Zimbabwe arrests unionists, opposition

Zimbabwe’s ruling party and paramilitaries are conducting a terror campaign of arrests and captive meetings of opposition supporters before the presidential run-off election on June 27.

Police arrested the union president Lovemore Motombo and general secretary Wellington Chibebe of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) on May 8. Police charged them with “inciting people to rise against the government and reporting falsehoods about people being killed” during a May Day rally.

The General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe has said that 40,000 farm workers are “affected by the current terror campaign” that has led to violence and eviction from their workplaces.

Teachers in rural classrooms are among those being targeted as MDC supporters. Two have been killed to date, with a third abducted by Zanu-PF paramilitaries. The teachers’ union has rejected reports that the Zanu-PF are chasing teachers out of schools, beating them, and demanding “reparations” fines in the form of cash, goats and raffle, according to IRIN, a United Nations news service report. “The situation in the schools resembles war zones, and there is no way teachers can report for work to face those death squads,” Raymond Majongwe, president of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, told IRIN.

“Our fear is that more could be under torture, or have been killed,” said Majongwe.

The MDC has placed the death toll since the March 29 election at 43 people, with hundreds beaten and more than 5,000 people fleeing to the mountains.

Continued on 3

African unions fight food crisis in streets

Unions are responding to rising food prices and food shortages. Workers in more than 10 African countries have taken action against high prices.

In Morocco, four public service unions struck for one day on May 13. The unions are planning a general strike on May 21 to demand lower food prices.

In South Africa, thousands of Congress of South African Trade Unions members marched through the capital city to demand lower food and electricity prices said to be rising by 53 per cent.

Workers from the public and private sectors in Burkina Faso protested in the streets of the capital, Ouagadougou, for two days starting April 8. They demanded a 25 per cent pay increase in the public sector and a reduction in taxes on food and fuel.

“We need an equalisation between the cost of living and purchasing power,” said Laurent Ouédraogo, the secretary general of the Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Burkina (CNTB).

While the Burkino Faso government has frozen import taxes on certain foods, it has refused to budge on pay raises.

The World Bank has reported that wheat prices have risen by 181 per cent over the last 1.5 years, while overall food prices are 83 per cent more expensive.

Africa is particularly vulnerable to food price increases because millions of people rely on food aid. The price increases have effectively cut food aid budgets, meaning fewer people get fed. The United Nations’ World Food Program said it needed $500 million to meet the shortfall.

Kenya, Namibia and other African countries are focusing efforts on increasing their domestic crop yields. However, fears of drought this summer across Africa are amplifying the crisis.

Continued on 3

UK teachers strike, first time in 21 years

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) held a one-day national strike in 90 cities across the United Kingdom on April 24 to fight low pay for teachers.

The strike affected 8,000 schools and one million students with a third of schools turning students away, according to a Guardian newspaper survey.

The employer’s failure to comply with wage and hour laws is one common issue at every shop.

Many companies have been retaliated by firing workers for their union activity. Workers have fought back through strikes, pickets, demonstrations, and selective legal action, among other tactics.

We find legal action to be most effective when combined with these other methods, and when viewed as a means, not an end.

This is a report on the legal status of our campaign, but readers should understand that legal action is only one of many tools workers are using to win their demands.

About a year and a half after we began using legal action, several favorable rulings have recently come down and several settlements have been reached. Since the rulings are new, companies have not yet begun making payments.

E-Z Supply ordered to pay IWWs $1 million

New York City IU 460 legal update

By Stephanie Basile

Since the New York City IWW began organizing in foodstuffs warehouses three years ago, we’ve organized in ten workplaces with varying degrees of success.

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E-Z Supply (now Sunrise Plus)

Thirteen workers were awarded a total of $1,068 million in back wages and compensation. The union has made a motion to define Sunrise Plus as an alter ego for E-Z Supply, which would hold Sunrise Plus liable for the judgment against E-Z Supply.

Handyfat Trading (now called HDF Trading)

Six workers were awarded a total of $360,000 in back wages and compensation. The union recently made a motion to require Handyfat to pay interest and legal fees which could raise the total amount.

Giant Big Apple

Fifteen of seventeen workers have settled their claim for back wages and compensation. The fifteenth will receive a total of $325,000. The remaining two have yet to settle.

Continued on 4
To the Comrades of IWW,
We would like to introduce ourselves to you: we are the Freedom’s Freeters’ Union. We are a Tokyo-based general union, established recently in the face of the out-of-control global situation in which neo-liberal capitalism is running rampant. As precarious workers suffering from working conditions that are becoming more and more fluid and amorphous, we are intensifying our struggles for freedom and survival.

This month, one of our new campaigns is to organize the Gas Station Union to confront Kanto Toy Co., Ltd.—a Japanese petroleum company which owns the Oil Wholesale Group—with the pretext of the rise of oil prices and increasing number of part-time workers on the pretext of the reduction of all risks and financial instability. It is a necessity to fight this gas station chain and the oil-driven conglomerate which forcibly lays off its employees in order to make even bigger profits. We will continue to inform you about this campaign, so please keep an eye on our efforts.

In the past few years, we have been organizing the May Day of Freedom and Survival, a May Day by and for the "informal" workers, who are increasing not only in Japan but also in the world over. This year’s theme is ‘The Precariat Expand and Connect,’ expressing the idea of making a network of various groups and the people working with various types of informal workers, outside our union. That is to say, many of the movements of the precariat are appearing across the country outside Tokyo. We will report on these lively movements as well.

We know the glorious history of IWW North America, and today we call on past and present struggles of yours are very close to ours. We are seeking to share both your efforts and hardships, going beyond our union. That is to say, many of the movements of the precariat are appearing across the country outside Tokyo. We will report on these lively movements as well.

Together let us fight against the aggression of neo-liberal capitalism by taking up solidarity and present struggles of yours are very close to ours. We are seeking to share both your efforts and hardships, going beyond our union. That is to say, many of the movements of the precariat are appearing across the country outside Tokyo. We will report on these lively movements as well.

The General Freeters’ Union
Japan
UK blood service protesters demand secret report be released to public

By Nick James, Indymedia UK

Health workers and supporters picketed the headquarters of the United Kingdom’s National Blood Service (NBS) in Watford, England, on April 11, calling for an end to what they described as a plan that would cut 600 jobs and put timely blood deliveries at risk.

The demonstration, with people drumming and shouting, “Release the McKinsey report”, was backed by community groups Hackney Solidarity Network, Stop Haringey Health Cuts Coalition, the West Midlands Coalition of Health Campaigns, and others. The noisy demonstration was an unusual sight in the otherwise quiet business district in Watford, about 19 miles (30 kilometers) north of London, with a Hilton Hotel complex and the central offices of pub giant Wetherspoons, as neighbors to the NBS headquarters.

The demonstration called for the NBS directors to release documents related to the cuts in common with their employers. There was a sense again, which relate to a review forced by the strong public reaction against the initial plan to cut the blood service. Top management consultants firm, McKinsey, hired to do the independent review, is said to have recommended the cuts in the plan. The review and a reduction in cuts to the NBS in a revised plan, amounted to a $5.2 million victory for the campaign. However, cuts in the South West of England were left out of the review and are due to go ahead as planned.

Campaigners want to see the review documents made public, warning that a critical review of the NBS cuts in the south and west of England is also needed.

After half an hour, Mr. Evans, head of Human Resources, emerged and met with the crowd. Evans told the assembled campaigners that there was no analysis or report produced by the management firm McKinsey. His claim resulted in a hot debate in which the question of whether the report documentation did exist and would be released after all.

“The [NBS heads] are getting away with cutting a vital part of the NHS and break it up into bits that they can privatise. Already some patients have lost their lives as a result of all this shakeup and meddling. We need to put a stop to this,” said Nick Durie, a member of the IWW’s General Executive Board.

“These bosses think they are invincible, sat in ivory towers like this office block in Watford, but what they are doing is absolutely outrageous.”

The demonstration showed again that the people are very clear on what they want. They want change. The dictators of the bosses are getting away with cutting a vital part of the NHS and break it up into bits that they can privatise. Already some patients have lost their lives as a result of all this shakeup and meddling. We need to put a stop to this,” said Nick Durie, a member of the IWW’s General Executive Board.

To track the campaign, visit nhs-sos.blogspot.com or contact the campaign at nhs-sos@gmail.com. With Fees from the FW.

UK teachers strike continued from 1

One-third of schools in the country were shut down due to the strike. Teachers toting signs saying that they can’t afford to pay the bills, shut down the schools they are considering getting second jobs to help pay the bills.

The union has traditionally relied on lobbying to achieve its agenda. However, the government for proposal a salary increase is below inflation and teachers are fuming. The government has put a 2.45 per cent increase on the table, but teachers are demanding a 4.1 per cent increase instead.

“‘If inflation is four per cent and you pay a offer a award of two per cent, that’s a pain in anybody’s body,” said Trade Union Congress general secretary Brendan Barber.

Preamble of the IWW

The working class and the employing class are organized as a class, take possession of the means of production in their respective industries, thereby solving the problem of the organization of industries into fewer and fewer classes, 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 situation. By organizing industrially we are organizing the employing class to mislead the workers into the system. “The working class and 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 unite, and organize as a class, take possession of the means of production in their respective industries, thereby solving the problem of the organization of industries into fewer and fewer classes, and live in harmony with the earth.

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The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the work floor. It seeks to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved. 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.

Join the IWW Today

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TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check in the order for $6 and your first month’s dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month’s dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under $1,000, dues are $6 a month. If your monthly income is between $1,000 - $2,000, dues are $12 a month. If your monthly income is over $2,000, dues are $18 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

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

I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.

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

Name:

Address: City, State, Post Code, Country:

Occupation:

Phone: Email:

Amount Enclosed:

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.}

Industrial Worker

Photo: imedia.org.uk

IWW General Executive Board member Nick Durie confronts the head of National Blood Service human resources about a plan to cut 600 jobs.

Zimbabwe arrests unionists

On April 25, armed police raided the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) headquarters in Harare. The raiding team is said to have arrested and tortured at least 45 people, most of whom are from opposition party members. The police also arrested leader Morgan Tsvangirai and his wife, Rachel, who are members of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party. The police also arrested at least 36 other opposition leaders.

Tsvangirai had been operating in neighboring countries and the United Nations to pressure Mugabe to release him and other opposition leaders.

MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai delayed his return to Zimbabwe, saying that his party alleged that the government had tortured and beaten them. Tsvangirai, who had been operating in neighboring countries and the United Nations to pressure Mugabe to release him and other opposition leaders, had been operating in neighboring countries and the United Nations to pressure Mugabe to release him and other opposition leaders.

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Ultra-portable revolution

With gas prices soaring and food prices at a new high, this seems an odd time to raise the subject of things getting cheaper. But in one small corner of our consumer universe, one commodity that used to be owned only by the very rich has suddenly, almost overnight, become very cheap indeed.

I'm speaking about ultra-portable, ultra-light laptop computers. As you know, if you wanted to buy a truly portable computer you'd be looking at a Sony Vaio, for example, weighing in at a couple of pounds, but costing something like $3,000. Even Apple’s latest laptop, the MacBook Air, costs $1,800 in its cheapest configuration. But in the last six months a new breed of tiny, powerful laptops has become available for $400.

A $90 per cent drop in the price of a tool that can be so useful to unions is something that should make us sit up and take notice. Why has the price of laptops gone into freefall? What are the implications for our unions?

I would say there are three reasons for the sudden fall in the price of light, small laptops.

The first is the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative. This brainchild of tech guru Nicholas Negroponte and endorsed by the United Nations, aimed to produce a new connected laptop for $100. Mass production began in November 2007. The first laptops are already in the hands of small children learning in developing countries.

If you can create a fully functioning laptop computer for $100, it’s kind of hard to make the case that the lowest priced laptops should cost 20 times that amount.

The OLPC has changed the way the industry and consumers think about laptop pricing.

The second reason for the fall in prices is do with changed perceptions of what people want and need in a laptop. For many people, such a computer will be their second machine—keeping a desktop or heavy “desktop replacement” laptop for most of their work.

With the being the case, the new ultra-light laptops don’t need massive hard drives. You won’t be storing your entire music collection and your digital videos on one of these.

In some cases, you can get rid of the traditional computer hard drive entirely, as Asus has done with its hugely popular “ee” range of $400 mini-laptops.

No more. Imagine a union where workers are part of the suit was.

They rely on buses and trains for their daily commute. For them, a lightweight laptop will be a tremendous change. It will allow them to access the Internet and email at any time. It will allow them to access word processing and spreadsheets on the go.

The third and final reason for the emergence of the sub-$400 PC is the growth of Linux. The Asus “eee” and other models run on variations of this free, open-source operating system. Most people who buy computers don’t realize that they’re paying for Windows when it comes pre-installed on their computers, costing hundreds or even thousands of dollars extra. Simply replacing Windows with Linux can cut the cost of a laptop dramatically, as well as increasing its speed, power and security.

You don’t have to buy an anti-virus software package either.

So what does this mean for our unions? If we accept the idea that computers can be useful tools (and I think most of us now buy into this), we have an opportunity to arm our organizers, activists, officials, and staff with tiny, light, powerful laptops that will give them Internet access, email, the web, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and just about everything they need, for a fraction of what these things used to cost. For example, the “eee” comes with Skype as well, and a built-in web-camera you can do free videoconferencing right on the machine.

Many union staffers, officials and activists do not have computers at home; they rely on desktops in their offices. Many union staff and activists are not allowed to do union business on the company’s machines. Some have access only to older desktops which are limited in what they can do. Some have laptops that are portable only in name: huge, clunky machines that are unpleasant to carry around.

While Asus has produced the first successful sub-$400 laptop, HP has followed with its Mini-Note (slightly more expensive, at $500, with a larger screen and keyboard). Dell has just announced that it, too, will be manufacturing its own cheap ultra-portable. The price is going to fall, and the models will become more powerful. The best and cheapest of them will run variants of Linux.

This is not good news for Microsoft. But it is potentially great news for us.

Giant corporations don’t really need very cheap laptops. For years, businesses have been able to afford laptops for their managers and others. But for unions and other organizations, the price has been a deterrent.

No more. Imagine a union where everyone had the very latest software, in a light, portable powerful laptop. Where everywhere everyone had to deal with email and access the web and wasn’t chained to their desks.

It’s a change as dramatic as the invention of the portable, battery-powered radio a few decades ago or more recently, the mobile phone.

E-Z Supply ordered to pay workers $1 million

Continued from 1

Amersino

In September 2007, sixteen workers at E-Z Supply, a lawsuit over illegally withheld overtime pay and retaliation. An additional eight workers have since joined the case. The plaintiffs are set to request class certification, which would extend coverage in the case to all current and former workers going back six years.

A few months after the suit was filed, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction ordering the company not to retaliate against any worker who is part of the suit.

The company has since allegedly violated this injunction several times, and the workers’ lawyers recently filed a motion to hold the company in contempt of court. To date, 11 of the 24 workers involved in the case have been fired or constructively discharged.

Flaum Appetizing

A back wage case is proceeding against the company.

Penang Restaurant

Penang, a Malaysian restaurant in the Upper East Side, closed down in summer 2007. Workers at the restaurant were not paid for under minimum wage when they chose to join the IWW in early 2006. The IWW carried out a heavy flyerv campaign outside the restaurant after the boss refused to honor an agreement with the union.

HWH

HWH changed its name twice before closing down in Fall 2007. It was one of the most slave-like warehouses in the industry, requiring workers to put in as many as 16 hours per week, with drivers often working multiple days in a row with no time off. The union reached an agreement with the company in July 2007. Shortly after, HWH locked out the workers and changed its name to Dragonland, then to US Garden, before closing for good.

Jim Crutcherfield, Daniel Gross, and Billy Randel contributed to this article.
Australian taxi drivers sit down for safety

By Viola Wikins

More than 500 taxi drivers stopped their taxis and occupied a city intersection in Melbourne, Australia for 22 hours on April 30 to protest a new fuel surcharge that threatens to put their行业发展.

The day-long sit-down worked. Half of their demands were met: safety screens are installed for drivers who work night shifts, pre-payment of fares will become mandatory at night, police promised to take seriously reports of harassment and robberies, and the government agreed to waive parking fines incurred by the protesters.

The State Government will pay 50 per cent of the cost of introducing safety screens, with the balance to be paid by taxi operators. The capitalist racket means the privatization of profits so public taxpayers incur any losses.

For years the industry has been divided and ruled by investors in the $500,000 licenses to run the 3,800 taxis.

Cab company owners and politicians do not pick up drunk racists at 2 am.

By www.iww.org

Intermodal truckers in Stockton, California, led by the majority Sikh drivers, launched a strike over the issue of fuel prices on May 5, 2008.

In contrast to the April 1 and May 1 shutdown protests, the 300-400 Stockton truckers working out of the United Auto Workers and the Independent Port Newark truckers were the first to protest low hourly wages and poor working conditions. A cooperative of drivers could organize work into eight hour shifts or less and enjoy better conditions. Funding could come from the superannuation money of transport workers. An industrial union combining chauffeurs and taxi drivers, bicycle and motor bike couriers, truckers, bus, train & tram drivers, airport & shipping would be able to bring on the employers and bring industrial democracy to workers in this sector.

California truckers in Stockton strike

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Port Newark Drivers Federation stops work

By Maria Rodriguez Gil

Independent Port Newark truck drivers from the fledgling Port Newark Driver Federation 18 (PDF 18) stopped work on April 30 to protest inflated fuel prices and poor working conditions. They held a press conference at the Vincenzo Lombardi Service Area off Route 35 in Newark, New Jersey, to protest conditions that threaten to put their members, along with thousands of other independent truckers across the country, out of business.

PDF 18 members explained that freight rates have not increased in years even though the price of fuel has quadrupled.

In addition, the companies they contract with are charging drivers higher fuel surcharges on their freight, but refusing to pass that increase to the drivers, which continue to get minimal amounts to defray fuel surcharges.

The PDF 18 members and sympathizers, included representatives from the United Auto Workers and the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Local 1388, and IWW members. They gathered at the truck stop to protest the low hourly rates, lack of affordable medical insurance, lack of paid sick leave and vacations, and diesel costs that have risen 45 per cent in the past year.

Edison Villacic, one of the founders of PDF 18, says the lack of organization on the part of Port Newark’s independent truckers has weakened their demands for better working conditions. He says the federation was founded to give its members a voice that will be heard and can create lasting, significant change. According to its website pdf18.org, the drivers federation’s purpose is to organize independent truck drivers at Port Newark in order to work together “inside and outside their ports” to ensure they can continue to make a living in the industry. Among their immediate goals are obtaining affordable medical benefits for the membership, increasing their hourly wages, and finding ways of coping with the devastating effect of diesel prices.

The drivers have not received a raise in four years and must work 12 hours or more a day to make ends meet, making them prone to accidents due to exhaustion and lack of sleep. Although a few can afford to pay a monthly deductible offered by the companies that hire them for medical coverage, that coverage is limited to on-the-job health conditions and does not cover medical problems outside of work. Family members are not covered.

PDF 18 member Luis Gaora, who has been in the business for five years and owns his truck, points out that many drivers are still making payments for their trucks. Some have already lost their trucks due to the high cost of fuel, lack of adequate reimbursement for fuel surcharges, and low wages, he said.

Several PDF 18 members say the waiting times at Port Newark for loading their merchandise for delivery are
Supermarket story: “Get out as fast as you can”  

By Adam Welch

Working at a grocery store is a world to its own. Although the customers stream through the aisles the way they see it, the workers at a store can be like a family, brothers and sisters, older parents figure, cousins. Just like a family, there can be generation gaps. At my store, we had mainly two kinds of folks, the 20-something-workers, many who were slow working their way through community college, and the older workers we called the “lifers.” It wasn’t just how the young folks saw them, but how they saw themselves—stuck.

Gary the day trader

In the break room was where I would choose to hang out because the managers would do their paperwork in the early mornings, Gary, a lifer with words of wisdom, would pass across the break room table from me.

“You gotta get out of that credit card debt, start saving money right away. Are you going to school?” he would lecture.

With a stern look and a pointing finger covered by a rubber glove, he would talk with a nighttime feel. He would tell the story about back in his day, working at Safeway was like being a trainer, nurse, or a firefighter. It was a respected job that you could buy a house and send your kids to college with.

Not anymore.

Over and over, Gary and the other workers would tell me how it wasn’t like how it used to be anymore. They would sigh, “Get out as fast as you can.”

They wished they could, but they had worked there so long that they couldn’t even think of doing something else. Most of the younger workers brushed it off, as they would be moving on.

But a few would wind up staying, like the ones who were getting married and needed the benefits, or those who just couldn’t get themselves through school.

To the lifers, buying a house seemed out of reach. They couldn’t afford to send their kids to college and they would always try to catch the occasional overtime or holiday shift where they could make double-time. Each of them had different strategies to get their own piece of the pie—their way of trying to get ahead when they were being pushed behind.

I’d kick back in my own department was where Gary worked. If you planned on sticking with the supermarket job, then this is where you wanted to wind up. The produce section was its own little castle. Unlike the check stands where management was always hanging over you, all the workers at the produce section had to do was meet their quotas, keep the stands looking clean and the manager didn’t ever mess with them.

Another world is possible

The miners stayed out despite wage cuts and promised wage increases because Pope and the union said it was “structural change” and a “new industrial order.” The strikers organized themselves through a group which superseded the official UMW apparatus.

Pope concludes: “Throughout the struggle, John L. Lewis had been a step behind the local union activists. His celebrated organizing campaign was not launched until after rank-and-file miners were already rejuvenated the union. Once deployed, his organizers worked persistently to undermine the strike movement.” Thus, the sensational recovery of the UMW union—later touted by Lewis as a product of centralized discipline and federal government law-making—was in fact brought about by a democratic movement of local activists enforcing their own vision of the right to organize.”

While most of the departments were on lower wage scales that topped $15 per hour, all the produce people were on the highest wage scale that went up to $20.

Now you couldn’t just walk off the street into produce. You had to work in the store for a couple of years and be approved by the older guys who worked there.

A middle-aged white guy, Gary, started working at my store as a bagger right out of high school in the Sixties. Now, he has a mortgage and two kids in college.

His thing was day trading. Every morning, the phone in the backroom near produce would ring and someone else would go out of the “office.”

“You could tell when the market was hot because you could hear him arguing about which ones to buy or sell through the whole backroom.

That’s how he was trying to make up for his lack of savings.

Two-job Jack

Then there was Jack. We would always talk to older workers in the check stands on slow mornings. He always looked completely exhausted with his coffee cup in hand. He would drink five cups every shift and sometimes eat nothing for lunch, except more coffee. His hands were calloused and sometimes blackened because every morning at 3 am, he would wake up to deliver newspapers to vending machines around the city in his VW bus. He was married, though I got the impression he was never really able to spend any time with her.

Debra the climber

The person that everyone loved to talk smack about and hate on was Debra. She was a single mother who dropped out of college while studying chemistry some years back. Something told me she probably had her share of fun then.

Her strategy was pretty clear: she was trying to impress the managers so she could move up the Safeway ladder and become a store manager or work for the corporate office in Pleasanton.

Everyone knew she was working off the clock and on her days off. After she was promoted to supervisor, she would write everyone up for the slightest thing, even for being a minute late coming back from break.

Lotto liberation

Anytime the jackpot would get really high, say $800-$100 million, Brenda would organize the lotto pool.

She was a short Filipina who worked in the cash room that none of us were allowed into. Her husband worked at another Safeway too. When she would come to give more change, count our answers or refill our change machines, she would talk to all the checkers, especially if it was a slow day.

When it was a lotto week she would come around asking everyone to pitch in $5. Part of this ritual was everyonedreaming up stories of what they would do if we all won the money. Some would say we could all retire together in Hawaii, never having to work again.

While I was sure that he would get fired one day for another argument with a middle aged housewife, he always thought his way out was his hip-hop T-shirt business that he swore would take off.

Untouchable Mr. McGoo

One of my favorite co-workers was this older, light-skinned, Argentinian checker, Alex. Having been the longest running checker at the store, he had a following of customers that would only go through his line. He checked some slow other workers would call him Mr. McGoo. But he didn’t care. He only had a few years until he retired with his pension, and no matter how many “Productivity Training Sessions” management made him attend, he knew they couldn’t touch him.

Checking began to make my back and wrist hurt all the time. Sometimes, I would even hear that “beep” sound in my sleep. But I loved talking with the customers every day.

I worked there for a year, and never ended up as a lifer. Yet, any of the younger workers could have become a lifer. We worked together and shared the same problems. We all dreamed of an easy way out. What we needed most, though, was a way to work together and make the industry meet our needs for once. Plainly, we needed a union able to give us hope and a practical strategy to making the supermarket something we didn’t need to escape.

By 2008, the Organizing Fund of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was raising money to support the supermarket strikers. They were demanding a living wage, democracy in the workplace, and the end of the “old order.”

Donate your Bush stimulus rebate to the Organizing Fund of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Send cheques to: IWW, PO Box 23085, Cincinnati, OH 45223-3085, USA.

FORGET THE INVISIBLE HAND OF THE MARKET.

RAISE THE HANDS OF THE WORKERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC ECONOMY.
Indian guest workers launch hunger strike

Five Indian guest workers who worked and lived in poor conditions at Signal International in Mississippi, United States, launched a hunger strike in Washington, DC, on May 14.

They have set up camp at Lafayette Park, within view of the White House where President George W. Bush resides. “We aren’t doing this for ourselves,” said hunger striker, Paul Konar, 54. “We did the system to change it. If this weren’t about changing the system, there would be no reason to do all of this.”

The workers are demanding that they be able to remain in the US without fear of deportation so they can participate in a trafficking investigation into their former employer. A labor subcontractor of Signal International and other American and Indian labor groups, matrix workers from Signal International denies any wrongdoing.

The workers also want the US Congress to hold hearings about abuses of the guest workers visa program in the Gulf Coast area, and that the Indian government take the same action to protect future Indian guest workers.

On May 21, they held a rally against human trafficking. They have picketed the embassy, handed out flyers through the city, and put on their strike vests. As of the press date, one hunger striker was hospitalized and six new hunger strikers have joined the campaign.

American hackers of the guest workers include Jobs with Justice, and representatives from the AFL-CIO, the SAC, and South Asian metal trades workers, South Asian Americans Organizing for Change.

The strike goes on.

Swedish syndicalists disrupt Bonniers to press stalled talks

By SAC, translated by Rickard Svensson

Members in the union at one of Sweden’s biggest media corporations, Bonniers, joined Solna LS, a local of the Swedish syndicalist union, the SAC. Wage negotiations with the company had come to a halt in Solna, so the Solna local contacted the Gothenburg local for help and back-up, and they decided to cause a ruckus at the Swedish book and library fair in Gothenburg.

The theme of the 2007 fair was “no freedom of speech at Bonniers.”

The attacks come less than a week after SAC organized an activity against international labor rights abuses.

One CNT member was seriously injured with a broken nose and rib, staying one night in hospital.

The attacks come less than a week after a major demonstration on May 22 by public officials who were stopped from attempting to arrest undocumented workers marching with them.

In Paris, 25 members of the zionist Ligue de Défense Juive attacked CNT activists with truncheons in the street.

By x353556

Day laborers in and around Olympia, Washington are fighting it easier to get to work these days, thanks to the IWW. The Olympia IWW has launched a new organizing drive among day laborers, using a beat up old, red van to get to day labor offices and jobs. The van itself belongs to a long-time Olympia wobbly, the insurance is being paid by the local Unitarian Universalist church, and the daily expenses are paid for by donations from the workers getting transportation and the Olympia IWW.

Transportation is a major issue among day laborers, along with minimum pay, no workplace health and safety, and companies that squeeze them to the bone. The IWW can demonstrate that worker solidarity can be used to meet the needs of each worker.

By ILA member Robert Gantry said...
Haitian unions host IWW solidarity delegates: A travel diary of the IWW delegation

By Cody Anderson, Nathaniel Miller, Justin Viteles, Joseph Lapp

The Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) invited an IWW delegation to Haiti to learn about their fight against “le plan multilatéral” and recruit help in the form of material aid and solidarity. The delegation arrived in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince on April 24 to May 3.

Haiti in a nutshell

Port-au-Prince embraces the Hispaniola island with the Dominican Republic, to the east of Cuba in the Caribbean. It has close to ten million people, with another four million living abroad, mainly in the United States and Canada.

Unemployment is a serious problem. For seven million people in the active workforce, there are only 200,000 formal jobs, split between 30,000 in the public sector and 170,000 in the private sector. The government has privatized much of its infrastructure and now is in the process of cutting public sector jobs.

Nearly $1 billion sent from Haitians living abroad make up about 20 per cent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product, propping up the country’s economy. Yet, six per cent of Haiti’s population controls 85 per cent of the wealth. The richest billionaire in Latin America is Haitian, while Haiti has the most billionaires in the Caribbean.

Haitian political instability has marred the country time and again. Hopes rose in 1991 with Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was born into a peasant family. Paul “Loulou” Chery, the General Secretary of the Union of Haitian Workers (CTH), the General Secretary of the Union of Haitian Workers (CTH), is currently Haiti’s president, having been elected president in 1995.

The road that led us there resembled a mountain riverbed as opposed to a road, loaded with mangoes and bananas, and people in the spaces left.

Arriving in Hinche, the capital of the Plateau-Central, we met with regional coordinators of the CTH, none of whom are paid for their work. They are represented: commerce, cooperatives, journalism, construction, youth work, transportation, the disabled, small cultural workers, professional artisans, and others.

Their overwhelming obstacle is an utter lack of infrastructure such as transportation, irrigation, modern tools, meeting space, schools, drinkable water, electricity, hospitals, social security or meeting space, schools, drinkable water.

The confusion over the layoffs is the main battle for better health care, living and working conditions. Equally important for her as a feminist is the training, education, and equal opportunities for women in all social and economic sectors. Women are the majority in Haiti, she said, but most are victimized by patriarchy, machismo, lack of education and work, and objectification in the media. She joined the CTH because it had the most progressive approach to women in Haiti. Through the union, she feels women organizers must reach other women to raise their consciousness, empower them, and to develop female cadres. She works predominantly with younger women so her two main areas are women organized against violence and women fighting for justice.

April 25-26: Plateau Central

We left Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s sprawling capital, to visit the Plateau-Central, the poorest region of the country and three national commissions. The conference was held in a building used for job training, decent housing, dignified work, improving agriculture and people’s quality of life: food, health care, education and job training, decent housing, dignified work, and leisure time. Basic irrigation could solve many of these problems.

Today we visited Port-au-Prince’s docks, where the CTH has a presence with the trade union of the National Harbor Authority employees (SEAPN). We met with the union’s president and seven committee members. The docks have 1,800 employees, with 1,275 as union members. The port has just been privatized and 1,300 workers are about to be laid off.

There is no opposition to the layoffs in the Haitian government. The port director, Jean Evans Charles, the hatchet man, during a long debate in French with Cody said, “We are capitalists, we have to make money in a competitive system, and the best way to do this is to privatize.” No one from the SEAPN listened to the director’s spiel; instead, they talked on their cell phones, engaged in non-verbal communication with us, and one even fell asleep. As we left the port some Haitians shouted at us “CIA, CIA fuck off,” alluding to US cooperation with the port’s privatization.

We proceeded to the Parquet, a local courthouse, where 30-40 hospital workers stood in solidarity with their union’s president, who was arrested after an altercation between some workers and the hospital’s director. The workers had not been paid for seven months. The union president, Levy Milest, was not even present at the incident.

In a crowd surveyed by plainclothesmen who carried M-16 machine guns and shotguns, we learned that a 35 per cent increase in hospital worker pay had been approved on March 15, but it has yet to be implemented.

The judge did not show up for the hearing and Milest was whisked away amid the outcry of those present.

April 29: Teleco workers demand compensation

This morning we went to a conference held by the Association des Employés Victimes de la Teleco at the CTH office. Since its 2004 privatization, Teleco has laid off over 5,000 workers. The workers received a 12-month severance package. They are now demanding an extension to 36 months.

Later we met with union representatives from Electricité d’Haiti (EDH), the state electrical company. There are 2,500 EDH employees, each of which support roughly 10 dependents. In October 2007, before the food crisis, the union concluded that the salary needed to bring a family of four up to the poverty line is $450 a month. This means two meals a day, and does not include the cost of schooling and health care, both of which are now private. The average EDH worker’s salary is $80 a month. Currently, the EDH is striking in order to get the $35 per cent raise in salaries promised in March to deal with the increased cost of living.

The EDH is the next target for privatizations following “le plan neoliberal.” The problem is practical, they said. How can you furnish the necessary service when 75 per cent of Haitians lack electricity, even in the capital city, while there are three hours or less of power per day? The EDH is calling for the state to invest in sustainable energy (solar, wind, hydro), but the state is not interested.

To date, the government’s argument for privatization has been that the public sector operates at a loss, but the evidence suggests that this is due to under-funding and theft. The EDH receives payment for only 50 per cent of all the electricity consumed in Haiti because people who have access to the electricity are paid for their union work. They specialize in conflict resolution, the formation of workers’ cadres, and international relationships, particularly with Canada, the United States and Venezuela. Unionists gaining the people’s trust and expressing their will is the basis of this work, he said. His vision for Haiti is justice and dignity for his extraordinarily creative and energetic people so his nation could be “one of the first orders.”

Ginette introduced herself as a unionist, a nurse, and a member of the CTH Commission. She explained her main battles are for better health care, living and working conditions. Equally important for her as a feminist is the training, education, and equal opportunities for women in all social and economic sectors. Women are the majority in Haiti, she said, but most are victimized by patriarchy, machismo, lack of education and work, and objectification in the media. She joined the CTH because it had the most progressive approach to women in Haiti. Through the union, she feels women organizers must reach other women to raise their consciousness, empower them, and to develop female cadres. She works predominantly with younger women so her two main areas are women organized against violence and women fighting for justice.

Continued on Page 8
Workers fight privatization, unemployment

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electrical infrastructure illegally tap into the electrical lines. Of course, people in the countryside and the shantytowns have no infrastructure, so there is no so-called theft in the countryside. The EDNI believes that the government funding of the EDNI is a deliberate strategy to justify handing over potentially profitable public sector industries to corporations.

In contrast with the government’s privatization plan, Venezuela and Hydro Quebec have proposed a cooperative agreement that would build several power plants around the country. Venezuela has offered to provide their own technicians to start the project and would train Haitians to replace them. In addition, Venezuela agreed to invest around 14,000 barrels of oil a day at a reduced rate. Sixty per cent of the cost is paid now, while the remaining 40 per cent must be invested in state infrastructure and re-paid in 25 years time. Venezuelan President Chavez does not promise aid, he gives it, said the electrical workers.

While taking a break, we heard singing in the adjacent room. We saw that it was the usual procurement, Harry Saint-Felix and Pierre Nadal, singing solidarity songs describing how the union fights not just for the betterment of its members but also for the betterment of the whole country. They said that songs demonstrateandy the fight against social injustice.

We continued our tour around the workers’ demonstration by telling the government turned around and sold the asphalt to the Dominican Republic for their own profit. He also said that Venezuela’s gas is sold for profit, too.

Paul invited us to a conference on organizing in La Pintura, a town where he had been held in Minas Gerais, Brazil on July 7-8 convened by the Latin American and Caribbean Workers’ Encounter (ELAC, www.elac.org.br).

May Day

May Day is a national holiday in Haiti so people were out in the streets enjoying themselves. We arrived at CTH headquarters where the fired Telecom workers were gathering for a rally and march to demand their 36-month severance package. Their slogan, written in French, English, and Creole, was “do you want to hurt our people and country? Don’t trust the government and the hungry.” They concluded the first part of their demonstration by telling the government “our destiny is to struggle with you or against you.”

May 2-3: Roche-a-Bateau

In the afternoon, we left for our trip to Haiti’s South East to a town called Roche-a-Bateau. The road there was paved but littered with potholes. The highway is also a main artery for pedestrian traffic, which often comes dangerously close to oncoming vehicles. Drivers, most of whom are wealthy, seem to have an utter disregard for pedestrians.

Roche-a-Bateau is a radiant village beneath the mountains, next to the sea. It is in a horseshoe inlet surrounded by coconut palms, hibiscus, mango, and poppy trees. It could be a great place for small-scale, community-controlled tourism, but it has no infrastructure to develop. We met with town “notables” in the local school, which lacked bathrooms and running water. There were only four women in a crowd of 50. The people present discussed the town’s main problems: no drinking water; no recreation for youth; no space for equipment for sports; no community center; no theater; no art or artisan materials; no fishing gear (in a seashore village). The state has done nothing.

The ultimate focus of our meeting concerned how the IWW could respond to these needs. Some of our thoughts are:

1) The importance of collaboration rather than charity, with the urgency of the citizens taking the initiative to realize their own needs, then acting together to attain them. 2) The IWW’s commitment to make our network to inform our community of Haiti’s problems.

Given all this, we reiterated the importance of the community taking the initiative to decide its needs. She told a story about how, a few years ago, an NGO decided, without consulting the locals, to build a fountain in the town’s center, because the fountain used by the residents was “too far away.” People did not use the new fountain because they wanted the exercise required to travel to the old one where they could also socialize.

We observed 20 barefoot peasants outside hoeing the field by hand and singing songs to the beat of a drum. Central tourism, but it has no infrastructure to develop. We met with town “notables” in the local school, which lacked bathrooms and running water. There were only four women in a crowd of 50. The people present discussed the town’s main problems: no drinking water; no recreation for youth; no space for equipment for sports; no community center; no theater; no art or artisan materials; no fishing gear (in a seashore village). The state has done nothing.

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IWWs curry resistance on May Day in England, Scotland

West Midlands, England

The West Midlands branch in England celebrated May Day with an evening of films and food at the Lamp Tavern pub in Birmingham. Decorated with posters produced by our syndicalist comrades in Europe and our new, huge IWW banner, the room was packed with 50-60 fellow workers, friends and comrades.

We showed Travis Wilkerson’s *An Injury to One* film, which follows the story of wobbly agitator Frank Little. This was followed by Charlie Chaplin’s classic “Modern Times”, which depicts workers struggling to survive in the modern, industrialised capitalist world.

People brought lots of homemade vegan cookies and cakes to share along with Indian food supplied by the branch. We also had a stall to distribute literature, sell our spanking new hoodies and t-shirts, and sign people up to the One Big Union.

By Douglas Fielding-Smith

Edinburgh, Scotland

Wobblies attended the Edinburgh May Day march and rally on May 3. The march, which rallied in Princes Street Gardens, was about 300 strong, representing a range of political parties and trade unions.

The Edinburgh IWW branch plus fellow workers who made the journey from St. Andrews and Dundee, distributed a special May Day leaflet. It also staffed the traditional literature stall featuring union materials and books.

By Bill Joseph, Edinburgh branch secretary

German IWWs mark May Day

By Lutz Getzschmann

Wobblies in several German cities participated in demonstrations and events around May Day. The two recently chartered branches in Cologne and Frankfurt organized their own activities.

The Cologne branch organized an event the evening of May Day with its newly founded music band, the Grand Industrial Band, which played songs of Joe Hill and T-Bone Slim, and read from Louis Adamic and Augustin Souchy before 60 people. The event was to help mobilize for an unemployed workers demonstration at the Cologne works agency the next day. At the demonstration the next day, the IWV band played and revived the idea that music can be a strong agitator.

The Frankfurt wobs had a stall on May 1 in Bad Homburg, supporting the initiative of a fellow worker to bring May Day back to the streets, after the official trade unions in the area refused to organize anything.

Afterward, wobblies participated in the traditional May Day barbecue of the Free Workers’ union (FAU).

By Paul Bocking

The Toronto IWW branch in Ontario, Canada, participated in a march on the Saturday following May Day, led by the local chapter of immigrant rights group, No One Is Illegal.

The steady downpour of rain didn’t dampen the spirits of several hundred people who rallied for permanent residence status as a worker, relative of a current resident, or a refugee. Meanwhile, temporary guest worker programs would be expanded under the proposed legislation. Many activists oppose the changes because it would leave immigrant workers more vulnerable and open to exploitation, since their legal status in Canada would depend on their employment status.

Dozens of community and labour groups participated, with banners and chants seen and heard in languages reflecting the diversity of the city.

Wobblies unveiled our newly rediscovered branch banner, with its message, “An Injury to One is An Injury to All”, providing a welcome message of solidarity and unity.

By Bill Joseph, Edinburgh branch secretary

The Edmonton IWW’s marching band plays as birds representing immigrant workers look on at the annual May Day rally in Alberta, Canada.

No one is illegal in Toronto

The Edmonton IWW’s marching band plays as birds representing immigrant workers look on at the annual May Day rally in Alberta, Canada.
May 1 ports shutdown

More than 25,000 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in the United States struck for eight hours on May 1 against the United States’ “war on terror” in Afghanistan and Iraq. A Pacific Maritime Association spokesperson said the action stopped 6,000 containers from being loaded at 29 ports during the usual work stoppage on the West Coast. The employer said it was an illegal strike, but the ILWU has responded that its members are exercising their First Amendment rights to free expression and free assembly.

The strike proved to be a rallying point for the United States peace movement and organized labor. Branches and members of the IWW were among the many who mobilized locally to support the strike.

ILWU International President Bob McEllrath framed the strike in patriotic terms in a media release.

“This is one of the most severe crackdowns on workers since the July 2007 election of the Justice and Development Party or AKP, a conservative party bent on unpopular neo-liberal reforms.

The General Union of Port Workers in Iraq announced their intention to join the work stoppage in solidarity with the ILWU workers. Reportedly, workers succeeded in closing down the Iraqi ports of Qasr and Khor Al Zabair.

“The courageous decision you made to carry out a strike on May Day to protest against the war and occupation of Iraq advances our struggle against occupation.”

The letter detailed the challenge of being an independent workers’ union, while the government is trying to impose a one-unions certification scheme and to turn the unions into political tools or target them with violence.

“We are struggling today to defeat both the occupation and sectarian militias’ agenda.”

While the ILWU action took the media spotlight, thousands of people demonstrated in the streets, including unions and other activists gathered to commemorate the international holiday. The workers and other activists gathered to commemorate the international holiday.

They are estimated $3 trillion. It’s time to stand up, and we’re no longer going to stand by while our country, our troops, and our economy are destroyed by a war that’s bankrupting us to the tune of $3 trillion. It’s time to stand up, and we’re doing our part today.

Dozens of labor organizations demonstrated in the streets, including the Labor Union of Indonesian People’s Social Service (SPIR), the Labor Union of Indonesian Informal Workers (Serbiindo), the Labor Union of Indonesian National Maritime (SBMNI), the Labor Union of National Transportation (SBNPI), and the Labor Union of Indonesian Agricultural Union (SPIO).

Fifteen thousand police and security guards stood by with guns and water cannons. Both the State Palace and the US Embassy were heavily guarded with barbed wire placed around them.

Police dispersed a separate demonstration for the independence of West Papua from Indonesia.

Facebook labor activists arrested in Egypt

Egyptian state security officers arrested a man who used Facebook to promote a general strike on May 4 to coincide with the President’s birthday.

While the strike fizzled, state security took notice.

Ahmed Maher Ibrahim, 27, was arrested on the street in the suburb of New Cairo, blindfolded and taken to a police station for interrogation. He was stripped naked and beaten repeatedly for 12 hours and asked for the password to his Facebook account among other things.

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Fifteen thousand police and security guards stood by with guns and water cannons. Both the State Palace and the US Embassy were heavily guarded with barbed wire placed around them.

Police dispersed a separate demonstration for the independence of West Papua from Indonesia.

Facebook labor activists arrested in Egypt

Egyptian state security officers arrested a man who used Facebook to promote a general strike on May 4 to coincide with the President’s birthday.

While the strike fizzled, state security took notice.

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Unions listen! Another world is possible

By Staughton Lynd

What is the problem? What needs to be fixed?

Currently, the mother of all wrong solutions is card-check voting, which would allow employers to call workers for the same top-down unions, with the same unaccountability to the members that came of the due-process-off, with the same ever-readiness to give up the right to strike.

Equally misguided, in my view, is the idea that the Taft-Hardley law represented a decisive turning point and that it’s repeal would release the original pristine impulse of the Congress of Industrial Organizations to flower again. All major trade union leaders beginning with United Mine Workers (UMW) President John L. Lewis have devised means whereby workers would give up the right to collective self-activity embodied in Section 7 in exchange for a mess of potage.

So we, labor lawyers and labor historians, can only begin to use what we forego our endless apologies for the latest hoped for “progressive” unionism. Oregonites have been enrobed in an institutional “embodiment of the class self-activity discovered and imagined by E.P. Thompson and colleagues and par

We must de-mythologize all leaders and we must re-conceptualize rank-and-file movements as something more than caucuses to elect new bureaucratic union leaders.

South African dockworkers’ solidarity saves Zimbabwean lives

By J340055, About Time, IWW Australia

Everybody knew just what sort of “defence” the Chinese weapons would be to use in the conflict with Indonesia. But there was a problem: How are we going to get them to the front? The answer was a sea of people. The Chinese had to build a railway to the border. The whole people were involved.

By the time the war was over, nearly three million people had built the railway. The South Africans and the Chinese built the railway together.

An Yue Jiang

The 300,000-strong South African National Labor Movement (NLM), founded in 1915 by the Tembo brothers, was anchored outside the Chinese ship question. The NLM is the only movement in this country that has ever been able to solve the problem of the Chinese question.

Now, the NLM is not perfect. It has its flaws. But it is the only movement in this country that has ever been able to solve the problem of the Chinese question.

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John Sweeney, which greeted Sweeney’s reference to the “confrontation from below. Lewis advised miners to strike and go on the picket line. This government position contradicts the current law and Labor Party’s domestic policy. If Australian workers took the same actions as the South African dock workers, they would be prosecuted for illegal action. It seems as though Sweeney is not only country in need of change through solidarity.

management prerogative and non-strike clause do exist in collective bargaining agreements. These two clauses give profit-maximizing manage-}

terialized by the IWW in work that developed from the notion of the union as exclusive bargaining agent. Moreover, like so many other

The indispensable precondition for a new bottom-up labor movement is that the present leader of the existing trade union move-}

ment who will make all well again. The present leader of the existing trade union movement who will make all well again.

The indispensable precondition for a new bottom-up labor movement is that the present leader of the existing trade union movement who will make all well again.
Grad students organize at U of Chicago

By Joe Grim Feinberg

More than 100 University of Chicago graduate students have joined an organizing committee to found Graduate Students United, an independent graduate employee organization.

Organizing began last year when students set up a basic structure, organized two well-attended demonstrations, and collected about 500 signatures on a petition demanding health insurance for student employees and an end to graduate student fees. Dues are $5 per year.

Our strategy is to build strength with a growing membership that can act in union to put pressure on the administration, to win concrete, work-related gains, and eventually to establish our organization as an organ of power for workers at the university.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) does not recognize graduate students at private universities as employees, and it gives us no special legal protection. It is likely that this NLRB decision will be soon overturned, but we have taken the opportunity to develop a strategy that does not depend on the NLRB for success.

We will continue to build our strength and not wait to be recognized by an agency from outside.

Progress from pressure

Already the administration has responded to our efforts by hinting that they will raise teaching wage approximately 50 cents per hour by the start of the next school year.

The administration also made the minimum concession of freezing a quarterly minor concession of $200 which would have raised teaching wages approximately 50 cents per hour. Our boss wanted us to turn them down, so we signed. Our boss wanted us to turn them down.

We have had three meetings with management and all teachers present.

We have all resorted to using work-to-rule tactics, i.e., we do only the work that is clear and necessary. It is to unite university workers to democratize the university by the best means available.

The movement for graduate student organizing began in 1969 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, when teaching assistants affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. There are now some 23 legally recognized graduate employee unions across the country, including at some of the largest public universities such as the University of California. There have been long-running organizing campaigns at other places like Yale and New York University. In these cases, such as at Yale, graduate students have successfully won additional rights and benefits without ever becoming officially recognized. The Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions (www.cgeu.org) formed in 1992, connects these different groups, including ours.

Visit www.uuchicago.gsu.org for information about the union.

3 years of organizing under Right-to-Work

We have all resorted to using work-to-rule tactics. If management tells us to “speed up”, we ignore it.

They’ll say one thing to one teacher and something completely different to another teacher. When we compare notes, we find the most advantageous “saying” and then hold it to its true. They hate that because not only does it limit their ability to talk to workers, it also limits their ability to pit one worker against another. They lose power and control.

Learning from failure

Unfortunately, everything hasn’t been bread and roses. Here are some examples of failures:

1. I have succeeded in signing one co-worker to our union. She then she moved on and discontinued her membership.

2. I have been unable to sustain my fellow workers’ interest in being more militant. Once something improves they stop.

3. I have not been able to keep co-workers together. They leave as soon as they can for a “better” job. Consequently, there is a high turnover rate that hinders worker solidarity and makes it harder to keep the gains we have made together.

4. Beware the Canary Letter. Once a year the company has all employees fill out a survey. The teachers made sure they were negative and unsigned. Our boss wanted us to turn them in to her. Instead I mixed them up with non-teaching staff then slid them under the Human Resources door unseen. Within 30 minutes our boss was running around asking all the teachers why everyone was so upset, etc.

5. How did the bosses know? It’s called the canary letter. Each department will have a different survey. It could be a different question, misspelled word, different numbered pages so that the boss can know at least what department it came from, even if it is not signed.

5. The most hurtful episode was when we had a labor faker in our midst. He came out all gun ho for everything union. He expressed the same sentiments as everyone else. He had some good ideas.

All that changed when we were having a meeting with the two bosses. He acted like Rambo by expressing opinions that were either not agreed upon or were designed to sidetrack our demands and place the meeting into chaos. That was the first inkling that we had a faker.

The last episode was when he got in trouble for something that happened in his class.

From what we can gather, he used his guts against what the teachers really thought about everything.

The worst mistake we made was when the labor faker sat there with us.

None of us admitted to anything and the faker remains employed. Needless to say but we treat him as someone not worth our trust or loyalty.

Opposite image: By X309212

I live and work in a “right-to-work” state, the United States where all workers have the right to quit at any time, yet they can also be terminated at any time. Where the benefit in that type of work environment?

For the last three years, that work environment has had a huge influence on my unionizing efforts.

At my place of employment I am the only union member. At times, it can be very discouraging, but I have learned that persistence is a must if anything is to be accomplished.

Successes

1. I have been able to get my fellow teachers to attend a restaurant or someone’s house a number of times where we have developed and agreed to a list of concerns that have been presented to our boss and her boss.

2. We have had three meetings with management and all teachers present.

3. We have all resorted to using work-to-rule tactics, i.e., we do only the work that is clear and necessary. When we compare notes, we find the most advantageous “saying” and then hold it to its true. They hate that because not only does it limit their ability to talk to workers, it also limits their ability to pit one worker against another. They lose power and control.

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Song

The Work of a Graduate Student: A Study in Social Contradictions and Their Potential Sublation

Or, Join GSU

By Joe Grim Feinberg

G Am   G Am      G Am         G Am
G Am     G Am         G Am        G Am
G  Am     G Am         G Am        G Am

We've got to raise our pens to change…the University.

We spend our youth in musty halls and laboratories cold.

We spend our nights in beds of books with lovers ages old.

Each day we say tomorrow then last we will be free

Until we’re tenured and retired then…then we’ll finally live our dreams.

We dream of picking up our pens as swords to save the world.

Instead we work for warlords under flags of greed unfurled.

In search of revolution we thought how to begin.

We’ve got to raise our pens to change…the University.

I am a graduate student and I wish the best to you.

Let’s get together and transform this system through and through.

For if we act in union there is nothing we can’t do.

Come one, come all right now, come join…come join in GSU.

Come all of you good students now…come join in GSU.

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G Am   G Am      G Am         G Am
G Am     G Am         G Am        G Am
G  Am     G Am         G Am        G Am

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Nafta From Below: Maquiladora Workers, Campesinos, and Indigenous Communities Speak Out on the Impact of Free Trade in Mexico
EDITED BY MARTHA OJEDA AND ROSEMARY HENNESSY

In testimonies from scores of maquiladora workers, campesinos, and indigenous communities from across Mexico, Nafta from Below details the impact of free trade on those it has most severely affected. First-hand accounts of workers organizing for their rights, of farmers and indigenous peoples fighting to preserve their land, and of efforts north and south to build alternatives document the courage of ordinary people who dare to join together and stand up for decent work conditions, just salaries, a clean environment, and lives with dignity. Published by the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, this book contains chapters on struggles in textile, electronics and auto parts manufacturing among many more. Especially inspiring is discussion on movements building alternatives to NAFTA race to the bottom.

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English Rebel Songs 1381-1984 is Chumbawamba’s homage to the men and women who never had obituaries in the broadsheets, those who never received titles or appeared in an entry in “Who’s Who.” This is an album that conjures up the tragedies and triumphs of the people who shaped England: its citizens. The songs were discovered in songbooks, in folk clubs and on cassette tapes, chopped and changed and blurred into shape with utmost respect for the original tunes. Originally released in 1988, this new CD version is fierce, sweet and powerful, and contains ballads not included on the original album. It’s guaranteed to sway the listener, break hearts and encourage hope...just as those who inspired the songs by changing history. 13 tracks, $14.95

This annotated bibliography published by the Boston General Membership Branch of the IWW lists all known books on the IWW, organized by category in chronological order. Brief critical notes describe the books, quickly and helpfully identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Other categories are Biographical Works, Miscellaneous Works including substantial discussion of the IWW, Writings by Wobblies, and a listing of novelists featuring the union. An excellent resource for anyone doing research on the IWW. 253 pages, $19.95

The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years by Fred W. Thompson & Jon Bekken forward by Utah Phillips
The IWW: Its First 100 Years is the most comprehensive history of the union ever published. Written by two Wobblies who lived through many of the struggles they chronicle, it documents the famous struggles such as the Lawrence and Paterson strikes, the fight for decent conditions in the Pacific Northwest timber fields, the IWW’s pioneering organizing among harvest hands in the 1910s and 1920s, and the war-time repression that sent thousands of IWW members to jail. But it is the only general history to give substantive attention to the IWW’s successful organizing of African-American and immigrant dock workers on the Philadelphia waterfront, the international union of seamen the IWW built from 1913 through the 1930s, smaller job actions through which the IWW transformed working conditions, Wobbly successes organizing in manufacturing in the 1930s and 1940s, and the union’s recent resurgence. Extensive source notes provide guidance to readers wishing to explore particular campaigns in more depth. There is no better history for the reader looking for an overview of the history of the IWW, and for an understanding of its ideas and tactics. $30.00

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Militant, independent, all-Cambodian union
Union perseveres despite murders, threats

By Erik Davis

Chea Vichea was the president and founder of Cambodia's largest and most radical union, the Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC). In January 2004, he was sitting at a newspaper stand reading the morning paper, when a man walked into the shop and shot him repeatedly in the face and chest. A few days later, the largest mass street protest in Cambodia's post-war history took place. Tens of thousands of workers and citizens dressed for mourning and proclaimed their love for this "hero of the workers." Over the next four years, three more union officials would be assassinated, and many more attacked.

Union keeps pressure on

Despite the violence, the Cambodian union movement continues to win victories. Most recently, the FTUWKC strategically organized to hold a national garment workers' strike during the 2008 election year in Cambodia. This forced the government to pressure garment manufacturing employers to agree to some of the union's demands. They won a US$5 increase, boosting monthly pay to US$85 per month. However, other demands, such as removing the five-year cap on seniority benefits, remained out of reach in this round.

If workers didn't strike, they would not [have] reached this offer at all," said Chea Mony, the current union president, and brother to the slain Chea Vichea. "Enforcing the national agreement is the next challenge for the union, he said. "Many factories seem to [be] misunderstanding/rejecting to pay the workers properly," said Chea Mony in an email.

In January 2008, I was fortunate enough to visit Cambodia as a temporary delegate for the International Solidarity Committee. I met with the current president Chea Mony and two other officers of the union, Mann Senghak and Sorl Kimsorn.

Cambodia in crisis

Ten years after the final collapse of the Khmer Rouge and a 30-year-long civil war, Cambodia remains a country in crisis. The country is classified as one of 12 Least Developed Countries in the world. Transparency International recently ranked Cambodia as the most corrupt in the world. Thirty-four per cent of the population survives on less than US$1 per day. Out of 1,000 live births, 143 will die before they reach the age of five, according to UNICEF. Of those that survive past this age, 45 per cent suffer from malnutrition so severe that they are permanently stunted.

If you read the bosses' press, however, you get a very different impression of Cambodia. Last December, Cambodia became the world's sixth largest garment exporter. This is impressive for a country the size of Missouri, with less than 14 million people, more than 80 per cent of whom live away from the cities and factories.

Cambodia's garment factories use networks that compose modern capital. Most of them are production supervisors in a garment factory. He joined the union because "I saw that the bosses had too much power over the workers; over their time, their hours, their days, and of course, their wages." Senghak told me about some of the successful tactics employed by the union.

Mann Senghak: tactics to win

There are approximately 30 unions in Cambodia. Of these, only three are independent: the FTUWKC, the Cambodian Independent Teachers' Union (CTTU), and the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union (CCAWDU). The others are all unions run by either the companies themselves or various proxies of 'big men' in government ministries.

The FTUWKC has over 70,000 members, 90 per cent of whom work in the garment industry. The other ten per cent work in a variety of other industries. Eighty per cent of all members are women.

Mann Senghak is the General Secretary of the FTUWKC, a post he has occupied for three years. Prior to that, he spent three years as a Deputy Secretary, one year as a union official, and before that he worked in factories as an ironing department supervisor. He joined the union because "I saw that the bosses had too much power over the workers; over their time, their hours, their days, and of course, their wages." Senghak told me about some of the successful tactics employed by the union.

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**By Mike Pesa**

**Solidarity with Dave Kerin and Unionbombed with Oaxaca**

Kerin issued a statement in support of the workers. The ISC also insisted that the All Freeters Union and its corporate partners must be held accountable for violating workers rights.

**ISC delegation to visit Japan**

The ISC issued a statement on May 5, 2008, that emphasized the importance of international solidarity.

**May Day**

The ISC issued a statement on April 28, 2008, that emphasized the importance of international solidarity.

**Workers Memorial Day statement**

The ISC issued a statement on April 28, 2008, that emphasized the importance of international solidarity.

**Australian unions demand repeal of labor police agency**

Australian labor activist resists forced disclosure

All Freeters Union. This delegation will help us to reach that goal. One of the delegates, Sahs Koba, is a member of both the IWW and the coalition that the All Freeters Union is a part of. Delegates have requested that all parties make this trip. To help, please email solidariy@iww.org.

IWW Haiti delegation returns

Four ISC delegates returned to their homes on May 9 after a two-week trip to Haiti, where they met with labor unions, peasants’ organizations and other segments of the Haitian population. The trip was a huge success and an inspiration.

**Legend**

Bellacosa, a bike messenger and IWW organizer, coined the term solidarity. The ISC secured the basic right of all workers to a safe workplace. The new Labor Party government, with its promising election promises, has renewed the commitment of citizens to hold informed debate and make informed political choices. The Institute of Industrial Relations, affiliated with a rival party that is seeking to take Oaxaca in the 2010 state election, has deployed the Mexican army to set up a base near San Juan Copala. Activists allege that the military does little to make the state safer and their role is to indoctrinate and train paramilitaries in rural areas.

**Conclusion**

Union Solidarity coordinator Dave Kerin is now facing up to six months in prison. The ISC called for concerted action to a recent strike at Boeing. If he refuses to give the government information that they intend to use against Union Solidarity and other rank and file union members by May 8, he faces as much as six months in prison. The ISC pledged its solidarity with Dave Kerin and Union Solidarity, while demading that the Australian government call off this legal harassment.

**Solidarity with Iranian workers**

The delegation is to visit Boeing in Japan in late May and early June at the invitation of the Tokyo-based All Freeters Union and the G8 Action Coalition. During their trip, delegates will meet with independent unions and workers centers in Japan. As part of an international call-out, the ISC delegation will also attend demonstrations and conferences against the Group of Eight (G8) summit being held in June. They may have the opportunity to speak to an international audience about the IWW.

The All Freeters Union is of special interest to the ISC. A new organization of class-conscious temp workers, the Freeters have published articles in the Industrial Worker and sent us an official letter of solidarity in early April. The ISC responded with an official statement of our own, declaring our desire to build a strong solidarity relationship with the All Freeters Union. This delegation will help us to reach that goal. One of the delegates, Sahs Koba, is a member of both the IWW and the coalition that the All Freeters Union is a part of. Delegates have requested that all parties make this trip. To help, please email solidarity@iww.org.

Two indigenous women broadcasters in the Oaxacan highland town of San Juan Copala, Mexico, were murdered on April 7, three months after helping bring a community radio to air.

Teresa Bautista Merino, 21, and Felicitas Martinez Sanchez, 24, were key organizers who helped equip, engineer and launch the community radio station, called The Voice That Breaks The Silence. They were killed while on assignment by automatic gunfire during a highway ambush, that injured other people. "Indigenous, reporters, women. Vital intelligent young women with names, who could be our sisters, companions, our daughters or nieces, our granddaughters," said a message sent to the Oaxaca Sigue Sigue solidarity email group. The message called for people to protest their murders by calling, faxing and emailing Mexican embassies and consulates as well as politicians.

**Construction workers in Queensland, Australia, demanded the abolition of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner (ABC) in May for undermining union rights.**

The ABC is a government agency brought in by the previous Liberal government in October 2006 to police building and construction trade workplaces.

The new Labor Party government had promised during its 2007 election campaign to abolish the ABC by 2010. “Unions are calling for it to be scrapped immediately,” said a May 35 statement on the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) web site.

It’s totally unacceptable to us that any organisation has the ability to summarily condemn people to compulsory interrogations with the threat of fines or jail and to make it illegal to discuss what was happening in union meetings. Testimony is compulsory and refusal means six months in jail. Workers who have stopped work due to fears about health and safety, have all faced ABCU investigations.

“In the last election the Australian people voted overwhelmingly to get rid of anti-union laws,” said a letter of solidarity in early April. The ISC called for concerted action to a recent strike at Boeing. If he refuses to give the government information that they intend to use against Union Solidarity and other rank and file union members by May 8, he faces as much as six months in prison. The ISC pledged its solidarity with Dave Kerin and Union Solidarity, while demading that the Australian government call off this legal harassment.

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.