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London Agency Workers Fight Back & Win With SolFed

By Jerome Baxter

The past few months have seen the United Kingdom based Solidarity Federation (SolFed) engage in an escalating "disruptive action" campaign to redress a case of unpaid wages by the world's largest employment agency. Four days into a national week of action, the Office Angels temporary agency capitulated and gave their ex-worker his due wages.

SolFed was contacted by the worker, Dan, in March. He had worked for Office Angels for three days in December 2010. When he began work, he was not given a time sheet. When he inquired about this, he was told not to worry. Then, on the final day of his employment, he not only sat next to the company manager, but he also received a phone call from Office Angels to check up on him. Despite all this, when Dan went to collect his wages, Office Angels claimed that he had only worked one day, not three. After telephone calls and polite meetings didn't work, he began a discussion thread on the libcom.org web-

site, asking for assistance in his situation. Office Angels, who obviously monitor their online reputation quite closely, sussed out Dan's identity and then had the nerve to harass him for daring to ask for help on the issue. At this point, Dan asked the South London Solidarity Federation to step in.

Efforts began in earnest, with a single picket and a delegation sent to the Wimbledon Office Angels branch where Dan had been employed. The only response from the "Office Devils" (as they'd now been dubbed) was to ban Dan from all Office Angels premises. Next, the London locals of SolFed chose to picket the busy Oxford Street location of Office Angels in central London. This time, SolFed members went



Continued on 6 SolFed protest in March demanding agency worker's pay.

Photo: South London Solidarity Federation

Jimmy John's Lied About Food-Borne Illness Outbreaks

By the IWW Jimmy Johns Workers Union

MINNEAPOLIS – Two months after Jimmy John's fired six workers for blowing the whistle on a company practice of forcing sandwich makers to work while sick, the IWW Jimmy Johns Workers Union (JJWU) has released Minnesota Department of Health documents revealing eight outbreaks of food-borne illness at franchises across the Twin Cities area in the past five years, seven of which were due to employees working while sick at the chain. The release of the documents seriously erodes the credibility of Minneapolis franchise owner Mike Mulligan who had previously claimed to reporters and employees that "the company has made more than 6 million sandwiches during its nearly 10 years in business and no one's ever gotten sick from eating one." Two of the outbreaks, both caused by sick employees, were at the Mulligans' (Mike and son Ron's) stores.

"This is smoking gun evidence not only of the seriousness of the public health risk caused by workers being forced to work while sick at Jimmy John's, it also proves that Jimmy John's franchise owner Mike Mulligan willfully lied to the media, the public, and his employees about his food safety track record. We will continue our fight for paid sick days for restaurant workers until Jimmy John's changes their policy to protect workers and the public," said Max Spector, one of the fired whistleblowers.

Although franchise owner Mike Mulligan has also publicly denied disciplining workers for calling in sick, the company's own written policy mandates one to two disciplinary "points" for workers who call in without finding a replacement, even if they have a doctor's note. Workers are fired after accumulating six points. In ad-

dition to the threat of discipline for calling in sick, workers are often unable to afford to take a day off if they fall ill because wages at the sandwich chain hover around the federal minimum of \$7.25 and the company offers no benefits.

According to results of a survey of 40 sandwich workers conducted by the JJWU, the threat of discipline and poverty wages result in an average of at least two workers working while sick at Jimmy John's in Minneapolis every single day. The union plans to release a report highlighting



Graphic: JJWU

these findings soon.

In an effort to silence employees who blew the whistle on serious food safety hazards at Jimmy John's, the company fired six workers in March for putting up posters demanding the right to call in sick and paid sick days in order to avoid exposing customers to infection.

The fired workers filed a charge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in April seeking reinstatement to their positions. Although ample case law precedent protects the workers' right to inform the public of a labor dispute or unsafe working conditions, the fired Jimmy John's workers' charge has been sent to the NLRB's Division of Advice in Washington, D.C. for additional investigation due to recent government procedural changes. Union members hope for a legal decision this summer.

"These Department of Health reports definitively show what we already knew—we were fired for telling the truth about food safety hazards at Jimmy John's. We hope that the NLRB will expedite our case because there is no time to lose in bringing healthy working conditions to the fast food industry," said Erik Forman, one of the fired workers.

For more information, visit <http://www.jimmyjohnsworkers.org>.

Seattle Co-op Workers Fight For New Contract

By Drew Robertson

SEATTLE – Negotiations are in the air once again in the Emerald City with another contract at Central Co-op (a.k.a. Madison Market) coming to a close. In past years this has been an uneasy song and dance between the IWW and management, but one without much friction outside of the negotiating table. This however, was not a normal year. In the lead up to negotiations, management denied a previously negotiated Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) raise, which was to take effect in February, ahead of the first session. Undeterred, workers were ready to fight back.

So in March, after denying the raise, a grievance was filed as per the contract. In April, after management had given word they were going to deny the grievance by claiming that the contract was no longer in effect, workers met promptly to decide a

course of action. With some support from other organizers in the branch, a petition demanding the raise and all related back pay was quickly drawn up and signed by every member of the IWW who works at the Co-op (a few folks were on long term leave). The petition was then presented to management by some of the workers at the shop along with the contract administrator from the branch. After a small back and forth, management realized they had misread the contract and promptly gave the raise and all associated back pay.

Perhaps it was a power play by management to see how solid the union truly was in the lead up to negotiations, perhaps it was a genuine mistake on their part, but the fact of the matter is it was the pure show of strength and solidarity that won the day. Because, as we always need to

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Dual-Carding Is Useful Experience

Howdy again, Fellow Workers:

Thanks for printing the article “The Railroad Industry And The Need For One Big Union” on page 3 of the April *IW*.

My grandfather Ed Clifton died in 1933, 14 years before I was born; but there is a good possibility that he was also an IWW member (my mother’s memory wasn’t clear about this). From what I’ve been told, he was not only a gentle man, but also a gentleman. He did not swear (his mother was a minister’s daughter); but instead, when he was angered, made up nonsense curses, such as “Farldunnit!!!”

He was an active participant in the National Shopmen’s Strike in 1922, and came home unexpectedly one afternoon at the conclusion of that miserable settle-ment between the railroads, the unions and the government. My grandmother, surprised to see him home so early, asked him what was wrong. “I won’t work with scabs,” my grandfather replied. My grandmother chastised him for swear-ing in front of my mother and the other kids. The word “scab” was the closest to swearing that my grandfather ever used.

He never worked for the railroad again.

Experience gained through working in ANY union environment is definitely beneficial, if for no other reason than to acquire a fuller understanding of the manner in which most unions govern themselves and attempt to represent their members. However, what is most important is the opportunity to experi-ence firsthand the shortcomings of the normal union contract processes, and how streamlined the IWW brand of direct action may seem in comparison.

So, by all mean get your railway work-ers’ card—but keep your dual membership card in the Industrial Workers of the World as well. And remember what my grandfa-ther had to say: “I won’t work with scabs!”

Up the Revolution!
- D. Kingsley Hahn X365465

Critique Of May Day Story

Fellow Workers:

I was surprised at a couple of elements in John Kalwaic’s article “Union Workers and Immigrants March Together On May Day,” which appeared on page 1 of the June *IW*. In this piece, he characterizes the events surrounding May Day 1886 and Haymarket as “protest” and “demonstra-

tion.” In fact the events were a general strike involving hundreds of thousands of workers fighting for the eight-hour day, as well as the power to severely re-strict the despotic power of the boss in the workplace. This was part of a mas-sive movement to put an end to capitalist exploitation and replace it with a demo-cratic worker-controlled commonwealth. Anyone interested in these stirring events should read “The Haymarket Tragedy” by Paul Avrich and “Haymarket Scrapbook” by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont.

The other thing that struck me was the phrase “self-described anarchists” to characterize the Haymarket Martyrs and their comrades. We are used to seeing this in the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times* and publications of their ilk. But the *Indus-trial Worker*? I’ve always thought that the phrase implies that said anarchists are too lazy to apply to the anarchist central com-mittee for membership cards. Many IWW members have similarly self-described ourselves and the IWW has historically enjoyed good relations with anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations, includ-ing the Spanish CNT, the Swedish SAC, and the IWA/AIT.

- Steve Kellerman X325068



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The Union Movement We Need: Wisconsin And Why You Should Join The IWW

By FW db

In Wisconsin, the business unions were the only unit with the infrastructure capable of building the statewide urban/rural coalition of low-wage, unemployed, and public workers necessary to win the struggle opened in the streets of Madison against a budget bill designed to crush the whole of the state’s working class.

Yet, the business unions summarily refused to do so. Their leadership conceded everything but collective bargaining before the struggle began and they sent in staff people from around the country to focus exclusively on this demand. In doing so, they restricted rather than expanded the struggle, and served to contain the militancy of the rank and file in the streets.

The rank and file in turn ceded their militancy on the two fronts that had the potential to expand the struggle towards victory. First, workers failed to expand or significantly support the strike initiated by Madison’s teachers, who ended it after three days due to bureaucratic pressure and questions of how long popular support could be maintained. Second, rank-and-file actors allowed the great gathering point of the struggle, the occupation of the capitol—Wisconsin’s Tahrir Square—to be shut down by legal barriers to occupation, even as Madison police initially refused to arrest protesters.

Finally, and dramatically, the business unions risked suicide rather than take the struggle to the next level in the direction of a general strike. Siding with the intentionally impotent Democratic machine against rank-and-file action, these unions chose the distraction of recall and faith in the courts over the challenge and possibility of exercising independent power.

Of course, this isn’t the whole story. From every corner of Wisconsin, workers, with particular leadership from teachers, took to the streets, building a whole web of relationships through the determined, independent action of the rank and file.

Farmers came to Madison in force and the whole world watched as U.S. workers identified with the bravery of those in Egypt and across the Middle East. For a heartbeat, the global working class questioned whether it could indeed take control of its own destiny.

Importantly as well, thanks to the leadership of a small IWW tendency in the business unions, the Southern Central Federation of Labor (which includes Madison) passed a resolution authorizing an education committee to educate its members about a general strike. Thanks to this work, and amplified by IWW members across the country, the general strike and the framework of workers exercising their own power were launched into the common vocabulary of this nation’s workers, and debated on the front page of Madison’s newspapers.

The question then, was not general strike or no, but would workers across the class exercise their own power in their own interests—because no one else will do it for them.

This struggle in Wisconsin, however this next phase goes, is the beginning not the end. Drastic austerity measures, caused by the speculation of the rich and false budget deficits of their politicians are already reaching U.S. shores, as has news of the massive unrest from workers the world over.

Designed to crush the whole of the working class and justify the theft of our remaining common resources during this capitalist crisis, these measures must be opposed with every available resource. Unions and churches are the only institutions in this country with the base necessary to chart us onto a new course, and unions are the only institution with the potential self-interest to do so en masse. Yet as we have seen in Wisconsin, business unions summarily refuse to live up to their historic mission in the present.

This is why the world needs the IWW

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and the IWW needs you. As of now, the IWW is the only labor formation with the clarity of principle, the independence of mind and finances, and the spirit of democracy necessary to move unions to the center of the struggle for the other world that is possible—a world without poverty, bosses, or destruction of the earth.

In the midst of a global economic transition and the edge of an ecological crisis there has never been a more pressing time for organizing. We need you to join

the IWW to transform the labor movement and in doing so, to help transform the IWW itself.

Surely, we are not uncritical of the IWW as it currently stands. Its diversity is poor, its organizing, coordination, and strategy vary greatly from excellence to inexperience. We have important lessons to learn from workers’ centers, reform movements, other unions with democratic traditions like the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), and business unions campaigns—particularly their more democratic locals.

This does not however change the experience from Wisconsin. There is an essential necessity for the rank-and-file tendency to fight for what it will take to win, to engage in day-to-day struggles from their own workplaces with an eye on the big picture and the big time. We must work to transform labor into a labor movement capable of putting unions and the working class, broadly defined, at the center of struggles against corporate tyranny and for a new world in the shell of the old.

The name for this is the IWW.

It is time for you to make that your name, too. We will seize the moment or suffer in silence until the rain stops, and lord knows that compared to the present Noah was in for a damn good time.

Get in touch with questions, or join us today by emailing db@riseup.net, or visiting <http://www.iww.org>.

IWW Constitution Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

Join the IWW Today

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Post Code, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the *Industrial Worker*.



Industrial Unionism And One Big Unionism In The History Of The IWW

By John O'Reilly and Nate Hawthorne

This article is the second in a series discussing the themes of the One Big Union and Industrial Unionism. We believe these themes are relevant to the future of our organization and our organization's vision and values. Through these articles, we hope to push for a discussion about possible ways forward for the IWW and how to build a new society. We welcome replies, whether in print or sent to us at crashcourse666@gmail.com.

We in the IWW, like many others, have long tried to link two types of struggle—struggles for short-term improvements under capitalism and the struggle to replace capitalism with a better society. For years, now the IWW has used two ideas to think about the connections between these types of struggles. These ideas are Industrial Unionism and the One Big Union. These ideas have meant many different things but they have always been related to the IWW's revolutionary vision. These ideas relate to our

vision of a future revolution that ends capitalism and to our vision of our organization under capitalism before such a revolution.

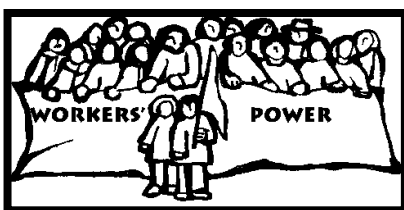
In this piece, we discuss some of the ideas in the early IWW about the IWW, One Big Unionism, and Industrial Unionism. The IWW's Preamble famously states that "by organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." For the early IWW, the idea of building the new within the shell of the old had two facets. Both were all about revolution. One was a matter of organizational design and the other was a matter of preparing the working class. In its organizational design, the IWW's structures were supposed to be set up to form the basis for running a future society democratically. The idea was for the working class to be able to run the economy as quickly as possible after a revolutionary change to get the post-capitalist economy going again after the tremendous disruption caused by the revolution. In terms of preparing the working class, the IWW was intended to radicalize workers by making them want revolution and make them more capable in acting on their urge to end capitalism.

We can see the notion of structure in some documents from just before the IWW's founding. A letter that helped bring about the IWW's founding convention described the need for a new type of union. The letter called for "a labor organization built as the structure of Socialist society, embracing within itself the working class in approximately the same groups and departments and industries that the workers would assume in the working class administration of the Co-Operative Commonwealth." In the words of another letter, this union should "represent class conscious revolutionary principles." A manifesto issued in January 1905 described the goal as an organization which would "build up within itself the structure of an Industrial Democracy—a Workers' Co-Operative Republic—which must finally burst the shell of capitalist government, and be the agency by which the working people will operate the industries, and appropriate the products to themselves." In the words of the people who created the IWW initially, that's what the IWW was supposed to be.

An article called "How the IWW is Organized" published in an IWW magazine later tried to sum up the IWW's aims in three points:

"(1) To organize the workers in such a way that they can successfully fight their battles and advance their interests in their every-day struggles with capitalists. (2) To overthrow capitalism and establish in its place a system of Industrial Democracy. (3) To carry on production after capitalism has been overthrown."

In addition to structure, the IWW's activity was supposed to prepare workers for revolution. One issue of the *Industrial Worker* newspaper said that conflict under capitalism helped get the working class ready to end capitalism. This conflict was "training" of a sort "most necessary to prepare the masses for the final 'catastrophe,' the general strike, which will complete the expropriation of the employers." The *Industrial Union Bulletin* wrote that "the very fights themselves, like the drill of an army, prepare the worker for ever greater tasks and victories." An early IWW leader named Daniel DeLeon wrote that one function of the union is "to drill the membership of the working class in the habit of self-imposed discipline"—or, to train the working class to use its capacities for self-organization. The idea was that workers would learn how to run society through running their own organization—specifically, the class conscious and revolutionary industrial union, in struggle against the capitalist class.



An *Industrial Union Bulletin* article called "Industrial Unionism" stated that the IWW "teaches its members that each dispute in which they are involved is merely an incident in

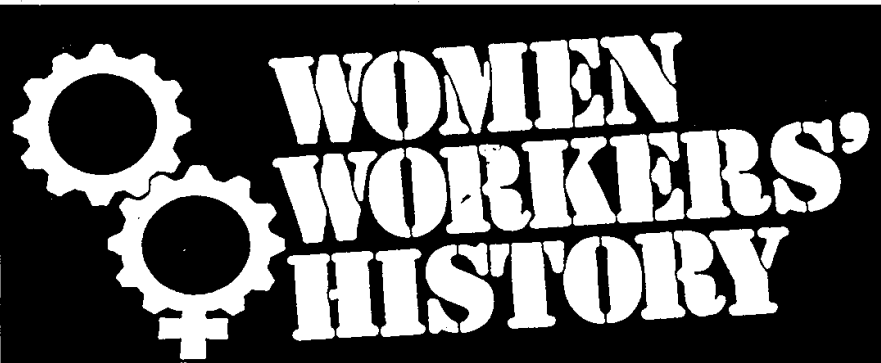
the great struggle between capital and labor—a struggle which can only be brought to an end by the overthrow of capital" and "this supreme end must be ever kept in view." As a result "every incident in the life of the union, every skirmish with the employers is made the text for proletarian education."

Sophie Cohen was a child during a major strike in 1913 in Paterson, N.J., in which the IWW played an important role. Cohen said that: *"the IWW left people with a taste for organization. Every time workers win a strike, it helps straighten out their backs a little bit more and lifts their heads a bit higher. Even though the big strike was lost in Paterson, there was a feeling of togetherness among the workers... From then on, there were a series of strikes and every shop had to be reorganized. Every shop refought the eight hour day all down the line."*

The education of individual members occurred through direct action, defined by James Kennedy as "use of their economic power by the workers themselves." Jack Terrill, the secretary of a Montana IWW branch put it this way: "If something should happen tomorrow so that the workers would have to run industry when they go to work tomorrow, there would be chaos. They are not educated up to that point, but the IWW is trying to organize them into one big union and educate them so that they can run industry when the time comes." This education could not happen without the day-to-day and month-to-month struggles against bosses.

"[T]he revolutionary character of the working class is best developed while the workers are engaged in actual struggle against the masters," stated an article from the IWW magazine the *Industrial Pioneer*. The article said that a "well conducted strike will do more towards developing class-consciousness and radical sentiment than ten tons of revolutionary propaganda of a general nature." The idea here is straightforward: struggle changes people. Being involved in struggle, instead of delegating one's power to another, makes that struggle more meaningful to the worker.

Readers may have noticed that we have spent more time on one facet than the other. We agree strongly with the idea of struggles preparing the working class for revolution. While we respect the idea of early IWW members that the organizational design of the IWW should be the structure for a post-capitalist society, we don't find it very compelling. Particularly in today's economy, so many workers labor on products or services that are irrelevant



Chapter 45

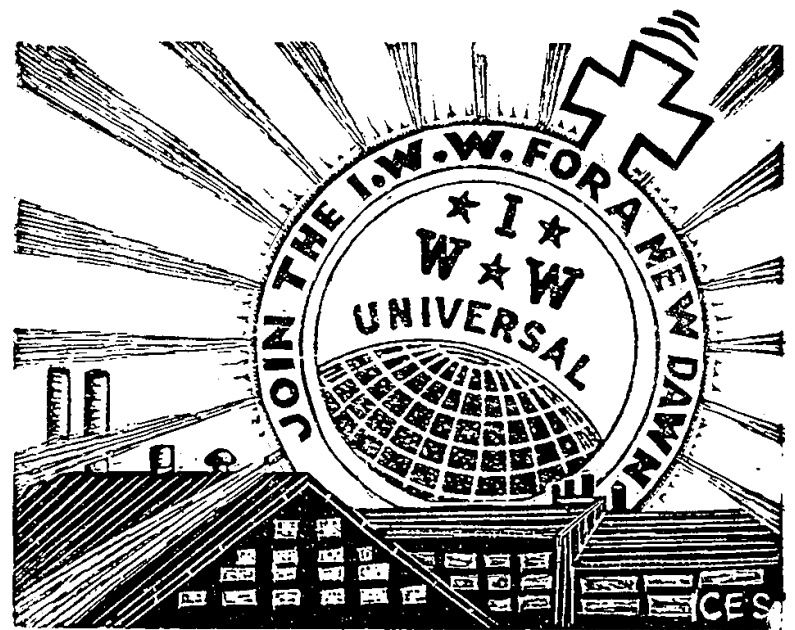
A Chicago Convention

One participant called it the "Continental Congress of the working class." On June 27, 1905, workers from around the country met in Chicago to launch a new labor organization, the Industrial Workers of the World. They were men and women who had seen some of the toughest labor battles of their era. They wanted to build a union to organize all workers, industry by industry, and engage in militant struggle against the bosses.

The IWW's founders had no use for the American Federation of Labor, which had organized only five percent of the workforce, mostly skilled, white males. We're not here to form a rival organization to the AFL, said William D. "Big Bill" Haywood, a tough leader of western miners. "We are here for the purpose of forming a labor organization."

Unlike some AFL unions, there were no membership restrictions on women or black workers in the IWW. Initiation fees were kept low.

Of the 200 delegates, 12 were women, among them famed organizers Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, Lucy Parsons, Emma Langdon of the Denver Typographical Union and Luella Twinning of the American Labor Union. Twinning served as presiding officer on the final day of the convention, Langdon as assistant secretary.



When Lucy Parsons addressed the convention, her words demanded attention. "We (women) are the slaves of slaves. We are exploited more ruthlessly than men. Wherever wages are to be reduced, the capitalist class uses women to reduce them. If there is anything you men should do in the future, it is organize women."

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

or unnecessary for our society if we free ourselves from the bosses' rule. For many people in the early IWW, however, these facets were not separable.

The article "Industrial Unionism" argued that the IWW's organizational structure was linked to both functions. Under capitalism, the structure was meant to coordinate effective struggle and to maximize the preparatory role—to make the IWW radicalize as many workers as possible as effectively as possible. After capitalism ended, the same structure would take on a new role. The article stated: "Under capitalism, the functions of the union are militant and aggressive; under the Socialist Republic they will be

administrative only. This change of function will involve no internal transformation of the union, as it is precisely those powers whereby it can inflict injury upon the capitalist that will enable it to take up the work of production. It is precisely its control over production... that give[s] its power for militant action." The idea was that after militant action ended capitalism, the IWW and the working class would immediately deploy its power for cooperative production.

We can see the idea of the One Big Union as having three different roles: a vision of a future society, an idea of revolutionary change, and a structure for

Continued on bottom of next page

Special

London Agency Workers Fight Back & Win With SolFed

Continued from 1

into Office Angels, spoke to management, demanded Dan be paid, and informed them actions would continue until Dan received his full wages.

After this picket, SolFed began to develop a public aspect to the campaign which was aided by two important factors. First, each picket so far (and throughout the dispute) was met with overwhelming public support. As even Office Angels admits, “There are in excess of one million temporary workers in the United Kingdom...Many people find themselves in a position where they need to consider temporary work as a result of job loss or redundancy.” That means millions of workers have experienced the shady practices and hyper-exploitative business model of Office Angels and their ilk.

Second, we were already having interested groups come to us offering support. Using this momentum, the first thing we did was to create an online callout explaining the situation and requesting sympathetic individuals attend our next picket and involve themselves in a “communications blockade” of the Wimbledon Office Angels. This, the first of two “communications zaps,” saw hundreds of phone calls and emails sent to the Office Angels managers by individuals and groups who were more than happy to express their dissatisfaction with Office Angels’ unscrupulous employment practices.

Finally, we encouraged any Office Angels staff who had been mistreated by the company to contact us. Even a cursory glance at online employment forums makes clear that what Dan had experienced was far from an isolated case. Plus, SolFed has a long-running campaign against casualization and precarious employment. The fight against employment agencies is, predictably, at the forefront of such a movement.

In any case, the morning before our first public picket, Office Angels contacted Dan. He was told that “this has gone on long enough” and he would “definitely” get paid. A manager promised to contact him by noon with the details. When that didn’t happen and perceiving this promise for what it was—a stalling tactic—the picket and communications zap went ahead. When Dan called up Office Angels later that night, he was told things were being held up in the legal department.

At this point, we could see Office Angels was beginning to falter. The pickets, emails, phone calls, and the online exposure were making a difference. They had clearly tried to fend off a picket while acknowledging the dispute “had gone on long enough.” Of course, for us and for Dan, the fight wasn’t over until the money was in the bank. To ensure this would happen, we planned for two things. The first was to call a National Week of Action, complete with a second communications barrage on the Wednesday. Leading up to this week, London SolFed put out a call for other SolFed locals and comradely organizations, particularly the U.K. IWW, the Anarchist Federation (AF), and the Commune, to picket Office Angels locations in their town or city. The second was to begin preparations for an International Week of

Action against Adecco, the company which owns Office Angels and is also the largest employment agency in the world with over 5,500 locations. By calling on SolFed’s membership in the International Workers Association (the IWA or, as it’s also known, the AIT) we could get pickets around the world. We also contacted the U.S. IWW and the Syndicalist Youth Federation in Sweden.

The National Week of Action began with pickets being announced around the United Kingdom: numerous pickets in London, three in Northampton, two pickets in Reading, another two in Brighton, and pickets in Oxford, Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Bristol, and Liverpool. Some of these pickets brought demand letters, some just sent delegations into the office to speak to a manager, and in some cases Office Angels just closed up shop for the duration. By the end of the dispute over 15 pickets had taken place around the country! Some of these were organized by SolFed locals, some by IWW or AF branches. In any case, it was an outpouring of solidarity and the initial response from Office Angels branches—calling the police and harassing picketers—proved they were shaken. But, by the second day of the Week of Action, it appeared that someone higher up in Office Angels or even in Adecco had taken over the publicity angle. On the Office Angels website, a press release went up from their managing director. In it unnamed “various individuals” were accused of undertaking unjustified “disruptive action.” There was also a change in their response to our pickets. The cops were no longer called and managers came out to speak to us—trying their best to be friendly and practically begging us to see if we’d been contacted by any other Office Angels workers. This was most evident in Reading, where an Office Angels manager had aggressively confronted a SolFed member, a mother with her 14-month-old child, and tried to rip fliers out of her hands. Thanks to cool-headed SolFed members, things didn’t escalate and he soon left. The next day, Reading went back to picket again. This time the same manager came out and apologized profusely. Someone, somewhere, was putting pressure on local managers to play nice.

Also on the second day of the Week of Action, Dan was again contacted by Office Angels. This time they told him they had documentation confirming that he had worked two days and would pay him for them. Still not satisfied, we went ahead with Wednesday’s communications blockade. On Wednesday morning Dan was contacted again. Office Angels offered to pay him for the full three days if he was willing to go to court to retrieve their money from Office Angels’ client, Kinetic, to which Dan had been contracted out. How ironic. They wanted to enlist Dan’s help to ensure they got their money. Shall we say: denied on principle. Besides, U.K. law states that agencies have to pay their employees regardless of whether they’ve been paid by their clients. It’s not Dan’s job to sort out Office Angels’ money problems and it’s not like he’d get paid for his time if he had to go to court. Dan politely refused



SolFed members picket Office Angels in March.

Photo: North London Solidarity Federation

the offer and that night they informed him they would be paying him his money and “hoped” he would support them against Kinetics if needed. Well, we had seen them lie before. Their word wasn’t good enough and the pickets weren’t going to stop until the money was in the bank. This created a funny situation though. Pickets continued on Thursday despite Office Angels’ claims of intending to pay. This meant that managers would come to us, waving press releases claiming that all was okay because Dan had been paid! By Friday the money was in Dan’s account. Office Angels had amended their online press release, claiming “new information has recently come to light and we have taken this individual at his word and paid all monies outstanding.” The only new information that had come to light was that Dan was not going to be their lackey and that they were scared of what an International Week of Action would look like. With Dan paid and thanks all around for the support and solidarity, we called off any further pickets.

Postscript: Why did we succeed?

To begin, there has been an uptick in class struggle since the recession began. That means that—for better or worse—we’re living in an environment that is easier to organize in. However, we think there is something larger (though very much related) going on—namely, an appetite for practical activity within the activist/political community, not to mention within the wider population. This is post-Millbank austerity Britain. People are pissed off and, for the first time in a generation, they know who they’re angry at. With the decline of basic industry and the marketization of the public sector, working for an employment agency—with none of the hard-won legal rights of permanent staff—is an experience far too many of us have had to suffer through. The Office Angels dispute gave class struggle anarchists an opportunity for tangible, practical activity. For too long, many of us have had to make do

with public or, even worse, online debate about anarchism, producing literature, or going to picket lines in the increasing rare incidents of strikes. Now, these are all important tasks. However, we want to reach a point where anarcho-syndicalist unions are facilitating, organizing, and leading struggles in the workplace and the community. For many of us, Office Angels was our first experience seeing an anarchist organization take an active role in a workplace dispute. We liked it. And we want more.

Second, we proved ourselves a legitimate threat. When we went London-wide, Office Angels was forced to go London-wide. When we went national, Office Angels was forced to go national. During the first five days of our week of action, there were over a dozen pickets in the United Kingdom. We should also note that the course of this dispute saw a change in management at the Wimbledon branch of Office Angels. Now, we’re not ones to speculate, but perhaps this should be a warning for local managers at Office Angels and elsewhere: If the Solidarity Federation shows up at your door, pay up. Or your job may very well be next.

Finally, direct action works. We achieved what we achieved without lawyers, courts, industrial tribunals, or even union reps. And we won. We planned and strategized and, despite some inevitable hiccups, we orchestrated an escalating campaign against the largest employment agency in the world. We didn’t even play all the cards in our hands and we still forced Office Angels to pay up out of pocket midway through our National Week of Action. After all, they still haven’t been paid by their client. In the process we strengthened our class confidence. Everything from giving demand letters to managers to speaking to the public to coordinating activities, we’re better at that now than we were three months ago.

Direct action works. Dan is living proof.

Seattle Co-op Workers Fight For New Contract

Continued from 1

remember, management never gives in because of what you did today, but out of the fear of what you could do tomorrow.

Fast forward to the present day: we have just completed our fourth negotiation session with management.

Some gains have been made in terms of protecting previous advances in health care and an increase to paid time off, but the major sticking point of pay and raises



Photo: Carole Candler, Examiner.com

remains. With a session or two left to go, we are coming down to the line in the sand. We are all prepared to fight management at every turn. But if a new contract is agreed to and accepted by everyone with these gains, along with a sizable increase in pay, it won’t be due to any skill at the bargaining table, but due to the demonstrated willingness of everyone in the union to stand up and demand what they deserve!



RECOMPOSITION BLOG

NOTES FOR A NEW WORKERISM

An informal blog of new and reposted material by IWW members. Recomposition includes Worker's Power columns, reflections and discussions related to our organizing and solidarity unionism as well as classics by Martin Glaberman, Stan Weir and others."

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Special

What Wobblies Can Learn From “Direct Unionism”

By Juan Conatz

A group of Wobblies recently published a pamphlet called “Direct Unionism: A Discussion Paper,” intended to start a dialogue about how we organize. It’s a welcome addition to further a conversation we ought to have. Often, in the IWW, in-depth discussion and assessments do not occur for various reasons. This wasn’t always the case. Historically, the IWW had a number of different publications, with varying purposes, and some of them included very theoretical, long and comprehensive articles. As the IWW receives additional attention and interest due to its campaigns at Starbucks, Jimmy John’s and in Wisconsin, there is no better time than now to restart these conversations around strategy and organizing. You can read the pamphlet online at <http://bit.ly/ip3gjZ>.

Direct Unionism and “Building the Union”

The piece suggests a way for the IWW to organize, which it calls “direct unionism,” described as “instead of focusing on contracts, workplace elections, or legal procedures, IWW members should strive to build networks of militants in whatever industry they are employed.”

I enthusiastically support this outlook. During the union’s most active years, until the 1930s, “no contracts” was actually part of the constitution. In an article titled “Industrial Workers of the World,” Wobbly author Joyce L. Kornbluh mentions, “As labor-management contracts were viewed as an interference with labor’s unconditional right to strike, the IWW would not sign contracts, a controversial position it did not abandon until the 1930s. Strikes rather than contracts were the fuel for IWW militancy, for strikes built the experience and perspective needed for the general strike that Wobblies thought would overthrow the capitalist system.”

The pamphlet addresses some important sentiments for IWW organizing: the sentiment of recruitment equaling activity, and the idea that by merely increasing membership we elevate our ability to function or to influence events. While more people joining does mean more resources in the form of dues, these members may not necessarily become active. We in the IWW have quite a bit of historical admiration and background that we’ve inherited, much like the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and the Socialist Party USA (SPUSA). This admiration, combined with the lack of identifiable radical organizations in some areas and the ease of joining online, means that often times we have many interested people join for a short period of time and then fall through the cracks (the so-called “one month wonders”).

We have been criticized for “building the union just for the sake of building it.”



Graphic: libcom.org

There’s some truth to that. Some people are really focused on getting others to join as if that is the end all, be all. After they join, they aren’t engaged as much and the same effort that was put into getting them to join is not put into getting them active. What is forgotten is that, despite the phrase of “One Big Union,” the IWW at our largest and most active in the early 20th century still mostly organized strikes and actions with workers regardless of whether they were members or not. Membership was secondary to militant organizing.

In my own experience with groups that are easy to join, I’ve seen this issue come up before. While 20 or so people total were technically part of a group I was involved in, we did far better work when we reorganized ourselves and totaled less than 10. Quality over quantity was the key to effective work.

Another sentiment that is tied with “building the union” is the unfortunate one of thinking membership precludes activity. As our organizer training program says, “We need to act like a union before calling ourselves a union.” A group of workers who are active on workplace issues but do not call themselves a union is more desirable than a workplace with a union presence, but in which workplace issues go unaddressed or ignored. To quote “Direct Unionism,” “informal participation in workplace struggle, not formal membership in the IWW, should be the first concern of a workplace organizer.”

Our aim is to intensify class struggle. This requires our co-workers to become active and gain confidence in our collective power. Their membership in the IWW is good, but it is secondary. This does not mean everything should be informal. Formal membership is an important aspect, but it is part of a wider experience and outlook, not the only and final thing.

Staying Power

“Direct Unionism” includes some of the shortcomings of the historic IWW.

The publication tries to address how gains are protected without contracts and with membership de-emphasized, but it’s not really explored in much detail. While the pamphlet usefully re-centers us on some of our more successful practices, there are negative aspects to these.

For instance, one of the major issues of the historical IWW was staying power. They came into a particular town in a particular industry, organized and then, whether the result was a win or a loss, IWW presence disintegrated fairly quickly. Perhaps this was a result of internal splits, government repression and exodus to the CPUSA, but it may also be due to a non-contractual network of militants, de-emphasizing formal membership strategy. Elevating struggle means building a combative working-class culture. Could direct unionism be too informal to contribute to the infrastructure needed for this?

Industrial Strategy and Dual Carding

The pamphlet lays out pieces of what has not existed in the IWW—a dual card strategy:

“In workplaces where IWWs are dual-carding, the organizing committee will seek to encourage workers to ‘super-sede’ (i.e. move ‘above and beyond’) the trade-union form...Wobblies will encourage struggle to be organized across trade unions and seek to bring unorganized workers into the struggle...When mass actions occur, Wobblies should make sure that workers remain in full control...This means democratic and open mass assemblies of workers (as opposed the secretive ‘back rooms’ inhabited by union officials) must decide every aspect of the struggle. The final decision on what actions to take and when to call them off must be decided by the workers themselves.”

This important concept should be used to combat chauvinism many folks have about their particular unionized workplace or mainstream union. I’ve noticed a mentality of “my union/workplace is completely unique and you can’t give me advice,” as if their union/workplace is an isolated island, free of any sort of commonalities from other workplaces (unionized or not) and other unions. This likely has a lot to do with the way most mainstream unions operate.

While, yes, each workplace and union local is different, there are broad strategies, principles and guidelines we can set. Ones which destroy the divisions between unionized and non-union, public and private, etc., are the most important. While the IWW is small, it is often forgotten that mainstream unions are also small, representing 11.9 percent of the U.S. workforce. We can’t afford to stay restricted to one segment of the class, and must, instead, use tactics that broaden the struggle beyond our small numbers. As “Direct Unionism” says:

“We are not seeking to function as a union pressure group, reform caucus, or trying to ‘capture’ official positions within

the union...In a union workplace, the IWW organizing committee must remain independent of the recognized union.”

De-emphasizing membership is important here also. The point is not to “poach” members from the mainstream unions or to raid them. Even if we were at a level where this was realistic, it would still be a bad idea. An ideal dual-carder strategy would not be about trying to replace another union, but about elevating the struggle and bridging divides.

In Puerto Real, Spain, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) worked to “massify” a struggle by organizing cross-union and cross-industry assemblies of workers and community members in 1987. The people were very militant and fought the closing of the shipyards there incessantly, not only preventing the closing, but winning bread-and-butter gains that weren’t originally part of the struggle.

It’s a very inspiring event that we can learn from. However, this seems to be one of only a few examples of a large, successful campaign the post-Franco CNT has had. This could possibly be a language issue. There isn’t a lot of material translated on the contemporary CNT and its successes and failures. To discover the different perspectives on their activity, it is pretty much a requirement to know Spanish. This is true of Spanish syndicalism in general.

In Spain, the three most widely known anarcho-syndicalist unions are (in order of size): the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), the CNT and Solidaridad Obrera. The CGT originated as a faction and later split off from the CNT over various issues, the main ones being participation in workplace councils (a sort of workplace parliamentary system, with different unions acting as “parties” and representing workers) and accepting state funding. The CNT opposes workplace councils and organizes similarly to direct unionism. Solidaridad Obrera sees itself as in between the CGT and the CNT, leaving decisions on these matters to locals or workplaces.

These debates are of interest to Wobblies because we’ve had some similar debates. There was debate about prohibiting dues check-off: the act of the employer subtracting union dues from employee paychecks and then transferring to the union. There was intense debate on how to respond to various labor laws, such as National Labor Relations Board elections, secondary boycotts and anti-Communist pledges for officers. Some of these debates resulted in the IWW shrinking, like when Cleveland factory workers disaffiliated over the IWW refusing to agree to anti-Communist affidavits required by Taft-Hartley.

But in order to discover the outcomes of these strategies in response to laws on workplace organizing in Spain, it is necessary to ask questions. Has the CNT’s approach—similar to direct unionism—been a success, and if so, how often? Does the CGT actually function like the mass, militant union we want to be or has it been too incorporated into the state? Is Solidaridad Obrera a successful merging of the two positions? While we cannot simply draw a blueprint based on what’s going on in Spain, knowing these things would shed some light on the viability of direct unionism.

Conclusion

“Direct Unionism: A Discussion Paper,” in my opinion, is quite good. It combats some negative parts of radical union organizations (fetish of recruitment and quantity automatically meaning quality) and builds off the IWW’s organizer trainings, taking it to its logical extent. It also tries to initiate a much-needed conversation on dual carding, giving some examples of why the direct unionist approach can work.

Support Women Wobblies: Donate to the Sato Fund!

This fund, established in memory of fellow worker Charlie Sato, supports the participation of women members in the IWW, for example by contributing to their travel costs to attend important meetings like our annual international convention.

A tireless fighter for social justice and the rights of working people, Charlie was a supporter of the Hawaiian-based LACASA (a Latin-American solidarity organization) and the People’s Fund, other projects in Europe, Australia and Japan, and an active member of the O’ahu General Membership Branch of the IWW.

Donate online at <http://store.iww.org/sato-donations.html>, or send checks payable to “IWW” (mentioning the Charlie Sato Memorial Fund) to: Industrial Workers of the World - General Headquarters, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618– U.S.A.



Industrial Worker Book Review

Critique Of Education System Ironically Left Off Curriculums

Sinclair, Upton. The Goslings. Privately printed, 1924. Out of Print.

By William Hastings
Editor, Industrial Worker
Book Review

Educational reform in this country is a crock of shit. We would know this if more people read Upton Sinclair’s “The Goslings,” his study of public and private education in America from 1924. But few know that the book exists thanks to how we teach Sinclair in school. He’s taught as a one-book writer. “The Jungle” forced the government to enact the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act, and that is all it was good for. It is not even a concession to socialism to teach “The Jungle” like this. It is a blatant smoke screen to prevent people from discovering that Sinclair wrote 92 books in his career. Six of these, written in an incredible burst of productivity between 1919 and 1927 when he wrote 13 books during, make up his “Dead Hand” series. The “Dead Hand” series is six non-fiction books that looked at the influence of greed and big business upon various American institutions. Of these six books, “The Brass Check” is the only one in print. Had “The Goslings” stayed in print and circulated widely, educational reform in this country would have happened a long time ago. Instead, we are now forced to dig up used copies of the book to see that little has changed since it was written in 1924. Beyond that, reading “The Goslings” now will show that we’ve grown accustomed to the “graft, favoritism, propaganda and repression” Sinclair brought to light.

“The Goslings” is Sinclair’s study of the systemic corruption of our public and private elementary and high schools by big business and other interests. In this, Sinclair succeeds admirably, though the book is marked by some flaws. His borderline intolerance of Catholicism is frightening to see from such a broadminded thinker and it undermines some chapters of the book by derailing the logic of his arguments. The book is organized thematically over 89 chapters. This works well if the reader wants to find certain things, but if read cover to cover, “The Goslings” can be repetitious. Yet, this is also Sinclair’s intention. By detailing the nationwide spread of graft, repression of thought and speech, the undermining of unions and gross incompetence of school leadership, he is able to show that his study cannot be cast off as too isolated.

At times, Sinclair’s now-classic hyperbole seems outrageous, but this is a stylistic tick used for a particular effect. When combined with the frantic nature of his writing (“Chief Spy Dotey admitted that he had given information against Mr. Lapolla to the Lusk committee!”) it gives off the feeling that Sinclair is so exasperated by the problems he chronicles, he must yell to be heard. The hyperbole and exasperation help to reduce incredible quantities of

information into easily understood terms. What could have been a dense academic study of American education is instead easily readable by anyone. Stylistically, this is Sinclair’s chief triumph. By making the book accessible without sacrificing any depth of thought, it could, if put into people’s hands, make them outraged enough to enact change. “The Goslings” is not one of the watered-down teaching manuals influenced by self-help books given to graduate students today. It is not “The Daily Disciplines of Leadership: How to Improve Student Achievement, Staff Motivation and Personal Organization” (Douglas B. Reeves, 2007). Certainly not, when Sinclair writes that:

“It is the thesis of the business men who run our educational system that the schools are factories, and the children raw material, to be turned out thoroughly standardized, of the same size and shape, like biscuits or sausages. To these business men the teachers are servants, or ‘hands,’ whose duty is the same as in any other factory—to obey orders, and mind their own business, and be respectful to their superiors. Whenever by any chance teachers dare to have ideas of their own, or especially to ask for higher wages, these teachers are treated precisely as we have seen labor unions treated by the Black Hand of Southern California.”

To be turned out thoroughly standardized. Like sausages. What appalls about this paragraph is not only how little has changed, but how accepting of this we’ve grown. After all, in order for a school to receive state funding, it must “be in compliance” under the state’s “program quality assurance services.” Now, teachers are told that education is driven by “data-based assessments.” Their schools are judged on “adopted performance outcomes.” In department and faculty meetings, plans are made for schools to meet “standards of satisfactory and excellent for data based areas [of instruction].” These quotes are from the state of Maryland’s school performance reports of 1990. The language of business and the factory is what we use to describe education in this country. How little has changed since “The Goslings” of 1924.

If “The Goslings” failed to ignite social change in 1924 upon its publication, and we have adopted the language of corporate America into our schools (“data,” “performance outcomes,” “quality assurance services”), then the America of “The Goslings” has allowed the sausage makers a firmer grip on education. We have grown so accustomed to the language of business

in our schools that we no longer challenge it. By forcing teachers to think and act in terms of corporate language, they teach corporate language to students. Students then become a piece of “raw material” and the teachers themselves are merely the obedient “hands” Sinclair warns about. Is it any wonder then, that students leave high school and enter college to study marketing? Of all the things to study, to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on: marketing?! How to better advertise for business! No surprise then that we speak of education without intrinsic value: You want to be an English major? What can you do with *that*? This is the by-product of an educational system that Sinclair details in “The Goslings,” one that has never derailed. Or as Sinclair puts it:

“I think it one more proof of the deliberate conspiracy which the masters of our plutocratic empire have hatched, to keep the American people at the mental age of eight. The schools are now conducted upon the basis of keeping the pupils at that age; and of course the safest way to do this is to keep the teachers at the same age, and likewise the principals, and the supervisors—and the superintendents.”

Paolo Friere, the Brazilian educator and critical theorist, said “it is impossible to think of language without thinking of ideology and power.” Taking that as true, and understanding that all educational disciplines are languages, our concern over education is not only warranted, but just. Who is teaching our children? Who writes the textbooks the state mandates that we use? What interests are backing the building of our schools, the education of our teachers and thus the education of our children? Why does defense spending outweigh educational spending? Why are our children asked to pledge allegiance to the flag every morning, though it is the rare occasion when they sit down in an English class and dissect that pledge and its meaning?

These questions are pertinent now, but reading through “The Goslings” shows Sinclair asking them 87 years ago. When he exposes how self-serving interests manipulate textbooks into schools, he was not only showing America what afflicted its schools then, but he was also warning us of future repercussions if we did not enact radical change. We did not listen. Take for example the recent report that Scholastic Books, a leading educational book supplier to schools, released a fourth grade lesson packet called “The United States of Energy.” The packet discussed the benefits of coal usage, though it carefully failed to highlight greenhouse gas emissions, laborers’ conditions, and mountaintop removal. The American Coal Foundation supplied the funding for the book.

Who is making money off of the standardized tests that drive “No Child Left Behind,” “data based assessment,” and “performance outcomes?” Money is being made all down the line here. And all this is part of what Sinclair deems the four major products of our educational system: “G, F, P and R—Graft, Favoritism, Propaganda and Repression.”

As Sinclair shows, this agenda and the corporate-industrial language used to describe both education and students comes in many ways from the school boards. Sinclair points out in each city he covers that the school boards are not only corrupt and self serving, but they are stocked with non-educators. In this regard, nothing has changed between then and now. Top-down systems of hierarchical management

plague our schools in displays of managerial totalitarianism. This is effective for the plutocracy, since totalitarianism in leadership produces docile employees and docile students. Generations of this and no one questions it at all. While we certainly use the word “democracy” with much more vigor in our media and schools these days, we are far from actually teaching and operating within it inside our school walls. In highlighting this non-educator run totalitarianism, Sinclair implies, then argues for, in his concluding remarks, that if schools were truly democratic they’d be run by the teachers. And they would be better off:

“In a social system based upon justice and freedom we have a right to ask for harmony; but where the system is based upon injustice and servitude, to ask for harmony is merely to be a tool of entrenched wrong. So my advice to teachers and professors is that they should stand up and assert themselves, and let harmony come when educational institutions are controlled by educators, and not by the owners of stocks and bonds and other symbols of parasitism.”

The totalitarianism of our schools is central to “The Goslings.” Sinclair devotes much time to detailing how the schools were used to push republic-centric, pro-capitalist thought and conformity onto students. At one point, he quotes directly from a textbook used in California schools, one prepared by the Better America Foundation. In it they taught students that:

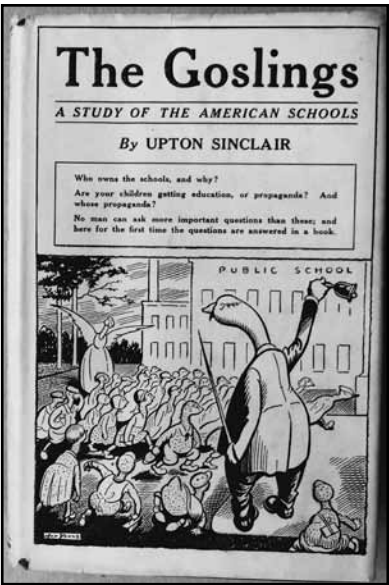
“...promiscuity, or free-love, is to the domestic world what democracy is to government...What gluttony is to the individual, democracy is to government...What drunkenness is to the individual, democracy is to government...What discord is to music, democracy is to government.”

While our textbooks might not be so ludicrous now, that is not to say that they’re any better. Since reading “The Goslings” shows us that our system has not changed, the Better America Foundation’s viewpoint has only been more carefully honed and inserted into school textbooks. In 2004, Nauset Regional Middle School in Orleans, Mass., used a brand new history textbook that ended with a brief section on George W. Bush’s “liberation” of Iraq. The textbook spoke plainly about the United States “winning the war” there. The question we should be asking ourselves, in light of Sinclair’s book, is what has been finely tuned since Sinclair exposed it in “The Goslings”? What viewpoints or propaganda is being fed to our students through textbooks, curriculum and administration-forced lesson planning?

“The Goslings” is certainly a shock to read, if only to show that educational reform since 1924 has been a myth. Jonathan Kozol has brilliantly shown that segregation in our schools is worse now than prior to *Brown v. the Board of Education*. “No Child Left Behind” has increased the language of business, corporate control and monitoring in our schools instead of reforming them. In that surge and control of our schools, we have not only continued the problems that Sinclair brought forth in “The Goslings,” we have deepened them. We have allowed the sausage makers better control.

Though at times uneven, at others fairly tedious, “The Goslings” should be bought up and passed from parent to parent, educator to educator, student to student. Perhaps then real educational reform will begin from the bottom up, with all people discussing what we have been ignoring, allowing and encouraging for over 87 years. And maybe, just maybe, we’ll stop teaching Upton Sinclair as a one-book writer. Instead we’ll draw back to life a powerful critical voice, one as important now as it was then.

The Industrial Worker Book Review’s column, Industrial Strength, continues at top of next page.



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Industrial Strength Wanted: Servile, Illiterate Drones

By Eric Miles Williamson

I have always found it suspicious that for my entire adult life, local, state and federal politicians have emphasized the importance of teaching students, from kindergarten through college, above all else, in the sciences. In Barack Obama’s most recent State of the Union address, he stressed the importance of investing in the sciences and made no mention whatsoever of the humanities.

When programs are cut, it’s the humanities that go to the chopping block: music programs are eliminated, foreign language programs are zapped, philosophy departments are chopped, literary journals and their subscriptions are discontinued, and the funds for the National Endowment for the Arts are cut once again. Library funds are reduced while computers are installed in classrooms. The drama teacher is fired while “smart” classrooms—replete with computers, internet access and gigantic video screens—are increasingly the norm.

The arts, we are told by the politicians, are not necessary for the kind of education our civilization needs. The arts are a luxury, and those who study the arts are slothful, self-indulgent burdens on society. And the general populace agrees with the politicians: cut education and its lazy and immoral teachers. Tuition keeps going up (or, rather, state and federal funding keeps going down) and the instruction gets no better: giving a teacher more money does not make the teacher better at his job. Pennsylvania recently cut higher education by 50 percent, and the population applauded. Texas is balancing its budget on the backs of the universities, implementing draconian cuts, and the people of Texas don’t care—they’re fed up with overpaid teachers who are immune from the vagaries of the economy. You can bet the sciences will be the last, not the first, area to take cuts.

Here’s the suspicious part of all this, what makes me livid: the people telling the American population that we should invest in the sciences and not the humanities, the politicians cutting liberal arts are, for the most part, lawyers. Arch-enemy of the humanities George W. Bush, though not a lawyer, got his undergraduate degree in history. Obama was a lawyer, so was Clinton, so was Gerald Ford and so was Nixon. Most congressmen and senators were lawyers. These former lawyers, U.S. presidents, senators and congressmen, constitute the most powerful governing body in the world. They rule the planet.



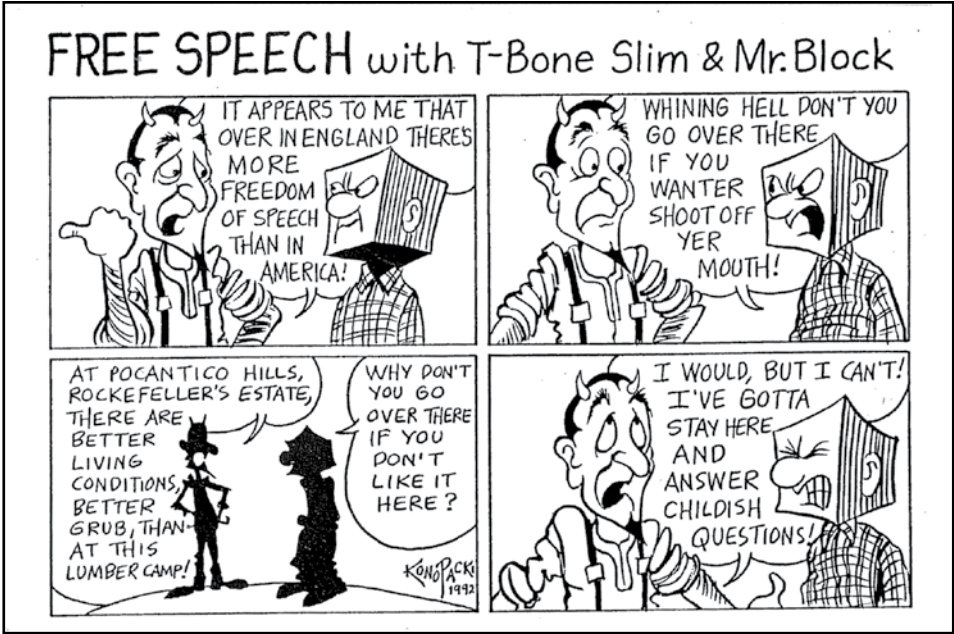
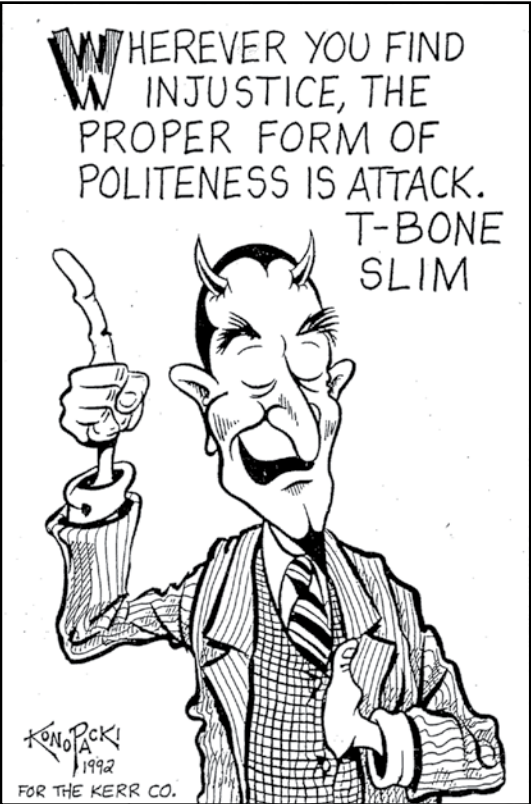
Graphic: clipartdb.com

Q: And what did these lawyers study in law school?
A: Language.
Q: What were their tools when they practiced law?
A: Words, words and words.
Q: What is the highest paying profession (not specialty, like baseball player or rock star), other than doctor, in the USA?
A: Lawyer.

And yet these lawyers tell us not to study what they studied, not to make words a priority, but to study the sciences. These lawyers, the most powerful people on the planet, tell us not to be as successful and powerful as they are. They tell us to be sheep in cubicles and in laboratories, to watch Fox News and believe every word we hear. And Americans do believe what they hear on the news: of course they do, since Americans are not trained in language skills, but in how to program a computer, how to do income taxes, how to drill a root-canal. Jimmy Carter, the last president to be an avid supporter of the arts (he published a book of poetry), was also the last American president to study the sciences: he did graduate work in nuclear technology and physics.

And so, the next time you hear a politician say we need to invest in the sciences, implying that we do not need to pay attention to the humanities and liberal arts, remember what he’s actually telling you and your children to do: spend the rest of your life on your knees at the mercy of those who control the language.

For he who controls the language controls the people.



Wobbly Arts Stay Strong, Fellow Workers

(to the tune of “Hey There, Delilah” by the Plain White Ts)
(new lyrics by FW Tyler Swain and FW Corey Randone, Nebraska GMB)

VERSE 1
Hey there, fellow workers
Marchin’ up in Madison
We’re a thousand miles away from you
But we see where you’ve been
Don’t give up the fight
Workers’ rights are human rights
Our guiding light

VERSE 2
Stay strong, fellow workers
You know we’ve got to fix this system
And if you get downhearted
We’ll be right there in an instant
Don’t give up the fight
Yes, victory it is in sight
We’re by your side

CHORUS x 2
Oh, solidarity
Yeah, it’s something we all need
Oh, solidarity
Yeah, it’s something we all need

BRIDGE
The battle seems so far from won
‘Cause they got all the tanks and guns
And money that they stole along the way
But my friends, this world belongs to us
It’s our brains and hands that built it up
And we’ll make damned sure they regret this day
Fellow workers, I can promise you
That by the time we get through
The world will never ever be the same
We’ll change this game

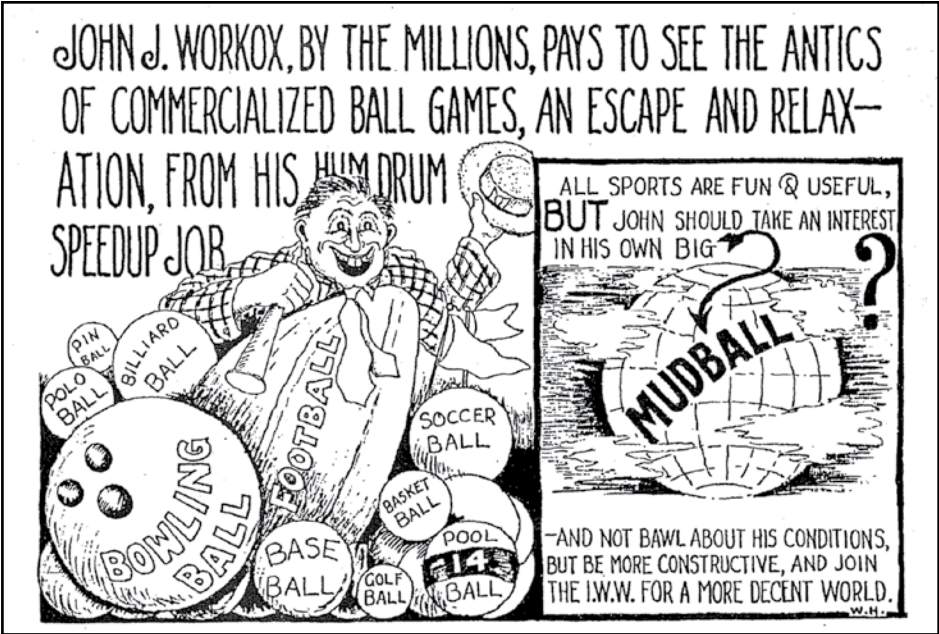
VERSE 3
One last shout out to all workers
Struggling all across this country
We’re a thousand miles away from you
But we still have your back
Oh yes, we do
And we all know Scott Walker* is a fool (*or insert local politician’s name here)
Just another fascist tool
So fellow workers, here’s to you
And to epic truth

CHORUS x 2
Oh, solidarity
Yeah, it’s something we all need
Oh, solidarity
Yeah, it’s something we all need

It’s something we all need.

VERSES:
G|: |779999| |779999| |779999| 777 :|
D|:7777777|779999|7777777|779999|7777777|779999|777777777777:|
A|:7777777|557777|7777777|557777|7777777|557777|777555777777:|
E|:55555555| |55555555| |55555555| |555 5555555:|


CHORUS:
G|7777777777777777| 77 |7777777777777777| 779999|
D|7777777777777777|7777777777|7777777777777777|5555779999|
A|5555555555555555|7777557777|5555555555555555|5555557777|
E| |5555 5555| |3333 |



The above images are three in a series of postcards called “A Short Treatise on Etiquette by T-Bone Slim,” published by the Charles H. Kerr Company in 1992. They were sent to the *Industrial Worker* from FW Harry Siitonen. The postcard on the top is T-Bone Slime; on the bottom left is a cartoon by labor artist Mike Konopacki illustrating a T-Bone and Mr. Block skit that originally appeared in the *IW* on Jan. 10, 1925; and the postcard on the bottom right depicts Wobbly environmentalism, drawn by William Henkelman for the *IW* on April 9, 1947.

WE ARE STRONG AND GROWING STRONGER

BUT EVERY DAY THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM BURDENS OUR CLASS WARRIORS WITH LEGAL TROUBLES



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x357829

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xNumber (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____

Postal Code (Zip): _____ Country: _____

If incarcerated, include additional information here:

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☐ I have included \$_____ for _____ Quarters dues (\$5 per 3 months of membership)

☐ I am currently incarcerated and would like to receive a membership sponsorship from a fellow GDC member

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☐ YES, I would like to be added to the list of prisoners to receive literature from the GDC/IWW



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Sports

National Football League And The War On Labor

By Neil Parthun

Management has told their workers that due to budget problems, there must be sacrifices. The bosses demand concessions in salaries, pensions and benefits. Yet, observers are aware that management is potentially lying about their financial picture and this appears to be a method to attack the existence of the union, the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA), and its hard gained protections. Readers may be thinking about the events in Wisconsin, Ohio or the more than 20 states that are currently attacking organized labor. However, this article is about another labor struggle—the players of the National Football League (NFL) against their owners.

Realities: Owners and Players

While some, like the Miami Dolphins owner saying so recently, feel that the NFL players make millions of dollars and should not be considered workers, the reality is that the average career of an NFL player is 3.5 years. This makes them almost eligible to be vested into the health care system for just five years. Nate Jackson, a tight end who played for the Denver Broncos from 2003 to 2008, laid out the realities for most NFL players:

“[NFL Commissioner] Roger Goodell recently took to the pulpit to debunk the popularly held notion that an NFL player’s career lasts 3.5 years. The truth, Roger says, is that if you make an opening day roster as a rookie, your career will last almost six years; if you get drafted in the first round, it’s nine years; and if you make a Pro Bowl, your career will last nearly 12 years.

“This PR push by the NFL—a response to [NFLPA Executive Director] DeMaurice Smith’s recent public attempts to shed light on what a typical career is like for an NFL athlete—is confusing to a former player like me: confusing, disingenuous, and ignorant. Confusing because it implies that the average NFL career, the average professional football existence, is comparable to the anomalous careers of Pro Bowlers and first-round draft picks. Disingenuous because it comes at a time when Goodell purports to care profoundly about the health of his players. Ignorant because it dismisses the thousands of athletes who sacrifice their minds and their bodies for a sport that keeps them hanging by a thread for years, shuffling them in and out of training camps and practice squads and never paying them full value for their services.

“The reason the average NFL career length is 3.5 years is because for every Pro Bowler, there are maybe 10 players who sign contracts and never play a down for their team. They go through off-season conditioning, mini-camps, training camps, preseason games, then get cut the week before the season starts. They are told to stay in shape and be ready. We really like what you’ve done for us, and if someone gets hurt, we’re definitely going to call you. So be ready!... When you pay attention to the heavy attrition every week in the NFL, the substance of that 3.5 years starts to take shape.”

Their careers are finished by the time they enter their early 30s, and data has shown that football players die much earlier than other males. Former player Dave Meggysey stated that players were giving up their right to a middle age by playing football. Meanwhile, the owners of the different franchises sit on their billions of dollars in net worth, demand that taxpayer money finance construction of new stadiums for their teams and have shut down an incredibly profitable sport simply so they can get even more money by getting concessions from players.

The Basics

The NFL and the NFLPA have had a collective bargaining agreement in place since the early 1990s. It was most recently negotiated in 2006, with the owners voting 30-to-2 to approve the deal. During this time, team values have increased, player salaries have increased, TV viewership reached record levels and the league had seen record setting success. All of this success came under the collective bargaining agreement that is now decried by the owners as they utilized the opt-out clause to remove themselves from the agreement.

The NFL and the NFLPA have to split \$9 billion in revenue. Traditionally, the owners took \$1 billion off the top for expenses and split the remaining money with the players. Citing increased costs of new stadiums, the owners have demanded that they receive \$2 billion off the top for expenses—an 18 percent revenue cut for players—but have not opened or shared financial data with the union or the public to justify the need for such concessions.

At the center of this labor dispute is the sheer greed of the owners.

The Owners’ Greed

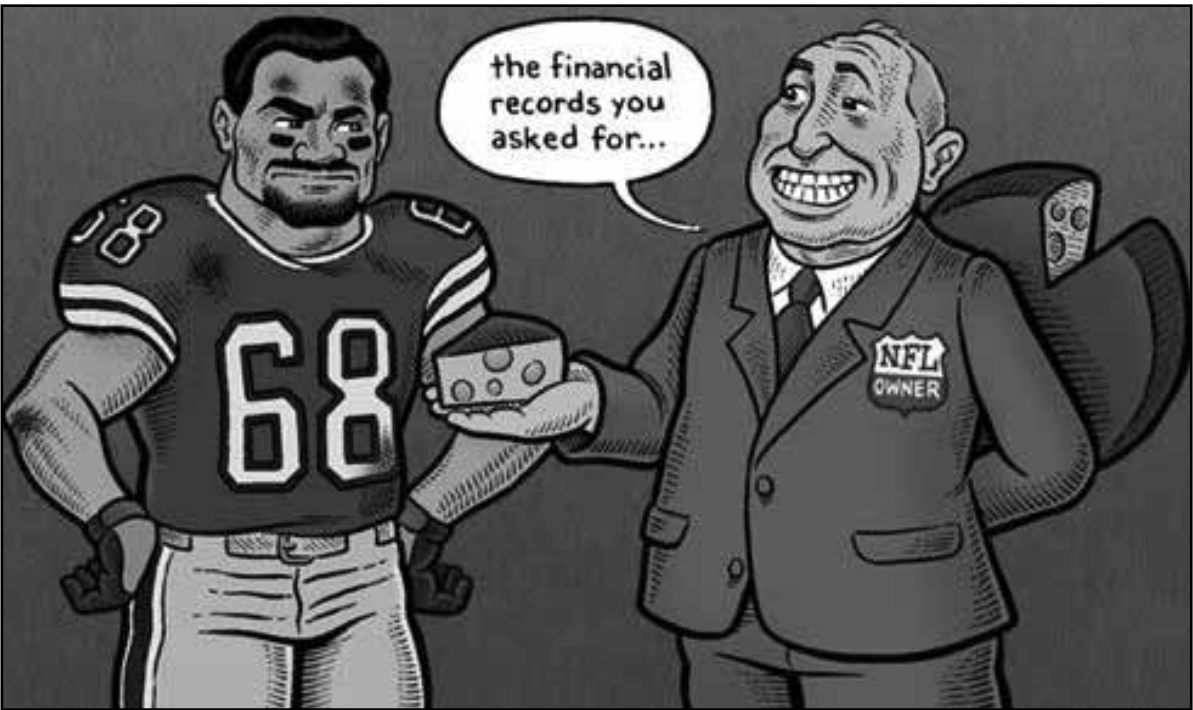
In multiple cities, owners have demanded and are demanding new stadiums. They want more luxury suites to sell, access to naming rights for the stadium, and to be able to justify increased ticket prices and personal seat licenses due to a new stadium—and they want this all (or mostly all) on the taxpayers’ dime.

As more and more cities are fighting back against the owners and their demands for taxpayer-subsidized stadiums or simply lack the ability to pay given most states’ massive deficits, even under threats of having their team taken from them and moved to a new locale, the owners are now demanding concessions from the players to retain their levels of profit. Sportswriter Drew Magary noted:

“[NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell] also says that the league “needs” new stadiums in Minneapolis, San Diego, Buffalo, and L.A. That’s a bald-faced lie. The NFL doesn’t NEED new stadiums at all. It won’t become financially unviable just because the Bills are still eating ass in Orchard Park a decade from now. It WANTS new stadiums, and it wants the players to help pay for them.”

The owners have also demanded two more regular season games. Commissioner Goodell extols how the fans want to see an 18 game regular season. However, recent polls show that the fans do not want two more regular season games but instead want lower price pre-season tickets. The demands for more games are even more pernicious when news about concussions and chronic traumatic encephalopathy entered the discussion. More and more medical research has linked head trauma that athletes experience to degenerative brain diseases.

As Commissioner Goodell institutes fines for devastating hits and trumpets how importantly the NFL takes player safety, they undercut all that lofty rhetoric when they demand that the players take more risks in their short term and long term health by playing even more games so the owners can rake in even more profits.



Graphic: sportscasm.com

The owners felt that they could get these huge concessions from the players because it was the first negotiations for NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith. New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees explained “Ever since [former executive director] Gene Upshaw passed away...the owners saw blood in the water... They felt like ‘this is our opportunity to take a significant piece of the [financial] pie back at all costs, a piece that we will never have to give back again. This is our chance, while they don’t have leadership.”

Or, as Jerry Richardson—owner of the Carolina Panthers and member of the ownership bargaining team—put it, “We signed a shitty deal last time and we’re going to stick together and take back our league and fucking do something about it.”

Playing for the Lockout

From the beginning, many observers believed that the NFL owners were playing for the lockout. This belief was only further cemented by news of the TV deal that was reached by the NFL owners and major stations to air games. In this \$4 billion deal, the owners got a clause in the contract that would guarantee them payments even if there was no football played in the 2011-2012 season.

The NFLPA believed that the owners took less money than they could have gotten in the deal in order to get a guaranteed revenue stream in case of a lockout. So, the players took the owners to court in a case that is still being litigated.

As of this writing, U.S. District Judge David S. Doty ruled in favor of the players. He said that the TV deal was indeed lock-out insurance and disallowed any access to that money by the owners. Judge Doty also ruled that the players may receive damages for the owners not getting full market value in the TV rights deal. The players are currently seeking \$707 million in compensation.

News of disrespectful treatment towards players at a negotiation meeting surfaced and no real substantive gains came from any of the bargaining sessions. In the last hours before the owners would begin to institute their lockout, the NFL made an offer to the players, which was then rejected.

In a move that shocked many, Commissioner Goodell subsequently emailed the deal to every single NFL player so they could decide for themselves whether or not the union was acting in the players’ interests. Players, very quickly and publicly, sided with their now decertified union. Most notable were the comments from Minnesota Vikings punter Chris Kluwe who mocked Goodell’s form letter:

“Dear Employee #1364 –

I am sending you this impersonal form letter because I care about you as a player (snicker). As such, I urge you to accept our last offer, one that would cut

\$30 million from the veteran salary cap, reduce your percentage of revenue from 50 percent to 32 percent over eight years, reduce the number of practices (since we don’t make any money off those anyways) in the offseason, and provide you with health insurance which will void if you ever work another job. You’re getting a great deal here. Really. Trust me. (unrestrained laughter) Sincerely, Rog.”

Decertification

To fight the institution of a lockout, the players decertified their union and had players like Tom Brady, Peyton Manning, Drew Brees and others sue the NFL on anti-trust violations (that the league was the only place they could ply their craft and they were being kept from making a living).

As the aforementioned Drew Magary wrote:

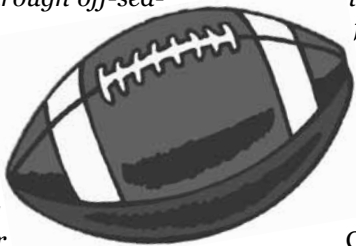
“...suing the league was essentially ALL the players could do, because for years now the owners have been hell-bent on losing games in the 2011 season specifically to squeeze more money out of the players, as much as humanly possible. Many owners didn’t bother to show up for the initial negotiating sessions in March. They want their lockout, and they’re going to exhaust every shitty, awful option they can to make it happen.”

The U.S. District court, led by Judge Susan Nelson, ordered mediation between the two sides which has had no substantive gains. On April 25, Judge Nelson ruled in favor of the players and ended the NFL’s lockout. Just days after, the NFL owners appealed in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals and got a temporary stay on Judge Nelson’s order. There was a hearing on June 3 to see if the lockout will remain permanent. A decision was expected from the Eighth Circuit a few weeks after the initial June 3 hearing. The players have received support from all the major sports unions and the Sports Fan Coalition to end the lockout.

The Results

The owners, as of this writing, still have their lockout in place. As the players and owners remain locked in litigation, the owners have further pushed their demand for profit by instituting furloughs and pay cuts on their office staff. Approximately one-third of NFL teams have instituted such policies.

It is imperative that we see this labor battle in the wider scope of the war against organized labor in this country. One side supports locking out the workers, demanding steep concessions without justifying need, putting workers into even more dangerous working conditions, and punishing other employees to further cement their billions in net worth. There is only one side to be on here and it is on the side of the NFL’s players.





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.

Tearing Down The North-South Divide

By Matt Antosh

About three years ago, I was taking a class at the Menno Simons Collegiate, a Mennonite college affiliated with the University of Winnipeg. The class I was enrolled in was named “Participatory Local Development.” It was a pretty amazing class, both in the knowledge from lectures and the sense of empowerment that the professor installed in us. The goal of the course was to help students learn about ways people throughout history have tried to address issues like hunger and poverty and then to try their hand at creating changes on a local level.

For one thing, the majority of assignments were based on creating images and handicrafts rather than simply writing papers. For their final exam, students put on a play about hunger called “Unequal Harvest.” The play was performed in front of a sold-out audience of 120 on Dec. 14, 2008, at the Prairie Theater Exchange.

One of the most memorable days was when two Haitian speakers came to talk about the history of local and rural development in Haiti, and the role that the West played. Through a translator, they spoke about how the international rice market has destroyed the ability of rural farmers to compete, the role of religion in imperialism (“we were told the devil was black like us”) and the slow and painful, yet rewarding steps out of the darkness. What I remember most, though, was the question I asked and the answer I received.

I raised my hand and asked, “From your perspective, how do we, from the Global North, do development work in the Global South?”

His answer:

“You don’t! For too long, ‘development’ has only meant ‘outside control.’ We don’t need any more of your development. What we need is solidarity. You are there to be with us, stand behind us and help us when we ask for it. Solidarity is treating each other as brothers and sisters, which we learn from each other as we work together.”

I remember leaving that class and immediately telling my wife that my entire academic career was dead. My entire conceptualization of “development” was destroyed, and I could no longer go on with the sham that was “international development.”

Looking back on it now, as a graduate of Menno Simons with a three-year Bachelor of Arts in International Development Studies, I can see that, while the edifice of “development” and North-South transfer was torn down, it was replaced with a monument to Global Solidarity. Through this person-to-person solidarity, we can build movements in support, from Haiti to Palestine to Madison and Cairo.

The International Solidarity Commission plays an important role for Wobblies in organizing this solidarity. It is the strength of this solidarity, the ability of Wobblies to get behind people in struggles, that empowers us and keeps us true to our creed of “an injury to one is an injury to all.” We love having more people active as ISC liaisons or just as members sitting in and participating in our conference calls and email list. We need you to build global solidarity! To get involved, contact the ISC at solidarity@iww.org.

Bullying At Catering Giant Makes Workers Sick

By Harald Stubbe and Monika Vykoukal

The IWW in Germany is fighting a real giant: Eurest, the largest canteen and catering company in Europe and a part of the internationally exploitative Compass Group. As Eurest squeeze their workers relentlessly, workers tell us again and again how they are put under pressure and bullied by their supervisors.

A colleague at the Ford canteen in Cologne eventually slashed her wrists. Workers in the canteen of Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt let us know that those who took sick leave were forced to clean the kitchen as punishment when they returned to work. Now our colleague Ida Lipeck, a fellow worker who worked at the canteen of the Stadtwerke (i.e., council services) Frankfurt, has resigned following her doctor’s advice. The manager’s harassment was making her ill. In her resignation she writes how the manager seems to think they are slaves and that she goes to work every single

day in fear of new humiliations and abuse.

Eurest in Germany employs 8,400 people at about 700 locations. The Compass Group PLC, listed on the London Stock Exchange amongst the Top 100, has an estimated 388,000 employees around the globe. The IWW has an Industrial Union (I.U.) 460 shop group at a Eurest-run Commerzbank canteen in Frankfurt.

Eurest depends on their customers’ belief that they are getting their food from a truly socially responsible company. This is not a single case, but part of Eurest’s daily menu! If you have a canteen near you which is run by Eurest, take a closer look. Talk to the workers. Make their mess public!

Tell catering giant Eurest that their bullying and abuse of workers makes you feel sick too! To support the struggle for decent working conditions at Eurest, please send messages of protest to Eurest-Germany at info.eurest@compass-group.de, or directly to the director at juergen.thamm@compass-group.de.



Graphic: wobblies.de

Support international solidarity!



Assessments for \$3 and \$6 are available from your delegate or IWW headquarters PO Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.



Response To The ISC’s Statement On Cuba

Dear Fellow Workers of the International Solidarity Commission,

We don’t believe that your solidarity statement, “Message to Cuban Comrades: You Are Not Alone,” which appeared on page 12 of the June 2011 *Industrial Worker* is the position the IWW should take, especially by FWs living in the United States. Some of us have visited Cuba firsthand, visited workplaces, labor organizing schools, attended cultural events and talked with a myriad of people that comprise Cuban society.

We have heard complaints and criticisms from these Cubans about the state of their lives and government policies, but are heartened by the fact that the great majority believe that the gains of the Revolution outnumber and offset the mistakes of the Revolution and that they understand intimately and are overwhelmingly committed to the principle of overcoming factional and individual tendencies that create division in their society. They are painfully aware of the eagerness of the United States to punish Cuba for the ideals and accomplishments of the Revolution.

Lifting the 49-year U.S. embargo of Cuba could do much more for these “Cuban comrades” than writing long rhetorical diatribes from, as you say, “us, male and female workers....who, in our own countries, resist the neo-liberal, authoritarian policies of the capitalists and their gendarmes in Seattle, Washington; Mexico City; Paris; Caracas, Venezuela; San Francisco, and Buenos Aires.” Resist the embargo!

Defend these Cuban comrades who, as you say, “represent the liveliest, most splendid bequest of the Cuban revolution, which refuses to perish despite the canker of bureaucracy.....decent folk who have risked their lives in service to others.” But don’t do it by sanctimoniously belittling the difficult decisions that the Cuban state has to make to maintain its independence from the vice of global capitalism. Do it in the spirit of people like Brian Wilson, who risked his life and lost his legs when he sat in front of train to block it from leaving Concord, Calif., with a railcar full of munitions headed to arm the Contras, who were used as a proxy army against the Sandinistas of Nicaragua. Do it in the spirit of Key Martin, who was in the thick of the “Battle in Seattle” and documented on film the face of the repressive state here—someone who gave up his life in the struggle when he died less than two years later from complications caused by inhaling the tear gas. These people risked their lives here to stop the U.S. government’s neo-liberal policies that wreak havoc on people around the world by starving them into submission and/or holding a gun to their heads.

You say, “We know our enemies are on alert.” But we say to you in the ISC, please get this straight: Cuba is not our enemy! It is a friend and ally to the working class the world over. And like it or not, the Communist Party of Cuba had a critical role in developing policies that established Cuba’s independence from global capitalism and thus the ability to aid and assist the working class.

The Communist Party of Cuba’s VI Congress is a very pivotal and controversial event. We encourage all FWs and the ISC to study the proceedings and comment on their endorsements and reforms. But remember that the Cubans have been engaged in making input and studying these reforms for the past year and it is the right of self-determination for the Cubans, by themselves, to make the decisions about how they proceed in Cuba. We welcome detailed analysis of certain provisions that are controversial. Let’s discuss them. What are the specific reductions in the presence of intellectuals and workers and the increase in technocrats? And if they are deemed necessary, how is it explained? Please share some of the works and activities of the “prestigious Cultural Theory Center,” poets and community activists.

Yes, we are aware that the Party has recommended reducing the size of the government, or as you prefer to call it, “the Nanny State.” They acknowledge that that government payroll has become a canker. Cuba is learning from its mistakes. At some point we hope the State does wither away. However, we note that while Cubans are weaned from unproductive or unnecessary government jobs, the government plans on ensuring that the social safety net is funded and new economic models for work are developed. And these new economic models for work are being developed with care not to bring back capitalism.

How should a workers’ state look and how do we get from here to there? Let’s ask those questions of ourselves, and acknowledge the difficulty of the task, as we show solidarity with workers in Cuba who are also engaged with those questions and the struggle to live in the acute economic, social, and environmental crisis of global capitalism.

We agree with your sentiments that revolutions tend to develop bureaucratic “cankers,” and so the revolution must continue from below until it is no longer necessary. However, this must be done without throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Despite any liberal positions the Obama administration may seemingly take towards Cuba, the island is still suffering from years of a crippling embargo. It is very hard for any country to continue to maintain public services and create jobs for its people when under such pressure. It is remarkable that Cuban socialism has survived as long as it has while constantly under attack from the North. Perhaps that alone says something about where the Cuban people’s political desires really are. Of course, we do not rule out the fact that there are many factors in play with regards to that. The thing is, we live in a world where the imperialist U.S. government is seemingly unchecked in the arena of global politics. If you think the United States cannot, or would not, make the time and pull together the resources to pound the Cuban workers into dust with bombs and bring the island under the dominance of U.S. capital once more, then think again. The U.S. government and its NATO partners can basically do whatever they wish, and the suffering endured by the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Libya is proof. The U.S. government is also trying to regain control of countries such as Egypt, which had revolutions earlier this year. The United States can, and will, try to hijack any movement in Cuba. If it is successful, not only will the people of Cuba suffer, but the toil of the Cuban people will, from then on, contribute to a global capitalist machine that sows misery for workers everywhere.

We, as people living in the heart of imperialism, must be careful when criticizing regimes targeted by “our” governments. Even if we criticize from the left, we risk playing into the war fever that the government constantly pushes. We risk sowing apathy among our ranks and among our anti-war and anti-imperialist friends in the United States. “What good is opposing a war when that country was bad to begin with?” our friends might say when it comes time to oppose yet another one of the bosses’ wars.

We continue to support the good work the ISC does, and we are not calling for apathy towards this group in Cuba. All we are saying is that we must be mindful of our privileged positions as people in the belly of the American beast, and we must be mindful of the global context. If you wish to help these FWs in Cuba, great, just keep the anti-Cuba rhetoric low-key.

Sincerely,

Nicholas DeFilippis, Richmond GMB Liaison to the ISC, X372040; David Boothe, Richmond GMB Treasurer, X363703; Brennan Chambre, Socialist Party CVA Treasurer, X371534; Peggy Sterling, Richmond GMB Communications Officer, X374244; Forrest Cook, former Socialist Party CVA Chairman