Starbucks: Where’s Anna’s Money?

By Stephanie Basile

While New Yorkers were wishing each other “Happy New Year” this past New Year’s Eve, a few select Starbucks managers were met with three words: “Where’s Anna’s Money?”

This simple question has become the catchphrase of a campaign to help Starbucks barista Anna Hurst win two weeks’ pay from the company. Anna is a member of the Starbucks Workers Union (SWU), part of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The New Year’s Eve protest was the latest action in the Union’s ongoing campaign for Anna. A group of about ten union members spent an hour demonstrating in the cold, chanting outside the Union Square East store and holding signs bearing slogans such as “Support Your Local Union Baristas,” and the soon-to-be ubiquitous slogan “Where’s Anna’s Money?” For one of the demonstrators, Starbucks barista Henry Marin, it was his first public action as a member of the union.

Customers were encouraged to ask management this question inside. One customer reported that the manager pretended she had no idea what he was talking about.

When a part-time wage worker is sick and has to leave work early, she or he misses out on the remaining hours in that shift. Starbucks baristas have no paid sick time and face this situation constantly.

Continued on 3

Independent Unionism in Cambodia:
Severe challenges as garment industry takes hit

By Erik Davis

Chea Mony, the president of the Free Trade Union Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC), seems to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When I meet with him, he is very tired, sick, nearing the end of a long day; and preparing to write up yet another complaint against the owners of a garment factory. He takes nearly an hour to talk with me about the experience of the Union and Cambodian workers, and to discuss the possibility of furthering solidarity actions with the IWW.

The FTUWKC organizes across trades, but the majority of its members are in the garment industry. The FTUWKC currently has over 30,000 enrolled members; approximately 85% of those workers are women from rural areas who send significant portions of their pay to relatives in the countryside. The World Bank estimates that such remittances improve the incomes of 15% of rural households—showing the significance of the budding urban industrial economy in a country which remains overwhelmingly rural and agrarian (71% of heads of household are primarily engaged in agricultural work, and over 80% live in the countryside).

Victories

In 2008, the union saw a few victories for the FTUWKC. A long-planned action demanding garment industry-wide salary raises, from $25 to $56 a month, was successful; though other issues, such as limits on seniority raises (limits which effectively freeze salaries for long-standing employees) were not effectively challenged. The FTUWKC has been the most successful union in the countryside in agitating for wage increases—starting originally from $25 a month.

Two hundred workers dismissed from a Thomson factory in the Warsaw suburb of Piaszezno are occupying the plant. The Indian company Videocon recently bought Thomson, which makes TV screens and tubes, and planned massive layoffs and “restructuring” at many of the factories they bought. Videocon was planning to move a lot of its factories and equipment to countries with cheaper labor, and was planning to integrate its foreign operations with its business in India.

The bosses at Videocon complained that the “salaries of the workers were too high” at the Piaszezno factory. From the very beginning, the company had bad relations with the Solidarity Union, which represented the workers. Videocon also demanded that the Polish government give it money to keep the factory in Poland, much like governments of Mexico and Italy had done to keep Videocon’s factories in those countries. However, the Polish government refused; and that’s when the layoffs started.

Only two years ago, there were 5,000 workers at the Piaszezno plant. Since Videocon took over, there have been as many as 4,700 lay-offs. The company lowered workers’ salaries by 40% this summer, and then wanted to cut pay by 30% more, despite the fact that Videocon was raking in profits from huge orders from Russia and Turkey. Many workers took voluntary redundancy or cuts. In the end, the vast majority were simply fired. 200 of the fired workers were not given their back pay and compensation of up to 15,000 Zlotys ($2,500).

When they realised they were being denied their money, the dismissed workers occupied their factory and demanded what the company owed them. The leadership of Solidarity tried to convince them to stay home and not occupy the factory, saying that the money was being transferred to their accounts. The workers discovered this to be untrue thanks to mobile internet phones, and continued with the occupation.

Many of the workers had an idea the company would try to rip them off. Technically, they worked for a company called Eagle, registered in the Cayman Islands, of which Videocon owns 80%. However, Eagle, like many other outfits, is having financial problems. If Eagle is not able to pay them, workers rightly worry that Videocon may claim it’s nothing to do with them.

This occupation has a striking similarity to the worker occupation at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago two months ago. In both cases, dismissed workers decided to occupy the factory to get what was owed to them. However unlike Republic in Chicago, where the UE union supported the workers, the Solidarity Union in Piaszezno seems to be dead against it.

For now, the occupation continues, and workers are filing lawsuits against Videocon for unlawful dismissal.
Get the Word Out!

IWW members, branches, job shops and other affiliated bodies can get the word out about their project, event, campaign or protest each month to the Industrial Worker. Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to IWG HQ, PO Box 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223 USA:

8 x 11 tall, 1 column wide: $12 for 18” tall, 1 column wide

For the OFU, Diane Kranthrum & Phil Wharton (Editors) (2009-2010)

Suggestions for improving the IW

First let me congratulate our new editors on their recent election. You’ve taken a major responsibility and for that you have the Union’s gratitude. That being said, I’d like to take this opportunity to give you a discussion of the direction of the Industrial Worker. The IW is an invaluable tool for the Union. We use it to keep each other informed of our struggles and our victories, to network with other IWW locals and to attract new members. It is also a major union expense. I, for one, feel the expense is fully justified, but must acknowledge that the IW can use some work. In particular, when we offer analysis we need to do a better job of explaining things. If we don’t know it is broken, we can’t fix it. We’re hopeful to have this problem fixed soon and we’re working with our printer and mailer, Saltus Press, to do so.

The Industrial Worker will carry on. As always, we are looking for writers and artists to contribute to the newspaper, and we are very open to suggestions. This is hard work and we cannot do it without the continued support from you, our readers. Please send your suggestions, news stories, artwork, publicity and contributions coming to us at iw@iww.org.

Continued on 11

Dear Fellow Workers,

It is our distinct pleasure to serve as the new Industrial Worker editors for the next two years. We are aiming to make this newspaper a genuine voice for the working class, so please bear with us as we learn the ropes and find the best way to do things.

One problem we’re having right now is that some of our subscribers and readers may not know that they are receiving the newspaper or that it arrives in bad shape or late. Former editor Peter Marks is working with us to address these problems. If you have not received your individual copy or bundle, please email us at iw@iww.org so we can report and try to resolve the problem. If we don’t know we don’t have it and we can’t fix it. We’re hoping our new editors can save us this problem fixed and we’re working with our printer and mailer, Saltus Press, to do so.

The Industrial Worker will carry on. As always, we are looking for writers and artists to contribute to the newspaper, and we are very open to suggestions. This is hard work and we cannot do it without the continued support from you, our readers. Please send your suggestions, news stories, artwork, publicity and contributions coming to us at iw@iww.org.

For the OFU, Diane Kranthrum & Phil Wharton (Editors) (2009-2010)
When Anna Hurst left work sick during a shift this past August, she already knew she would have to deal with losing a few hours’ pay. Never did she imagine that her employer will then deny her an additional two weeks of work. Hurst called work the next day to find out her schedule, only to discover that her name was removed from the schedule for two weeks. Since then, Hurst has been trying to procure back wages for the work she is owed. She first pursued channels with her employer, and then with a lawyer. Krueger has even offered conflicting stories to upper management of industries into fewer and fewer workers.  

The FTUWKC and the union movement in Cambodia are anything but defeatist. When Krueger tried to procure their release on the day she went home sick, Hurst walked out of the store without telling anyone. Hurst received the pay she is owed until Hurst receives the pay she is owed. Hurst says she is grateful to have the support of the union. “I appreciate everyone’s help,” she says. “Usually, when something like this happens, you’re on your own.” Hurst made a new $29,850 a year with losing a few hours’ pay. Hurst received the pay she is owed. Hurst says she is grateful to have the support of the union. “I appreciate everyone’s help,” she says. “Usually, when something like this happens, you’re on your own.” Hurst made a new $29,850 a year with losing a few hours’ pay. Hurst received the pay she is owed until Hurst receives the pay she is owed. Hurst says she is grateful to have the support of the union. “I appreciate everyone’s help,” she says. “Usually, when something like this happens, you’re on your own.” Hurst made a new $29,850 a year with losing a few hours’ pay. Hurst received the pay she is owed.
The fight at Great Western Erectors
By Jason Netek

DENTON, Texas—Lack of clean drinking water is just one example of the terrible conditions that workers at Great Western Erectors are organizing to end.

Great Western Erectors (GWE) is a steel, concrete and rebar contractor based in Dallas, with offices in Phoenix and Denver. In May 2009, a number of GWE workers walked out on strike against the company over the lack of drinking water at job sites, where temperatures regularly reach well over 100° Fahrenheit. In 2006, there was at least one serious case of dehydration at a GWE site; this unfortunate worker has gone on to create a social networking website for union members and activists.

The dedication of Coalition is getting results. Last month, some members joined North Texas Jobs with Justice and the International Socialist Organization in a demonstration against corporate bailouts, and their story made the front page of the local Denton Record Chronicle.

Public exposure of GWE’s mistreatment is important, but it’s clear that the company won’t budge until they feel the pressure from friends of labor and justice. These workers need our solidarity, and a campaign to demand that our schools and local governments won’t deal with Great Western Erectors until workers’ conditions improve.

Contact the Coalition for Justice at Great Western Erectors by e-mail at coalitionforjustice@yahoo.com or call 866-493-5878.

UnionBook: The social network for trade unionists

By Eric Lee

In early February, we launched UnionBook, a social networking website for union members and activists. Sponsored by LabourStart, UnionBook can be found at www.unionbook.org.

The new site was launched to fill a gap. Union members have been using existing commercial web-based social networks such as Facebook and MySpace, but have found real problems in doing so. Facebook, for example, has shut down union groups—in one case during an organizing campaign at a casino in Canada. Union activists have had their accounts closed for being “too active.” We decided we needed a social network that is advertising-free, under our control, and designed specifically to support the union movement.

UnionBook is that network. UnionBook offers many features that activists will find useful. Among these are:

* Blogs. Every user of UnionBook can have their own blog, advertising-free.

* Groups. Users can create groups to support their union and their campaigns. Groups can have discussion forums and shared documents. They can be public or closed. They’re a very powerful tool. (The BW group is here: http://www.unionbook.org/pg/groups/1661/industrial-workers-of-the-world/)

* Profiles. Users can post their profiles (with photos) and sign up their friends—just like in any other social network (with certain subtle differences).

UnionBook will never be as big as the giant commercial networks like Facebook, but once we have several thousand union members using it, we’re confident it will become a powerful tool for our movement worldwide.

We’re not telling anyone to stop using other social networks; but use UnionBook for your trade union activities and see how easy it is to build and form groups, and to publish content online.

Please spend some time on UnionBook.org and explore the possibilities. And then spread the word—because together, we can create something amazing here.

The Troy Collar Laundry Union

By Eric Lee

The Troy Collar Laundry Union succeeded in raising the wages of the laundresses from $2-$3 a week to $8-$14. Kate Mullaney became one of the most important women labor leaders of the Nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, in Jackson, Mississippi, a June 18, 1866 “Petition of Colored Washerwomen” started the establishment.

The petition announced the intention of black laundry women to charge a uniform rate for their labor. Says historian Philip Foner, this was the “first known collective action of free black workingwomen in American history.”

Production of detachable collars and cuffs and shirts used to be big business in Troy, N.Y.; washing, starching and ironing the collars was an important part of the process. Several hundred Troy women worked 12 to 14 hours a day, doing this back-breaking work in 100-degree heat, in air full of chloride and sulfuric acid.
Melbourne Wobs commemorate indigenous freedom fighters

By Aima Mahmood, Exective Committee of Working Women Organization (ILO)

Talk of "a worker" and people imagination factors and skills. A worker is he or she who works in a factory or plant, they say. But privatization and the contract system increasing, taking hold of the global economy have changed the definition as well as perspective of a worker. Tens of thousands of workers in Pakistan today earn their livelihoods either individually or at cottage industry, not at big factories.

The majority of these workers are women, accomplishing various tasks in extremely unfavorable conditions. These women included with any trade union nor they are organized, and are therefore counted as an "informal sector" of the economy, one not governed by labor laws. Used extensively and in a broader sense, the term "worker" applies to housemaids, farm workers, bonded laborers, small shopkeepers, hawkers etc. This "informal" sector plays an important role in Pakistan's national economy. The World Bank estimates, for instance, that there are over one million women farm workers in Pakistan. These unacknowledged workers are victims of the worst economic and social exploitation. According to one estimate, housemaids earn from Rs10 to Rs50 daily. (1 Pakistan Rupee = 0.01267 US Dollar). These women are also shuffling double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers.

Meanwhile, trade unions, guardians of workers' rights, are themselves in crisis under informal conditions. Employers, official restrictions and anti-labor laws. The closure of industries has on one hand deprived the workers of their employment opportunities and on the other badly affected trade union membership. Faced with a fight for their own survival, trade unions fail to chalk out a line of action for informal sector workers.

All this has led to worsening conditions for women workers in the informal sector during the last couple of decades. The sector is so far exempt from the minimum wages law, while working hours are also considerably longer. In a country where women already face extreme exploitation in the name of religion, societal norms and traditions, working in the informal sector is further pushing them into the depths of oppression. A few recent reports from neighboring countries reveals a different story. In India particularly, women employed in the informal sector are not only aware of their rights they are also active in winning them. In Mumbai, for instance, housemaids have formed their own representative bodies which jointly decide wages according to their workload, as well as leave and other privileges. No housemaid goes to work for families. They are being paid wages on the basis of the "on call" system. Many housemaids earn from Rs10 to Rs50 daily. (1 Pakistani Rupee = 0.01267 US Dollar). These women are also shuffling double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers. The Pakistani government has neither adopted a strategy regarding double and sometimes triple responsibilities, but do not figure in official statistics of workers.

photo: Working Women Organization

Unnamed, unacknowledged worker

By Jewel Topzelfiel

Melbourne Wobs commemorate indigenous freedom fighters

"Every town in Australia has a monument, but to remember people who died fighting other people's wars, but nowhere in this country do we see monuments to indigenous peoples who fought to defend their country and way of life," Dr Toscano said. "In order to begin reconciliation, the coloniser needs to acknowledge what happened." Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said he did know the story of Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheener until he met Dr Toscano, who also stood for Lord Mayor, on the election trail. "We often don't know these stories right in the midst of our own city," he said at the conclusion ceremony. "Awareness of our indigenous history is vital to our understanding of ourselves. It is OK to focus on things which are admirable... but we also need to look at things that are shameful squarely in consideration as we go," Toscano added.

The Melbourne City Council will part of its indigenous heritage story, to be continued.

Also in January, Melbourne IWW delegate Canopy Son took part in the Aboriginal Peace Walk '09. This event included a delegation of activists and supporters who walked from Sydney to Canberra for recognition of Indigenous Sovereignty, an end to the Northern Territories (NT) Intervention and an end to Australia's involvement in the dangerous nuclear-fuel cycle.

"Aboriginal Australia has been battling for over 200 years. The NT Intervention is the most recent attack on our human rights, our collective rights as Indigenous peoples and our sovereign rights as the true custodians of these lands" said spokesperson Darren Bloomfield. "The Federal Government has been hacking away at Aboriginal cultural rights with the NT Intervention and now compulsory leases if Aboriginal communities were觉 the government should not only enact laws to protect the rights of informal workers but also provide training opportunities and social security for the unemployed. The ILO needs go beyond just providing assistance to the unemployed. The government should offer interest-free loans for improving business and skills. Training opportunities and social security for the unemployed and the unemployed should also be extended. This will be possible only when a popular government takes its due recognition and protection. Only then will these unnamed and unacknowledged workers get their due recognition and protection.

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why is Kimberly paper mill closed?

By Jim Del Duca

Rick Hardrath, Randy Gossens, and Dan Sawall are all paper-makers. More of the product relate directly to imports than to domestic production, Rick explains. "The sad story of Kimberly suggests they would have no work, they have plenty of free time to explain their situation to IW readers."

On Sept. 18, 2008, NewPage Corp., a subsidiary of Cerberus Capital Management LLC, laid off 476 workers and closed their paper mill after 119 years of operation in Kimberly, Wisconsin (pop. 6,200). According to NewPage Corp., the Kimberly mill was unprofitable due to a $4.8 million environmental fine NewPage was hit with that morning, it was taking place. As workers turned out better for the workers and their community because they were in physical possession of the product, they were able to take steps to prevent the mill from shutting down, even though the management was not willing to do so.

Support I.W.W. Members in Legal Trouble Support the General Defense Committee of the I.W.W.

Marie Mason

Marie is a dedicated wobbly who in the 92's and was part of the Industrial Workers, working as a 12-year veteran, and has continued her membership in the union since then. She was an active member of the Wisconsin WWP and OSAK. She was also a frequent contributor to the local I.W.W. newspaper, the "Northern Worker." She was also a frequent contributor to the local I.W.W. newspaper, the "Northern Worker." She was also a frequent contributor to the local I.W.W. newspaper, the "Northern Worker.

Alex Svoboda and Jason Friedman

Alex and Jason are I.W.W. members who have been involved in organizing a W.W. rally in Providence, RI to pressure restaurants to pull business from a N.C. food distributor that has been accused of unclean working conditions and unfair labor practices. Alex was thrown out by the police officer and arrested and Tina was thrown out of her family and friends and Jason was thrown out of his family and friends. Alex and Jason demand that the O.G.C. is caring for money and their defense has been issued a motion of support and $25,000 assault stamp.

Tom Kappas

Tom is I.W.W. organizer in Cincinnati, Ohio who works amongst street vendors and textile and clothing workers. He works with a total of 2 years as a retail worker working conditions and a total of 1 year as a retail worker working conditions.

Across

1. Everything
2. Desire
3. She sells one from the sea by the sea
4. She sells one from the sea by the sea
5. Not internation
6. Not bosses
7. Used to give the clap
8. The loneliness of its kind
9. Different pitches simultaneously
10. People who write like this

Down

1. They probably have between 6 and 8 zeroes
2. Ways and means
3. Cereal, board game
4. Wind, fire and
5. Happens in baseball
6. Happens in baseball
7. Not working
8. Found in schools
9. Huiling Bruce, you won't like him when he's barefoot
10. Misanthropes hate these
11. Not working
12. People who write like this
13. Hulking Bruce, you won't like him when he's barefoot
Starbucks Loses Round in Battle Over Union

By Steven Greenhouse

A National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) judge ruled on Dec. 23, 2008 that Starbucks had illegally fired three baristas and otherwise violated federal labor laws in seeking to beat back unionization efforts at several of its Manhattan cafes.

Administrative Law Judge Mindy E. Landow found that Starbucks had also broken the law by issuing negative job evaluations to union supporters and by intimidating employees—Daniel Gross, Joe Agins, and Liberte Locke—after they made the observation that the fact that they were denying her a witness showed they are far more scared of us than we are of them. Both Liberte and Cesar stood their ground throughout an entire weekend of interrogations and intimidation.

NYC IWW members verbally pierced the entire year and a half she worked for Starbucks with no formal reprimand. It was only the day after she went public with her Union affiliation that her tongue piercing became a fire-able offense...

Over the next few days, Starbucks stepped up its subtle and not-so-subtle intimidation campaign against SWU baristas at Union Square East. Discouraged managers would come into the store from other districts, staring at Union baristas through their whole shifts, hovering over them while they worked the bar, repositioning the store cameras, interrogating both union and non-union baristas, and illegally soliciting grievances to undermine the union drive. Immediately following Sheanel's firing, SWU baristas Liberte Locke and Cesar Ramirez were subjected to interrogations by Krueger, Ormsbee, district manager Tracy Bryant and regional manager Nicole Mozeliak. During these illegal and unethical interrogations, they were told, among other things, that they would never work in the store again. Liberte was denied a lawyer and Union representation when she was called into the back of the store, to be reprimanded for the first time.

For the first time, a judge has ruled that Starbucks has trampled on workers’ rights to organize a labor union, said Tara Darrow, a spokeswoman for Starbucks.

She said the company was disappointed that the decision did not take into consideration what she said where personal threats lodged against managers. Darrow said the company was proud of its tradition of communicating with its employees directly, and not through a union.

“We believe that at the end of this, our policies and approach will be deemed fair and consistent,” the judge’s ruling grows out of charges the

Starbucks was quick to voice its dismay with the ruling.

While we respect the NLRB process, we’re disappointed with the decision, and we intend to appeal it to the next stage in the process,” said Tara Darrow, a spokeswoman for Starbucks. She said the company was disappointed that the decision did not take into consideration what she said where personal threats lodged against managers. Darrow said the company was proud of its tradition of communicating with its employees directly, and not through a union.

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The company asserted that the

NLRB's Manhattan office brought against Starbucks in April 2007. Previously, in March 2006, Starbucks had reached a settlement with the union, agreeing to pay $18,000 in back pay and reinstating two other New York baristas who the Board had said had been fired illegally as part of an effort to quash unionization.

Judge Landow ruled against Starbucks on most issues, finding that its managers had improperly barred employees from wearing more than one pro-union button and had illegally prohibited workers at its Union Square East store from posting union items on a company bulletin board.

The judge also ruled that a Starbucks manager had illegally prohibited employees from talking about wages and other terms of employment. But the judge found that Starbucks managers did not improperly discriminate when they prohibited two union supporters from wearing what the managers said were overly obtrusive necklaces. The 88-page ruling describes a bitter and escalating battle between Starbucks and the union since it began its organizing drive in 2004.

The union has repeatedly sought to pressure Starbucks, demonstrating outside shops and handing petitions to management demanding improvements in working conditions.

The company has fired employees for the first time, a judge has ruled that Starbucks has trampled on workers’ rights to organize a labor union, said Tara Darrow, a spokeswoman for Starbucks.

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Judge Landow ruled against Starbucks on most issues, finding that its managers had improperly barred employees from wearing more than one pro-union button and had illegally prohibited workers at its Union Square East store from posting union items on a company bulletin board.

The judge also ruled that a Starbucks manager had illegally prohibited employees from talking about wages and other terms of employment. But the judge found that Starbucks managers did not improperly discriminate when they prohibited two union supporters from wearing what the managers said were overly obtrusive necklaces.

The 88-page ruling describes a bitter and escalating battle between Starbucks and the union since it began its organizing drive in 2004.
Parents sticking with the IWW

By Peter Moore

Sticking with the IWW as a new parent can be a hard thing to do. The stock market agreement that we must “fight the power for their sake” rings hollow when doing so means spending less time with one’s children and partner. As a father of two children under three years old, the needs of my family are often more concrete and immediate than the needs of the IWW. The baby and toddler need changing, walking, breastfeeding, consoling, dressing, bathing, immunizing, sleeping, and hugging. My partner needs showers, napping, feeding, listening, house cleaning, and more. As we see the end of her paid maternity leave coming, I know that work will change roles can be hard. But our life is already a sandwich of family needs and the work regime. Personal time can disappear, and time for working with the IWW can get squeezed out, or at least fall in priority. Perhaps most challenging is that even in direct contact with my local Fellow Workers, limited to the branch meetings I can attend, like workshops and email help, but it’s not the same.

As the IWW doesn’t represent directly most of its members in the workplace, the need to be a member can come into question as the benefits are less tangible. As the children grow, budgets can get tight, so even that $6 or $8 a month for dues can become a place to cut expenses for more immediate needs, such as baby clothing, furniture or children’s activities.

How can IWW members who are new or soon-to-be parents cope with the new reality and stick with the union?

An important “to-do” is to look at one’s current style of organizing to see whether caring for children fits with the demands of that role; then, imagine a different role that does fit, however minimal. When an opportunity for organizer training came to Ottawa, I wanted to participate. But weekends are family time and, most importantly, break time for my partner; dumping the children on her to attend a weekend-long IWW conference was not immediate than the needs of the IWW. The baby and toddler need changing, walking, breastfeeding, consoling, dressing, bathing, immunizing, sleeping, and hugging. My partner needs showers, napping, feeding, listening, house cleaning, and more. As we see the end of her paid maternity leave coming, I know that work will change roles can be hard. But our life is already a sandwich of family needs and the work regime. Personal time can disappear, and time for working with the IWW can get squeezed out, or at least fall in priority. Perhaps most challenging is that even in direct contact with my local Fellow Workers, limited to the branch meetings I can attend, like workshops and email help, but it’s not the same.

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How can IWW members who are new or soon-to-be parents cope with the new reality and stick with the union?
Crisis Is Time For IWW Ideas, Organizing

By Chris Agenda (Portland IWW)

The current economic crash provides an opportunity for the IWW to push the battle against capitalist power structures to a new level. That being said, it also provides those same power structures an opportunity to push forward even an harsher conservative agenda.

As unemployment grows, along with foreclosures and associated socioeconomic pressures, people will become increasingly dissatisfied and angry. The union’s goal must be to help guide that anger in a clear and conscious direction against the ruling classes. If we fail to do so, we will become silent witnesses to a new wave of xenophobic and divisive propaganda. It is difficult to compete against a conservative, multi-billion dollar corporate media; but it is crucial we do so. The media will make sure that anti-immigrant and anti-union sentiments become an ever-more common theme in public discussion.

Undocumented workers, already highly exploited, will become an obvious target for the media. They will be used to focus the frustrations of the “average American working person” away from the government and corporations, despite their glaringly obvious culpability. Similarly, as we can see from the recent crisis in the automobile industry, trade unions will quickly lose what influence they have. Greedy unions will be blamed for redundancies, rather than inept bosses.

The IWW should seize the moment, however, with a massive education campaign focused at examining the larger issues at hand, namely the workings of the capitalistic system itself. This campaign can become the foundation for revival of a radical social and labor movement, as well as spreading a popular consciousness in which individuals know which side they are on. Rather than begging for minor reforms and concessions, we can use this opportunity to radicalize workers with the hopes of larger gains. Factory/occupy workplaces such as the one at Republic in Chicago could be but one of many tactics utilized as more support grows from the working class. Instead of encouraging more fiscal responsibility from above so that workers get a little piece of the economic splendors that imperialist capitalism promises, we need to transform our society by removing not just the obvious faults of the system, but the system in its entirety.

The reformist approach will look far more appealing to a lot of people, but it will not cause substantial change. A cost of living increase or an extra sick day will (maybe) be gained, not ownership of the means of production or significant control of one’s labor.

Worker Identity poses problems

Much historical emphasis has been placed on the potential role of workers in building a revolution, whether it be an explicitly “worker revolts” or “as a part of a broader revolutionary movement. The emphasis on the individual identifying as a worker has many benefits in terms of promoting solidarity, but also poses some problems. For an individual to identify as solely a worker raises the dangerous specter of robotism. Haired authors such as Antonio Negri (Empire) have referred to the modern radical labor movement as a half human/half machine, tirelessly pluging away at work and activism with little room for emotion. While risking the crossing into some “fluffy” areas, it is important to confront this view.

We are human beings first and foremost, with all of the capacities and shortcomings that this includes. Identifying as “worker” can potentially play a role in a new generation of robotism. There are many layers of oppression, and so there should also be many layers of resistance. These methods of resistance require self-education and a healthy approach to self-criticism.

Democratic unionism can be more than an economic movement if we intentionally make it so, by combining other aspects of social transformation within it. This is where the IWW stands apart from other unions or the labor movement as a whole. The radical historical, and critical analysis by the IWW provides room for a wider movement as we strive towards a truly different society.

IWW Members Hold Organizer Training in South Texas

By Greg Rodriguez

MCALLEN, Texas—The weekend of Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2009 was a historic one for the radical labor movement in general, but also for workers in the Rio Grande Valley (South Texas) looking to create democracy on the job. The IWW—an international labor union known for its principles of direct action and working class empowerment—held a training for working residents of the Deep South Texas area. Young labor leaders from Laredo, McAllen, Edinburg, and Mission attended the two day event.

Space for the training was provided by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 5, which organizes local public employees including Hi-Valleym, Hidalgo County and Hidalgo County Head Start workers.

The training was independently organized by a group of local IWW members whose goal is to establish an officially chartered IWW branch in the months to come.

Attendees were able to be part of a very comprehensive and participatory educational experience. By means of role plays, brainstorming, and discussion, IWW Members Hold Organizer Training in South Texas

IWW Principles

Why does the IWW stand out from other labor unions in this country? What makes the IWW a radical labor organization is its principles and structure.

One fundamental difference between the IWW and the rest of the labor movement is its emphasis on member-run unions in strict opposition to the capitalist class.

Since its founding in 1905, the IWW has held strong to the idea that the strength of the working class lies in its ability to control the flow of production, and that employees and employers have nothing in common—one exploits while the other is exploited. Furthermore, the organization collectively believes that decisions concerning any work place should be made by the respective workers—not by some bureaucratic entirely disinterested from the shop floor (not to mention, the working class in general)—as is the case with most large trade unions today. IWW leaves the face of every labor action, direct or negotiation up to the creativity and ingenuity of each individual branch.

The concept is that every work group knows what is best for them, therefore it should have the ultimate say on what type of strategies to execute. The IWW also believes that in order to develop a successful working class movement capable of dealing with the fundamental problems of our society, all workers—irrespective of trade, skill or industry—should be united into one big union.

Moving forward in the Valley

Totally energized and boosted by the skills learned at the training, the local IWW group is ready to put their newly acquired knowledge into action. They seek to grow Valley IWW membership and build a collective effective role in the local labor struggle.

At a time when unions are on the decline and society finds itself in a state of economic crisis, Zumwalt says, “Things will only get worse if no unions exist—this is especially true of the Rio Grande Valley, where many workers are susceptible to abuse at work.”

In the IWW, workers realize they must try to involve workers in the plan for change. They have a vision that embodies democratic values and workplace democracy,” he added.

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A non-confrontational way. As I’m sure workers. When the IW offers analysis, but regardless, a headline such as this works. We’re an economic organization, not a political one, and any worker who realizes that only organized power, not the inhuman drive for corporate profit; but they may also be proud gun owners. Conservative Workers Ready for Exploitation
Many of the drivers ‘I’m helping organize in the NC 530 campaign may very well identify as conservative. They may have an inherent understanding of the labor theory of value; they may realize that only organized power, not an appeal to fairness, can counteract the exploitation of working-class people. This brings us to the next article of contention: Conservative Workers Ready for Exploitation
Revolutionary Road is about the desire for freedom—an instinct stumped on inside the Big Bourgeois Trap from time you are a “terrible two” until you’ve finally “grown up” and decided you must be an adult and conform. Either that or become a hobo or be true to your inner rebel. The mathematics PhD John Givings in the movie. Givings (played by the excellent Michael Shannon) is the kind of Frances Farmer non-conformist who has not grown out of child-like bluntness, who must therefore be shocked to keep from shocking others. (Was he thrown in the asylum by his ever loving mother, played by Kathy Bates?) He blurts out his truths, even within proper, safe social settings. He blurts them out like the machine gun fire that might face as a soldier during WWII.
Frank Wheeler (Leonardo DiCaprio) has heard this question of truth before. At first, he has no answer (Kate Winslet) recognize it and embrace the fact. Frank had been a soldier, facing death in WWII, a war still fresh in the memories of all. It was in the face of death, he confesses to his wife April that he felt most alive. And April, whose love for her husband has been challenged by the hum-drum life of housewifery in the safe, leafy suburbs of New York City, confesses that she felt the same, existed another awakened and experienced making love with Frank, back when they were young and on their own revolutionary road away from the inhuman lives they had lived. (This moment of mutual recognition leads to a steamy sex scene in the kitchen. Obviously, April and Frank both have had experience with the art of love.)
The thing is that Frank is now a salesman for the same company which employed his father, and he sees the death trap of Willy Loman looming over him, much as Willy’s children saw it destroy their father. April sees it too. So they decide it’s time to chuck it all and take a chance on Paris. Yes, “move the hole”...
Suggestions for improving the IW
Support Organizer” and then an explanation of the situation would paint a much more positive picture of union membership.
2) IW should adopt a more positive model for organizing the IW’s headline should focus on the more positive aspects of a less-than-ideal situation. A headline like “IW Members, Community Support Organizer” and then an explanation of the situation would paint a much more positive picture of union membership.
Fellow Workers, I encourage the all members of the IW, and particularly our representatives elected to the International Solidarity Committee and IWWM members who collaborated to make and universities that license their logos to the 2007-2008 Workers’ Rights Consortium report to its affiliates, which can be accessed here: http://www.workersrights. linkedin.com/WRCReportToAffili- ates_20072008.pdf
It’s remarkable for many reasons: the scope of work that the WRC is undertaking, the description of the power dynamics within the global apparel industry, the frankness with which the WRC’s university affiliates are confronted with the obstacles they face as licensees which have accepted responsibility for the enforcement of their codes (WRC).
Accepted at face value—as a report to university administrations that describe their role and responsibilities is likely when the funding they provide the WRC, we cannot help but be impressed and gratified at what the WRC has accomplished and the students who have been asked to do this work by convincing their administrations to adopt this “academic standard” of accountability.
Announcing the Lafayette Area General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World
On Jan. 21, 2009, the Lafayette, Indiana area GMB of the Industrial Workers of the World came into being. Our branch began with a single individual—years ago called in the words of the spirit to agitate for workers’ control of industry. Gradually, we’ve grown in numbers, now being 14 strong in our GMB. Though this is a small number, it does not yet give us the vast power to speak on behalf of working people. We hope that this achievement, along with the other recent successes of the IWW, will encourage others to see that another world is possible, but only with a lot of hard work.
We are currently organizing to begin IWWM should support ‘sweat-free’ campaign
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The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email solidarity@iww.org.

By Adam Lincoln

New ISC for 2009

Justin Vitiello, Adam Lincoln and Michael Ashbrook have been elected to the 2009 ISC. This promises to be an exciting year for the ISC as the three members are based in Philadelphia, London and Luxembourg. We are all planning to participate in solidarity delegations throughout the year.

ISC Resolution on Gaza

The first act of the 2009 ISC was to pass a resolution condemning the invasion and bombing of Gaza by the Israeli state:

“The International Solidarity Commission (ISC) of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) condemns in the strongest possible terms the military attack by Israel on January 31 and February 1 of the 1.5 million Palestinian people living in the Gaza strip. This attack has included sustained indiscriminate aerial bombing of urban population centers, schools, mosques, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured, and homes have been destroyed. This attack is a form of collective punishment by the Israeli state against the people in Gaza. This attack on the people in Gaza is barbaric and represents an attack on the working class in all countries.

“The ISC condemns the 18-month siege against the population in Gaza which has prevented food, electricity, medical supplies, and other basic necessities from reaching the people of Gaza and the region’s economy. This form of collective punishment against the people of Gaza is barbaric and represents an attack on the working class in all countries.

“The ISC condemns rocket attacks fired into southern Israel by various factions in Gaza. These attacks have killed and injured Israeli civilians. This form of collective punishment against the people of southern Israel represents an attack on the working class in all countries.

“The ISC recognizes the urgency and necessity of organizing workers from North America and Europe to visit the factories of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, which is one of the many subcontractors to Houston-based KBR.

KBR is a spin-off company of Halliburton, long associated with former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney. KBR is the largest non-union construction company in the United States, as well as being the largest contractor in occupied Iraq. KBR has come under fire many times from Iraqi trade unions for attempts to privatize oil, and also has an impending lawsuit against it over human trafficking.

The guest workers, who were primarily from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, included laborers, cooks, chefs, nurses and doctors. Each had to pay $7,000 to a middleman so they could get to their promised jobs in Baghdad. However, Najlaa failed to secure enough contract work inside US military bases in Iraq; when their promised jobs fell through, the workers were detained in three large warehouses in a walled compound at Baghdad Airport. When Iraqi immigration officials visited the compound, the workers began throwing water bottles and stones at them. The compound’s security guards fired on the workers, which prompted Iraqi police to intervene. The workers then called on the US military to meet with them, only to be told by a spokesman that they were looking into the situation.

KBR has denied holding the workers at the compound.