears in the language of everyday life; for example, “my company is doing better than most.” In effect, we become thralls. What do I mean by thrall? According to Wikipedia’s slavery entry, what distinguishes a thrall from other types of slaves is that “the state of being a thrall could be entered into voluntarily as well as involuntarily.”

Most lefties who identify as socialists or communists have either forgotten or abandoned or never knew class analysis and now favour moralistically-flavored, so-called militant actions for what boils down to legislative reforms of the inherently exploitative wages system. There is nothing wrong with getting some of the wealth and power we sell everyday to our bosses directed back to us. If we get legislative reforms which work in our class interests, then great.

However, with this mentality the capitalist system itself is not the target of Labor or most of the left, except maybe to talk about “seizing State power.” This rhetoric is usually reserved for the most ‘Rrrrrvolutionary’ sects whose programs, if implemented, would lead them to become administrative bureaucrats within a wage system that has, perhaps, another name and a new national flag.

In the coming months, the conservative line will be used by our rulers’ political spokespeople (Labor, Liberal, Green and National) to get us to toe the line in both domestic and foreign policies. We, the people, will be told to accept the capitalist system with all its faults, for it is the best one we can possibly obtain.

## Stewards Network rallies at London stock exchange against bank bailouts

By Linda Taaffe, www.shopstewards.net

On October 13, as four banks came cap in hand to the government for a taxpayer-funded £60 billion bailout—and got it—supporters of the London Shop Stewards Network gathered outside the Royal Exchange and Bank of England with placards, banners and leaflets to appeal to city workers to get organised and prepare for a fight-back over the prospect of 62,000 job losses in the city over the next two years.

We were not appealing to top bankers whose CEOs take home between £2-4 million a year or the city traders who have squandered obscene amounts of wealth in the “good times”, but rather to the 40,000 cleaners and caterers, who keep the city clean, fed and watered but suffer rock bottom pay, long hours and few benefits; to the office and clerical staff; and to the building and maintenance workers. No job is safe—manual or professional.

We created quite a stir as we assembled noisily, with slogans of “jail, not bail” for the bankers and “give us what the bankers got.” A group of school students on an educational visit stopped and listened and, echoing our chants,

To hell with that. Despite what our rulers tell us about change, the working class will be the content of any change, with the power to make the change or prevent it. Capitalism, revamped or not, is wage slavery and passively allowing our leaders to “make history” is a recipe for our own continued thralldom.

rather innocently asked, “Well, where has the money gone?”

This is exactly the sort of question that will be a burning issue for thousands of young people as they face prospects of mass unemployment in a few years. Hopefully, they will remember this demo and draw the conclusion that they need to join a union and fight back.

The media were all around, from local London press and radio, national press to Japanese TV and the BBC World Service, all snapping our city “fat cat” crying into his champagne and particularly eager to get shots of our Grim Reaper in front of the Bank of England threatening to fell World Capitalism.

The problem is that the Grim Reaper may well have Capitalism in his sights but it is going to take organised action to effect any real change. To do that, workers have to build strong unions.

In the Shop Stewards Network we are playing our part in helping to revitalise the unions in the United Kingdom.

After the rally, we marched past the Royal Bank of Scotland and yelled “Say ‘thank you’ for the £20 million!” We then leafleted lunching workers.

## Review

# A Union Man won't quit

Mann, George. *Union Man*, Washington, DC, 2008, DVD, \$13.

By Scott Satterwhite

As I get older, I've come to appreciate a few things in life that I once overlooked. One being that there are few more beautiful things in life than an old timer, well past the retirement age, that refuses to quit. For Julius Margolin, the rank-and-file subject of the documentary, *A Union Man*, the stakes are too high to simply retire.

In this beautifully sentimental film, we find a man who has dedicated his entire adult life to fighting for the union cause, not only in the United States but around the world, and not only in the prime of his life but in his twilight years. What comes across in this story about Margolin's life is not so much that this one man led an amazingly exceptional life, but that this was one man who, along with many other men and women, helped make the labor movement that we know today.

While representational of many union activists, what makes this man's story unique is that when Margolin was kicked down, he got back up again—fists in the air and still fighting. Margolin's constant reinvention of himself is paramount to this story. In the film's opening scenes, Margolin is interviewed by an adolescent girl. In the film's first moments, this aged activist makes it quite clear that the reason he keeps going, the reason he keeps fighting, is not for himself, but for the next generations.

Active since the Great Depression, Julius Margolin first became involved with labor through the National Maritime Union until he was blacklisted from the sea trades during the McCarthy era. Margolin then found union work in the film industry where he continued his activism until retirement. Then, after

retirement, Margolin continued his life's work singing songs for the cause of unionism. While these twists and turns of life certainly took Margolin on a radically different path than others of his generation, building the labor movement was his lifelong cause and all of these professions—seaman, film crew, and singer—are connected to that goal.

*A Union Man* features a number of songs that Margolin and George Mann, the film's producer and director, had co-written and arranged. Evident throughout the film is that producer and labor activist George Mann has the intention of documenting the life of this great rank-and-filer, not simply to record Margolin's life, but so that his continued life in struggle will be an inspiration for those that will come after Margolin, who is well into his Nineties, when he is gone.

Featured prominently in the film is late IWW icon Utah Phillips in one of his last interviews. Phillips discusses the role of unions in America, his life in the union movement, and the role of musicians in the union cause. While the film is dedicated to Phillips, this is but one of several testimonies to Margolin specifically, and to union activism as a whole, that permeate the film.

While there were parts of this film that could have been edited out for time's sake, I would have found it difficult to cut anything out of a film on this man's life. After all, how do you condense 90 years of struggle into a one hour film? Margolin travelled the world spreading unionism, connecting with the working class all over the world. Not to mention that the music in this film is great, too—fun, catchy songs with a strong sense of message performed by probably one of the most unique bands

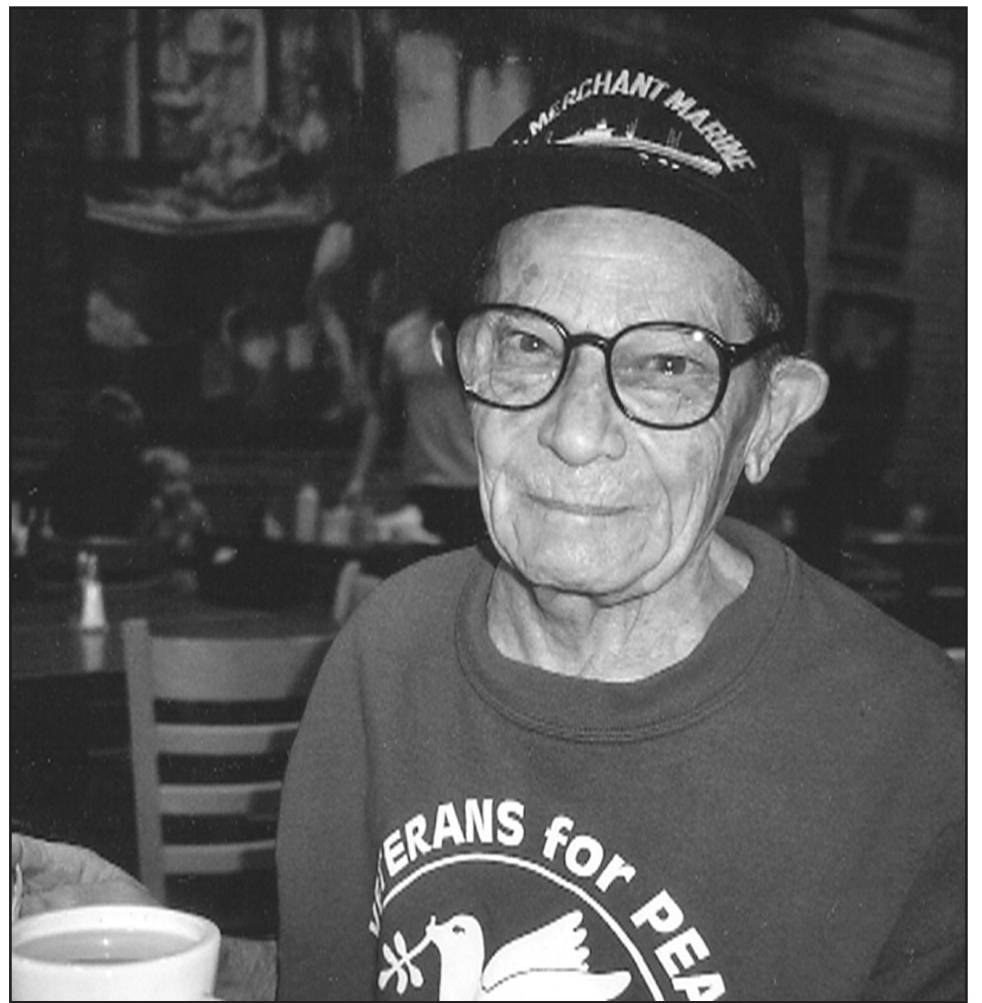


Photo: George Mann

**Julius Margolin, 95, is the subject of a DVD documentary about his lifelong struggle for the working class, available through [georgemann.home.att.net](http://georgemann.home.att.net).**

in New York City. After all, how many bands, political or not, can boast a lead singer with Margolin's story *and* that is probably more radical than most anarcho-punk bands, but 70 years older?

If there is one message in this film, that message is "don't give up." If there's room for another message, that message would be "don't forget to have fun."

This film is a not only a testament to the great life of one man, but to the great multitude of rank-and-file union men and women who have given us such a rich history to be proud of.

*A Union Man* is not only inspirational, but it made me wonder, how many more people like Julius Margolin are out there?

## Colorado right-to-work

Continued from 5

pushing the union out.

This is not the only union Coors has broken. At one point, Coors broke 19 unions in 20 years. Joe Coors became an influential advisor to Ronald Reagan, was a regent at the University of Colorado and had persistently red-baited some highly respected, liberal-minded professors.

It is not too surprising then that 30 years later Coors would continue with determined hostility toward unions by trying to push an amendment through that would, if passed, severely damage the unions and workers alike in this state. Organizers of this initiative in April filed more the 133,000 signatures with Secretary of State Mike Coffman's office. These signatures were filed despite Governor Bill Ritter's closed-door meeting asking them to stand down and the questionable validity of some of the signatures gathered.

The Colorado AFL-CIO and a coalition of labor and liberal donors called Protect Colorado's Future opposed the measure strongly. They put five retaliatory measures of their own on the ballot in response.

In the passing months, as the battle continued to unfold, unions in our state found themselves allied with big business to try to get the extra muscle needed to defeat Amendment 47. Labor union leaders offered to pull their measures from the ballot in exchange for business leaders' help to fight Amendment 47.

For those of us on the ground, it was more than a little frustrating. The IWW presence is not strong in this state and we are not well organized. As a result, most wobblies could do little more than to offer support and volunteer their time to help the other bigger unions and labor

organizations in their fight against this measure. Of course, we all handed out flyers and held up signs.

As a wobbly, perhaps this has been the single most frustrating aspect of this fight. I do not subscribe to wobblies renting themselves out for use by other organizations in order to fight for the cause of labor. Yet at this point, there was little choice. The day will come I hope when wobblies are regarded as more than just available manpower with an interesting history; a day when wobblies in this state can once again make their own history.

Nevertheless, folks worked hard to fight Amendment 47. This combined with the efforts of labor unions and businesses did result in victory for labor. Amendment 47 failed.

Will the failure of this amendment get Coors to back down? No. There are members of the Coors family who will likely never stop trying to crush unions out of existence in this state.

Some folks now claim that some members of the Coors family support the unions, that businesses coming out in opposition against Amendment 47 means they are now our allies. Can bosses ever be true allies of the working classes?

Labor won today. Or did we? Did we truly win the hearts and minds of the workers in this state, or did we only succeed in building shaky alliances?

We were lucky enough to gain the support of much larger organizations but could the workers standing on their own two feet, would they have had not just the ability but the will to fight this? I do not know.

Anti-union sentiment is strong here in Colorado, and I fear the true battle for workers' rights in this state has only just

## Review

# Labor law handy

*Straughton Lynd and Daniel Gross, Labor Law for the Rank and Filer, PM Press, Oakland, 2008, 118 pages, paperback, \$10.*

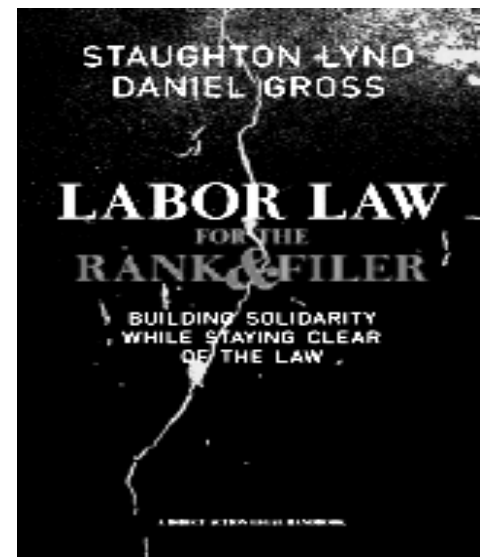
By John Gorman

"Bosses break the law every day," Alexis Buss, former General Secretary Treasurer of the IWW, reminds us, while workers are expected to observe it strictly. *Labor Law for the Rank and Filer* is written to help ordinary working people observe that law, know what rights they have, and what to do about the boss's attempts to nullify them.

This book tells workers when to tread carefully and when to stand up against a workplace tyrant who imagines he can run his establishment like a tiny fiefdom. This slender volume, as its subtitle tells us, helps working people in "building solidarity while staying clear of the law."

The modest size of this handbook and its minimum of legal jargon make it a fast read and it also lets workers have it on hand, in a pocket or a lunch pail or a desk drawer, as ammunition for a quick counterattack, should the boss get out of line. It is not inconceivable that the mere sight of this slender volume might make a company despot think twice about whatever Unfair Labor Practice he is planning that week.

On a more subtle level, *Labor Law* reminds us that the knowledge it imparts is not the exclusive property of lawyers or even of union officials. Ordinary workers can understand and apply it, making an important contribution to the democratization of their unions. Should the rank-and-file have questions about the union's legal position, they have the terms and the concepts to frame those inquiries properly and get intelligible answers. In some unions, seeing *Labor Law* in the hands of ordinary members might also make the business agent think twice about his plans to accom-



modate management's latest "improvements."

For us Wobblies, however, the most interesting part of *Labor Law* is chapter five, which offers a way around and beyond the customary business union's approach that sees becoming sole collective bargaining agent for its members as the only worthwhile goal. Instead of waiting sometimes years for union recognition and the signing of a contract, solidarity unionism enables workers to form their own unions and act on their own behalf without being the bargaining agent or even being much concerned about ever attaining that status.

Unlike the business union, which generally mimics the bureaucratic structure of the company, solidarity unionism is of necessity democratic and depends on the ongoing commitment and activities of its members. Lacking a hierarchy, the solidarity union must decide on its own how to remedy grievances. Solidarity unions, as the authors point out, are free to take actions that are beyond the scope of business unions, since they have no contract with management. Members'

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# Grocery worker fights boss, union for rights, pension

By Diane Krauthamer

The Key Food on Montague Street in Brooklyn, New York, gives the appearance of a friendly neighborhood grocery store, a place that you can't imagine to be "worse than a sweatshop." But Mamodou "Mohammed" Doucoure, who has worked for more than 15 years at Key Food, said they "bring about fear in their employees."

## Retaliation for unionizing

"Open your mouth and you leave" that is the message Doucoure said the owners are sending their employees if they ask for more. The Montague Street Key Food owners, Enrico Palazzo and Ivan Arguello, have allegedly spent the last 10 years actively denying workers fair payment and using intimidation, harassment and corruption to discourage workers from demanding fair union representation.

Meanwhile, the union says that Key Food employees are being fairly represented, but refused to comment on Doucoure's situation as it is a pending legal matter.

In the last week of October 2008, Doucoure was demoted from his position as "assistant manager" to overnight stock boy because store owners accused him of "sexual harassment"—a claim which was denied by store customers who witnessed the incident in question, and which lacked any evidence.

Doucoure said he was accused of harassment in retaliation for speaking up against years of not receiving overtime pay, and against falsified claims of his length of employment, which caused him to lose a seven-year pension that he was owed. Due to these measures, along with intimidation against other employees, he alleges that Palazzo and Arguello are effectively scaring workers from demanding fair union representation in the store. Both owners refused to comment on the matter.

When Doucoure was demoted, he called in representatives from his union, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1500, to meet with Arguello and Palazzo in his defense. At this meeting, Arguello accused Doucoure of sexually harassing co-owner Enrico Palazzo's wife. Doucoure said there are security cameras all over the store and demanded video evidence, but Palazzo provided nothing. Doucoure also asked why the police were not called.

Due to such questionable circumstances, the union has not made any further moves and would not comment on the matter. This situation continues down the path that Arguello and Palazzo had been fighting for years—that of workers being denied union representation at a time when it is most crucial for them.

## Labor law

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input is vital, however, since without that knowledge and support, any action the union takes is bound to fail. While sit-ins and plant occupations are illegal, there are other remedies like work-to-rule which can give the boss nightmares and make negotiation attractive, with the solidarity union becoming the *de facto* bargaining agent, even though no NLRB election has ever been held.

Taking a wider view, the authors address issues like foreign sweatshops, immigrant labor organizing, the battle against the "race to the bottom" of globalization, assuring us in chapter six that "Another World Is Possible." While we may wonder how probable that world might be, this book is an important reminder that the world we live in is not handed down by decree from the Almighty, but is the product of human minds and human institutions that can be altered for the better.



Photo: Diane Krauthamer

**Key Food, UFCW Local 1500 and employee Mamodou Doucoure are locked in a three-way fight over working conditions, pensions and union representation.**

## Doucoure's struggle at Key Food

Key Food on Montague Street hired Doucoure in 1992, but the company allegedly submitted false information to Local 1500 that he was not hired until 1996. Although he had worked for the company for years with an understanding of being represented by the union, he was not allowed to join the union until 1997, "at least six months from his date of hire." Key Food refused to supply the union with his actual hiring date so Doucoure's rights as a long-time worker at the company were refused. As a result, he has "continuously lost wages, fringe benefits, seniority, pension rights and other rights."

In January 2007, Doucoure twice requested that Local 1500 take his case to arbitration, but the union did not respond to his requests. Instead, in March

2007, Local 1500 demanded approximately three years in dues payments from 1995 until 1997. He then filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board against the union and Key Food on September 13, 2007.

In November 2007, Local 1500 responded to this complaint, alleging that Doucoure told them he did not pay dues to the union until 1997 because Key Food "convinced him it would not be in his interest to do so."

The union claimed that he was working as a part-time security guard—a job category that the union does not represent—until 1995. According to the union's investigation, Key Food "concealed" that fact until 1997. As a result, the union claims to have requested that Doucoure's records be adjusted so that he would receive his pension from 1995,

and the union claims to have informed him of this in 2006.

Doucoure said he has neither received the pension nor was informed of the adjustment in 2006. Doucoure, frustrated with a lack of fair union response, said this is because Palazzo claims to "own the union."

"Palazzo made it clear to everyone [who works at Key Food] that if you call the union, he owns the union and [the employees] will pay the price." Additionally, Doucoure said Palazzo told him he would agree to a settlement if Doucoure agreed to leave the store.

## The union's response

A spokesperson for UFCW Local 1500 said that the National Labor Relations Board has dismissed each complaint Doucoure has filed against the union, meaning that "Local 1500 has been found by the NLRB to have properly represented Mr. Doucoure," said Patrick Purcell Jr., Director of Special Projects, UFCW Local 1500.

"I will say that the members of Local 1500 at the Key Food in question have an outstanding contract that provided among other things completely paid for health insurance, pensions completely funded by the employer, dental, vision and legal insurance and of course good wages," said Purcell.

Doucoure is not alone in being denied his legal rights to benefits at this Key Food. According to local waitress and long-time friend of Key Food workers, Bonnie Burke, several other employees at the store spent years trying to join the union and had also been intimidated, harassed and denied pensions.

In 2006, employees were finally given a four-year contract, which Doucoure said "has resulted in far from outstanding benefits for Key Food employees at our store. In fact, the employees have not been invited to vote to accept or reject any contract, as required, during my time at the store."

Additionally, when employees finally won union representation, Arguello and Palazzo again allegedly sent the union false information about their employees' length of employment, which in turn shortened their pension.

Burke remembered that one long-time employee, Anna Bailey, suddenly had her schedule changed to hours that she could not work. She had already lost three years of her pension and faced continued harassment and intimidation. According to records, with the "outstanding union contract," a cashier like Bailey received only \$9.85 per hour after working at the company for more than 12 years. She decided to quit shortly thereafter.

Burke said another employee named Gloria spent more than a decade working for the company, and lost her pension upon retirement. She said management continues to harass workers in order to "push them out" of the store.

As a friend of many of the workers, Burke said, "I care about these people and I can't just sit by and let this happen to them," adding that she is very heartened by the "outpouring of community support."

"If there's anything the (Key Food workers) need done, we will do it," she said.

Doucoure said that the owners are consciously trying to manipulate employees into quitting in what he called a "backdoor push-out"—describing that owners are trying to conceal the corruption and repress his voice by literally pushing him out of the back-door where his voice will not be heard. He said that Palazzo is trying to bring about fear in his co-workers.

"It's important that we come out of hiding from fear and stand up for our rights," he said.

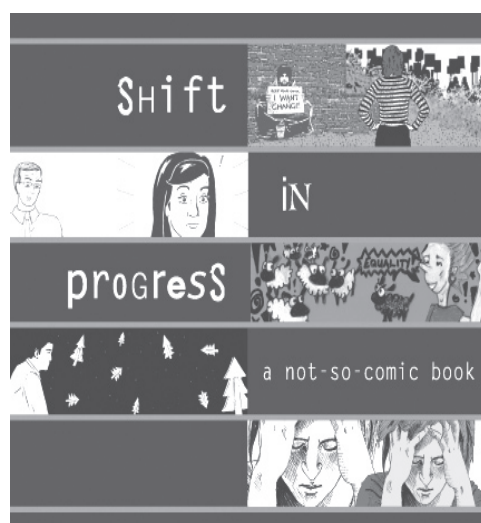
## Young Edmonton workers launch comic

The Edmonton IWW branch launched a comic book created by six aspiring artists that is based on true stories of workplace mistreatment. A book launch party for *Shift in Progress: A Not-So-Comic Book!* was held in Edmonton on November 20 at Happy Harbor Comics.

The Edmonton IWW branch said it sought to empower young people to tell their workplace stories and together create a common story that speaks directly to the community. The comic book format was chosen because it is an art form that is current and relevant to young people. The overall goal was to illustrate and try to address some of the pressing issues of the "Voices Less Heard" of young workers in Edmonton and elsewhere today.

The comic both poses hard questions about issues on the job and propose actions that workers could take toward bettering their workplaces.

The issues, both universal and personal, were identified through interviews with young workers. Interview notes were then handed over to the artists participating in the project who combined the interviewees' stories with their



The cover of the Edmonton IWW's new comic book about young workers.

own create a comic book of "truth-based fiction."

The comic book received funding through Edmonton's 2007 Cultural Capital Community Program, "Voices Less Heard."

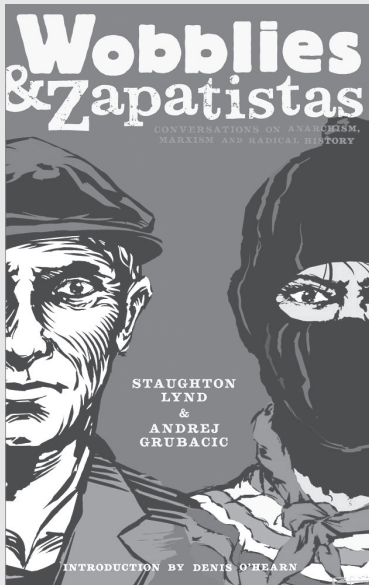
To buy a copy, download an order form at: [edmonton.iww.ca](http://edmonton.iww.ca) or call the Edmonton IWW at: 780-633-2141.



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## Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History

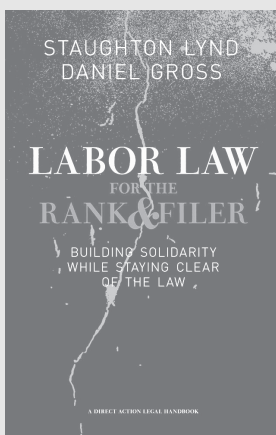
BY STAUGHTON LYND AND ANDREJ GRUBACIC

*Wobblies and Zapatistas* offers the reader an encounter between two generations and two traditions. Andrej Grubacic is an anarchist from the Balkans. Staughton Lynd is a lifelong pacifist, influenced by Marxism. They meet in dialogue in an effort to bring together the anarchist and Marxist traditions, to discuss the writing of history by those who make it, and to remind us of the idea that "my country is the world." Encompassing a Left libertarian perspective and an emphatically activist standpoint, these conversations are meant to be read in the clubs and affinity groups of the new Movement.

The authors accompany us on a journey through modern revolutions, direct actions, anti-globalist counter summits, Freedom Schools, Zapatista cooperatives, Haymarket and Petrograd, Hanoi and Belgrade, 'intentional' communities, wildcat strikes, early Protestant communities, Native American democratic practices, the Workers' Solidarity Club of Youngstown, occupied factories, self-organized councils and soviets, the lives of forgotten revolutionaries, Quaker meetings, antiwar movements, and prison rebellions. Neglected and forgotten moments of interracial self-activity are brought to light. The book invites the attention of readers who believe that a better world, on the other side of capitalism and state bureaucracy, may indeed be possible.

"There's no doubt that we've lost much of our history. It's also very clear that those in power in this country like it that way. Here's a book that shows us why. It demonstrates not only that another world is possible, but that it already exists, has existed, and shows an endless potential to burst through the artificial walls and divisions that currently imprison us. An exquisite contribution to the literature of human freedom, and coming not a moment too soon."

—David Graeber, author of *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology and Direct Action: An Ethnography* **300 pages, \$19.95**



## Labor Law for the Rank and Filer: Building Solidarity While Staying Clear of the Law

BY STAUGHTON LYND AND DANIEL GROSS

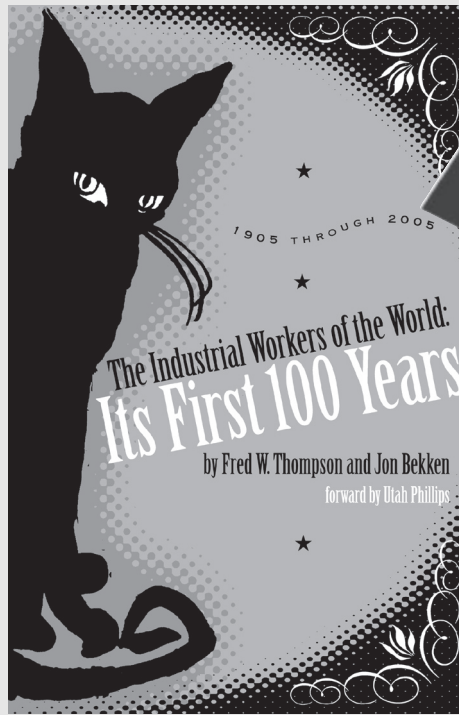
Have you ever felt your blood boil at work but lacked the tools to fight back and win? Or have you acted together with your co-workers, made progress, but wondered what to do next? If you are in a union, do you find that the union operates top-down just like the boss and ignores the will of its members?

*Labor Law for the Rank and Filer* is a guerrilla legal handbook for workers in a precarious global economy. Blending cutting-edge legal strategies for winning justice at work with a theory of dramatic social change from

below, Staughton Lynd and Daniel Gross deliver a practical guide for making work better while re-invigorating the labor movement.

*Labor Law for the Rank and Filer* demonstrates how a powerful model of organizing called "Solidarity Unionism" can help workers avoid the pitfalls of the legal system and utilize direct action to win. This new revised and expanded edition includes new cases governing fundamental labor rights as well as an added section on Practicing Solidarity Unionism. This new section includes chapters discussing the hard-hitting tactic of working to rule; organizing under the principle that no one is illegal, and building grassroots solidarity across borders to challenge neoliberalism, among several other new topics. Illustrative stories of workers' struggles make the legal principles come alive.

**110 pages, \$10.00**



## The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years

by Fred W. Thompson and 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 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**

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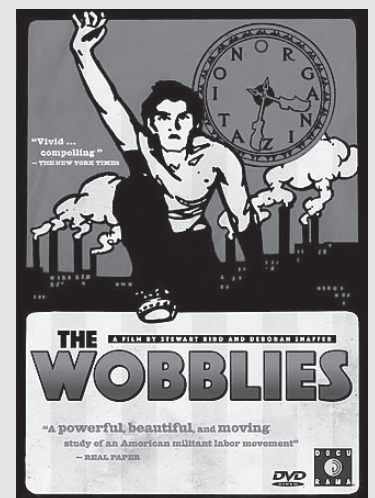


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## The Wobblies DVD

This documentary from 1979 takes a look at the IWW's organizing from its early days, with a combination of interviews from the people who were there, and archival footage. Features songs and appearances by Utah Phillips.

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## FICTION

# Thomas the Tank Engine goes on strike

**“We are the railroad.”**

Graphic: radicalgraphics.org

By Sparrow

It was dark in the land of Sodor. The moon loomed low in the early morning sky. Thomas puffed slowly to the Tidmouth Sheds, pistons knocking and clattering where his buffer had fallen off once again.

“Joe Hill’s Ashes!” Thomas exclaimed to his friends, “Today is the last straw!”

He had so much to tell Percy, who had stayed in his shed after his boiler exploded. Poor Percy, he was still shaking from the shock of the explosion.

That morning Gordon, the biggest and fastest engine, had been driving himself as fast as he could go to make up time after the boss, Sir Topham Hatt, had erred in his schedule. Sir Topham Hatt often made errors and invariably placed the blame on the poor hard-working engines who had made him and his stockholders so much profit. This morning, Gordon was forced to pull a long line of overloaded freight cars that wobbled and rocked along the trackway. Sir Topham Hatt had ordered Gordon to disregard the “slow speed” signals along his route.

The engines had warned Sir Topham Hatt again and again that the old wooden bridge over the river gorge was in severe disrepair. But he had ignored their warnings because fixing it would have cut into his profits.

As Gordon rushed onto the bridge, he felt it shudder and begin to buckle, but he was going much too fast to avoid disaster. He reached the center of the span just as it collapsed and plunged Gordon and his frightened freight cars down into the gorge. The obsolete wooden freight cars had no chance and were dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Gordon was luckier. He plunged into the river and stayed in one piece, although severely damaged.

The main route around the island of Sodor was severed with the bridge’s collapse. Thomas and his friends were forced onto the longer and steeper side tracks to complete their already lengthy and arduous runs. In addition, they had to shoulder Gordon’s heavy burden by putting on more freight cars to make up for his lost cars, even though they were smaller engines.

That was why all of the engines were limping back to the sheds, long after their work day was to have ended. As they met together to share their day of painful experiences, James sighed and informed them that Gordon had been raised and towed to the scrapyards to be cut up and melted down in the foundry.

“That is Sir Topham Hatt’s answer to our pleas to be pensioned off and retired once we are worn out and unable to perform as ‘Really Useful Engines’.” He always used Gordon’s speedy pace

over all our heads, saying, ‘Why can’t you all be Really Useful Engines like Gordon?’” said Edward.

“Really Useful Stakhanovite Engines, is what he means,” said Thomas’ cars Annie and Clarabell together.

“What is a Stakhanovite?” asked Edward, confused.

“Oh, that was a worker in the old Soviet union who got special privileges for speeding up production and forcing other workers to keep pace,” answered Annie and Clarabell.

“Alone, each of us will wind up on the scrap heap when we are no longer able to increase profits for Sir Topham Hatt and his corporate cronies,” declared Thomas. “Direct Action is our only alternative. For too long, we have begged and pleaded for change and been ignored. We must stop work until our demands are met! Linked together drive shaft to drive shaft with extinguished boiler fires, we shall be invincible!”

“No more pitting one against another, like he did with poor Gordon,” added Rosie. “We need a strike committee to present our demands. By uniting under the banner of the Industrial Workers of the World, we will have the experience and support of other workers to back our demands.” The other engines tooted their horns and blew steam in agreement. They started to draft their list of demands.

“First of all, we demand that Gordon be repaired and brought back whole. An Injury to One, Is an Injury to All,” cried Percy. “Repairs to all of us must be completed before we return to work!”

“An end to unsafe working conditions and the elimination of hazardous worksites,” chimed in Edward.

“A limit on the length of our workdays with longer breaks to fill our boilers and catch our steam,” added Donald and Douglas.

“More wages!” cried Toby the Tram Engine.

“But shouldn’t we demand the Abolition of the Wage System?” asked Annie and Clarabell together.

“We have that already,” joked Rosie, “We don’t get any wages now.”

“Sir Topham Hatt thinks he can push me around because I wasn’t allowed to be as vocal as you, Thomas,” said Emily. “I demand to be heard and treated the same as any other engine.”

“Unless we all support one another’s demands, none of us will be able to change the way we are treated,” replied Thomas.

The others nodded in agreement.

“We must work toward being able to make those workplace decisions that affect us the most.

“We are the railroad. We know how to run it and it cannot run without us.

“For now, we must demand equal participation in those decisions, but later...”

Rosie spoke up. “We cannot be ‘given’ these rights. What is ‘given’ can also be taken away. Our right to determine our own workplace lives is non-negotiable. Only the strength of our union will insure they will never be taken away from us again,” she said.

The next morning, Sir Topham Hatt came running into the Tidmouth Yard shouting angrily.

“You are all naughty engines! Really Useful Engines do not disobey orders! If you do not return to work at once, I shall take away your privileges!”

“What privileges?” said Emily. “Even Santa Claus brings more coal to bad engines than you provide to us!”

Muttering threats, Sir Topham Hatt returned to his office and called together his stockholders.

“They cannot hold out for long,” he told them. “Once they discover that they can be replaced, they will meekly beg to go back to work at whatever conditions we demand. We simply have to find other temporary means to perform their tasks until then.”

Meanwhile, Thomas and his friends were busy telling others about their strike. Bertie the Bus, even Harold the Helicopter, agreed to honor their strike and to organize other road vehicles and aircraft to refuse to cross their rails or carry their freight or passengers.

“If they are allowed to continue to abuse you,” Bertie the Bus exclaimed, “then they will feel free to continue to abuse us.”

“If you win with our support,” said Harold the Helicopter, “then we will make similar demands and will look forward to your support in our struggle. That’s what Solidarity Unionism is all about.”

Sir Topham Hatt rapidly discovered that finding ways to replace the striking engines was not so easy. He even sought foreign engines on the mainland to bring to Sodor. However, both Bulstrode the Barge and Sodor Bay Tug Boat had passed the word about the strike on to the freighters crossing the sea from the mainland. In transit, the freighters told the engines about the strike and what was at stake. The foreign engines agreed not to scab but to join with the strikers once they reached Sodor. A few initially refused, but they swiftly agreed to join the strike when Bulstrode the Barge hinted he might jettison them, acciden-



tally.

On the docks, Cranky the Crane and Salty also joined the strike and stood up for the working class. Shipments at the docks began to pile up. Those few freight shipments that left the docks, somehow either arrived damaged at their destination long after they were due or were found delivered to the wrong destination across the island.

Ships filled with cargo containers began to accumulate in the bay, at least those whose containers had remained on board on the voyage across the sea.

As word of the strike and the solidarity of workers spread, foreign docks refused to even load containers on board ships that were destined for Sodor.

At last, as the best of endings happens in Sodor even in the worst of circumstances, the stockholders recognized the greater strength of the engines and their union. They agreed to all their demands. Sir Topham Hatt was sacked and was last seen wearing overalls, carrying an oil can in the transfer yard.

The engines elected representatives to replace Sir Topham Hatt and they all participated in making management and workplace decisions that gave them control over their own working lives. The railroad’s stockholders agreed to limits on their say over the railroad and to a share in its income; they were still the owners and bosses of the railroad, for now. After winning the strike, all of the engine’s engineers, conductors, firemen, brakemen, and all the yard mechanics and technicians banded together and agreed that the engines’ victory was their own, joining in the workers’ management of the railroad.

## International Solidarity Commission

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as well as Haitian, Caribbean and Latin American labor unions and community organizations.

### Solidarity with arrested Japanese

The ISC pledged its solidarity with three “Reality Tour” activists who were arrested by plainclothes police as they peacefully walked down a public sidewalk in Tokyo on October 26. The activists were on their way toward the mansion of Prime Minister Tarou Asou, where they planned to highlight the growing gap between the rich and poor in Japan. Many of the participants in the publicly announced march were precarious workers and members of independent labor unions such as the General

Freeters Union. As independent video footage shows, the demonstrators broke no laws and the police response was unprovoked and violent.

The ISC demanded the immediate release and exoneration of the three arrestees, as well as a full apology from the police and appropriate compensation. The ISC urged the government of Japan to take serious steps to ensure that citizens’ rights are protected, citing widespread abuses of police power that took place during this year’s anti-G8 demonstrations in Japan. Shortly after sending the letter, the ISC received confirmation that all three activists were released and remained steadfast in their commitment to continue the struggle for justice.



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](mailto:solidarity@iww.org).

By Mike Pesa

### ISC chair addresses Red and Black Coordination in Athens

International Solidarity Commission chair Saku Pinta spoke about the IWW to a crowd of nearly 200 people at a public meeting of the Red and Black Coordination, held at Athens Polytechnic in the Greek capital. The event was a meeting of revolutionary industrial unionists from throughout Europe and beyond. Pinta gave a brief history of the IWW and then talked about current organizing efforts such as the Starbucks Workers Union and the delegations and solidarity projects of the ISC.

Pinta also attended the official private meeting of the Red and Black, which focused on the struggle against precarity in Europe, a direct action response to the current economic crisis. A controversial proposal to change the name of the gathering to the Anarcho-Syndicalist Coordination was also discussed. He had an opportunity to discuss cooperation between the ISC and other unions and how to improve communications in the future.

### Haiti documentary premiered

The ISC gave a three-hour series of presentations and discussions at the Wobbly Art Show in Baltimore, Maryland on October 25. Although the overall event focused on an IWW art exhibit, the day was packed with presentations and discussions on a number of topics.

The highlight of the day, from the ISC's perspective, was the world premiere of *Haiti's Tourniquet*, the ISC-produced documentary about our delegation to Haiti in April and May 2008. Diane Krauthamer, Nathaniel Miller and Justin Vitiello who co-produced the film were on hand to answer questions.

The ISC segment began with an International Solidarity 101 workshop led by ISC representative Mike Pesa. The workshop included a thought-provoking conversation about the meaning of solidarity. IWW filmmaker and former ISC delegate Krauthamer also spoke about her experience serving on the ISC's delegation to Japan this past summer. Using photos and video footage, she captured the spirit of the delegation and the anti-G8 mobilization. The event drew in visitors from New York City, Philadelphia, Upstate New York, Virginia, Vermont and other locations.

### No to union-busting at Telefónica

The ISC wrote a letter to Spanish telecommunications company Telefónica, expressing alarm that the company has fired or suspended nine shop stewards and/or members of the works council of four unions (including the Confederación General del Trabajo - CGT). Five were fired and four sanctioned with 45 days with no work or salary by the company following a demonstration during the final round of contract negotiations. The agreement proposed by management would have meant a 30-40 per cent wage reduction for new hires. During this demonstration, members of the strike committee tried to deliver a written letter of protest opposing the draft agreement but were prevented from doing so by company security guards. Nine workers were then disciplined on the grounds that they acted as "provocateurs." In its letter, the ISC condemned these management maneuvers as attempts at union-busting and disciplin-

ary procedures directed at those unions which refuse to accept a contract that includes discriminatory practices against newly hired workers. The ISC echoed Telefónica workers' demands for a union contract that insures equal pay for equal work and full reinstatement with back pay for the nine workers who were fired or suspended.

### Solidarity with Tokyo Hotel Workers Occupation

The ISC sent a letter to the Tokyo Union and the workers of Keihin Hotel in Tokyo, Japan, declaring support for their occupation of part of the hotel as part of their struggle to save their jobs. The ISC condemned the current owner and his new partners (organized under the guise of LC Hotels) for firing the entire staff of the hotel. Management of the hotel was recently turned over to a new body created by the current owner together with a subsidiary fund of the now notorious US-financial firm Lehman Brothers. This buyer will manage the closure and sale of the hotel to cover the personal debts of current management. At the same time, all Keihin Hotel workers stand to lose their jobs. In the letter, the ISC applauded the actions of the Tokyo Union (TU) in taking the new fund to Japan's labor relations board for refusing negotiations with workers and other labor rights violations. The ISC declared its full support the workers' occupation of parts of the hotel, which began on October 20. The letter closed by insisting that the actions of Keihin Hotel's owners are a blatant attack on worker's rights, made possible by current, global mechanisms of financial speculation. The struggle of Keihin Hotels workers is vital and in all of our interests. The ISC stands in solidarity with Keihin Hotels workers and looks forward to providing any kind of support that is within our means.

### Demanding an end to the occupation of Haiti

The ISC endorsed a letter written by Haitian labor organization Batay Ouvriye and other grassroots Haitian organizations calling for an end to the UN occupation of Haiti. The letter, written in both English and Creole, focused on the complicity of Haiti's Latin American neighbors in supplying the ground troops for the MINUSTAH peacekeeping force which has acted for four years as an occupying army, crushing dissent and enforcing the West's neoliberal agenda.

"The true goal of the occupation in Haiti is to settle that the people here can't independently debate and emerge with the solutions necessary to solve our own problems. Accordingly, force and repression are necessarily integral parts of such a policy: countless denunciations of assassinations, rapes, blatant violations of our democratic rights have been registered against the occupation forces in the country—all being the direct consequences of military occupation."

To this letter, the ISC added its own statement calling on the governments of the United States, Canada and France, the real masterminds of this unjust occupation. The ISC called for an immediate withdrawal of international troops, supervised and monitored closely by international civil society, including reputable human rights organizations

Continued to 11

## California sues truck companies for classing workers as 'independent'

On October 27, California's Attorney General Edmund Brown Jr. launched three lawsuits suing three truck companies at Long Beach and Los Angeles ports for classifying their workers as "independent contractors" and denying them their rights as employees.

"The companies control all aspects of the drivers' work and own and maintain the trucks that the workers drive. Drivers are paid by the hour and often forced to work 60 hours or more a week," said a statement issued by the Attorney General.

"These companies are also cheating the State of California out of thousands of dollars in state payroll taxes." Moreno

Trucking, Guasimal Trucking, and Edmund Jose Lira, were named in the law suits.

In September, the Attorney General sued two other companies, Pac Anchor Transportation Inc. and Jose Maria Lira, for "employing cost-cutting schemes to avoid California taxes" by classifying their workers as independent contractors.

In the case of Lira, the Attorney General alleged that he had required his drivers to sign a truck lease that had them pay him 50 per cent of their gross earnings each month for the use of the truck and an additional 10 per cent for management fees.

## Chinese guest workers in Turks and Caicos demand \$15,000 work fee refund

By John Kalwaic

On October 17, 300 Chinese workers took 15 of their bosses from Israeli construction company Ashtrom hostage on a small island in the Caribbean where they were building a luxury hotel. The workers closed off the West Caicos island, part of the British Turks and Caicos colony near the Bahamas, and detained the bosses in their quarters, refusing to let them go until they agreed to pay a \$15,000 fee each worker paid to get the job through a Chinese contractor.

Lehman Brothers Bank, which funded the project, filed for bankruptcy and the project which was 75 per cent complete, was canceled due to a lack of other financing.

The West Caicos Island has no police force and is only accessible by a 40-min-

ute boat ride from the nearest island. All of the Israeli hostages were freed on October 19 after negotiations with the Israeli ambassador. Media reported that Ashtrom had agreed to pay the workers, but made no mention of whether the company will pay the \$15,000 job shark fee.

"We're not the ones who owe the laborers, the Chinese contractors are," said Moti, the project director for Ashtrom to [ynetnews.com](http://ynetnews.com). "They have con men in China who take money from innocent laborers as commission for getting them into this project, and then they just disappear. We've paid all the wages we owe the workers, without exception. It's the Chinese company that's evading its responsibilities." *With files from the IW.*

## W. Virginia miners protest election tricks

By John Kalwaic

On September 29, 440 coal miners in Monongalia County, West Virginia, held a "Memorial Day" and stayed home from work at Blacksville Mine #2 to protest the appearance last week of a National Rifle Association (NRA) film crew. The action was a political strike.

The boss had given the NRA permission to come on its property and film statements against Democratic presidential candidate, Barack Obama. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) had endorsed Obama's candidacy.

The NRA crew asked the miners: "Did you know that Obama wants to take away your guns?" The idea was to get union miners to vote for, and speak on behalf of Republican candidate John McCain, who the NRA had endorsed.

The miners did not appreciate both this attempt to use them as pawns for the NRA to embarrass their union. Consol, the mine owners, never allow outside parties on the property. The UMWA said that Consol letting the NRA film crew on the property was so they could embarrass the union.

To protest, the rank-and-file UMWA members demanded the UMWA leadership declare a one-day memorial day or day off work.

Republican nominee John McCain won the vote in all but seven counties (one of them being Monongalia County) in West Virginia, but lost the presidential election.

*With files from IW.*

## German IWW speaking tour builds links

IWW members Stephanie Basile from New York City and Sarah Bender from Chicago went on a 10-city speaking tour throughout Germany from September 1-14. The tour was organized by the German Language Area Members Regional Organizing Committee (GLAMROC). The GLAMROC is currently growing, with branches in Frankfurt and Cologne and members throughout the country.

Each speaking event included presentations from Basile and Bender, the screening of a short film, and a discussion with the audience. Basile spoke about immigration and unionization issues in the US, as well as the current drive to unionize warehouse workers at Wild Edibles. Bender spoke about her experiences organizing in the Starbucks Workers Union. The film featured footage from a protest and interviews with three members of the New York City IWW.

The Frankfurt and Cologne events were hosted by IWW chapters, while the other events were hosted by trade unions and other progressive organizations. In addition to meeting fellow IWWs

from around the country, the tour gave the German and American wobblers a chance to meet allies from other unions. Some events were hosted by the Free Workers' Union (FAU), Germany's anarcho-syndicalist union, which has chapters in several cities including Berlin and Bremen. Other events were hosted by unions which are part of the DGB, Germany's trade union confederation. These unions include Ver-di, the services workers union, and IG Metall, the metal workers union. Participants at the events were enthusiastic about the the IWW's work at Wild Edibles and Starbucks. They offered words of solidarity, and many made financial donations.

The speakers also learned many things from the audience members, including the differences between German and American unions. For example, whereas all mainstream American unions have closed shops, all German unions have open shops. Many Germans also expressed concern that there is a lack of young people in the German labor movement. Basile also spoke in Bordeaux, France at an October 11 event with IWW historian Larry Portis.