Police arrests try to disrupt convention protests

Police harassment and repression during the Republican National Convention (RNC) held on September 1-4 in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, violated the right to assembly and protest of protesters who came to protest eight years of Republican party rule and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
An estimated 800 people were arrested during the week, including 21 journalists and news-gathering staff. About 10,000 people attended the main anti-war march on September 1 to coincide with the convention’s opening day. During the protests themselves, police routinely used batons, tear gas and pepper spray as well as flash-bulbs and concussion grenades, and rubber bullets.
Police tried to disrupt the protests by targeting their infrastructure in pre-emptive raids. On the night of August 29, police raided the protesters’ RNC Welcoming Committee convergence space, used for meetings, communications and coordination, alleging a violation of the fire code.
Eight RNC Welcoming Committee organizers have since been charged with conspiracy to riot in order to further terrorism.
“Conspiracy to commit riot was the charge used against the Chicago 8 after the police raids in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic Convention,” said Heidi Boghosian, Executive Director the National Lawyers Guild. “Guild attorneys defended those charged in 1968 (charged with conspiracy to riot) and we will do so again now.”

—Heidi Boghosian
National Lawyers Guild

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Protesters dressed up as politicians at the Republican National Convention in Twin Cities, Minnesota, drag Lady Liberty through the streets.

Quebec workers get union contract at Wal-Mart

In 2005, UFCW had unionized a Wal-Mart store in Jonquiere, Quebec. Wal-Mart responded by shutting down the store before a first contract could be negotiated, claiming the store was losing money. The same year, UFCW applied to the Quebec labor board to represent workers at Wal-Marts in Gatineau, Saint-Hyacinthe, and Brossard.

Currently, Wal-Mart and the UFCW are in binding arbitration for a first contract at the Saint-Hyacinthe store.

To add to Wal-Mart’s union troubles, in Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada agreed on August 7 to hear two appeals from workers who lost their jobs at the Jonquiere store three years ago. As is customary, the Supreme Court gave no reason for deciding to hear the appeal.

The appeal is the last legal step for the former employees in a series of lost legal battles. The Quebec labor tribunal dismissed the workers’ complaints, save one. The Quebec Court of Appeal then threw out the complaint it did allow. Wal-Mart’s lawyers have argued that Canadian law allows a company to close a store for any reason it chooses.

UK cinema fires IWW organizer

Showroom Cinema in Sheffield, England, fired IWW member Chris Lockwood on August 21 from his bar job for union organizing.

The firing is the most recent part of a campaign by management to pick off and isolate workers who have voiced objections to recent changes that have worsened the conditions of all who work at the non-profit movie house. The Showroom cinema is a registered charity and claims to be an “investor in people”, yet has consistently attacked workers pay and conditions with the sole aim of making more money.

Lockwood’s firing represents a direct and illegal attack against union organizing. Management have refused his request to review his dismissal.

IWW members picketed the Showroom Cinema on September 12 to demand his immediate reinstatement.
As a first-time at the IWW’s General Assembly (GA), I thought I’d record a few of my perceptions of the event.

It was a great experience to meet so many wonderful IWWistas from across the globe, not only from the UK, the US and Canada but also those members from the German language area and Portugal, as well as those invited guests from the French Conféderation Nationale du Travail (CNT) and Coordination Syndicale Révolutionnaire (CSR) and the Polish comrades talking about the Workers’ Initiatives.

All in all, we got some serious work done over the weekend. True, we didn’t all have time to eye-on each other, whatever the disagreements, it was good to see members keen to move on and get on with the business of building a spirit of friendship and solidarity.

Now for a bit of criticism... As I saw it, the bulk of the GA motions were very procedural, which can often be incredibly boring and make us seem overly bureaucratic and inward-looking. Sure, the dull stuff has to be dealt with and GA is exactly the place to do it, but I think it would be healthier for the organisation if we also had more outward looking discussions on campaigns across the world.

Moreover, it seems to me, especially as the IWW becomes increasingly global in its make up, that we are missing a golden opportunity of using this event as a means of coordination between the various IWW sections around the world.

Maybe the move to GA becoming an assembly of mandate delegates would help diversify discussion. It certainly ensures that branches would have the chance to send members who, for whatever reason, have so far been unable to attend GA.

It was a great couple of days, and well done to the London Wobs for putting on the first ever GA outside North America. Best of luck to whoever hosts it next year!

Rob Rob
Leicester GMB
Marie Mason pleads guilty

Cincinnati, Ohio-based environmental activist Darryl Cherney, 46, agreed to a plea bargain on September 8 convicting him of burning the Agriculture Hall at Michigan State University on New Year’s Day. Her ex-husband Frank Ambrose and not reporting the arson to the authorities.

Under the plea bargain, the IWW member, Mason petitioned the court for lesser charges of helping Mason and Ambrose and not reporting the arson to the authorities.

By the Organizing Committee

Awards for similar crimes on March 19 and will be sentenced on September 22. She is currently under house arrest with an electric monitor to track her movements.

The Associated Press reported that Mason’s lawyer, John Mincok, said that Ambrose helped the FBI build its case against Mason by tape recording their conversations in 2007. They divorced in early 2008.

Little over a week later, Joe was fired, ostensibly for “stealing” a bag of coffee, which is donated by Sweetwater Coffee Company explicitly for the personal use of Natural Foods Department employees. This free coffee, which was and continues to be intentionally given to employees to drink at work and take home. Employees routinely made this their morning coffee and openly took it home.

To our knowledge, no employee was dismissed for selling or dispensing warnings or being discharged for taking this free product, which did not cost a store a single cent. Joe received no written warning, as the employee handbook stipulates is appropriate for minor infractions, but fired two days after checking out with the coffee in hand, while buying eggs and donuts as well, on a Sunday morning.

Workers believe Joe was illegally fired for taking part in the petition drive. They view the firing as an attempt at improving the working conditions of all the employees in the store. Identified as a key member by the FBI, they tried to make an example of him, contrary to the National Labor Relations Act’s guarantee of union rights to collectively organize and bargain. Ward’s firing is a chilling message sent to the rest of his co-workers that they still insist on bettering their conditions.

Workers are asking supporters to call the store 932-372-1741 ext. 4, and demand that they either sign a petition or write a letter to Ward’s at 515 NW 23rd Ave, Gainesville, FL, USA 32601.

Workers Joe Richard was fired from Ward’s Supermarket in Gainesville, Florida, he believes, as do his co-workers, that the firing was a illegal and a direct retaliation for his organizing efforts.

On September 2, IWW member Joe Richard was fired from Ward’s Supermarket in Gainesville, Florida. He believes, as do his co-workers, that the firing was a direct retaliation for his organizing efforts.

On August 8, Joe and 14 other employees in the Natural Foods Department of the supermarket handset a letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) requesting an increased employee performance evaluation.Fast food restaurant employees and managers say that infrequent and irregular schedule of employee performance evaluations. His petition was largely ignored.

Marie Mason, another part of Michigan the next day. She was arrested on March 19 and will be sentenced on September 22. She is currently under house arrest with an electric monitor to track her movements.

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Secret to union web site success

Ask people what they think makes for a great union website. Some will say: Keep it fresh with loads of new content. Others will add: Make it interactive. Add a mailing list. Make sure the site is accessible for disabled people. Use a content management system. Don’t use Flash to add a search bar.

That’s good advice, but in my experience setting up three websites for three different trade unions in London this summer, I think there is one thing people often neglect when we talk about the difference between success and failure. I’m talking about training.

You can’t just build a website and hand it over to a union. Even if it’s your own union and you’ve built the website yourself. I’ll give an example. For one website I’ve just completed, first I trained the branch secretary for a couple of hours. I then trained two other branch officials because it’s always best to have more than one person involved for a couple more hours. Last week I met with the tech secretary to do another hour-long refresher. This week, he came by for two more hours to work out how to do a whole bunch of things on the site. And we’re not done yet. I’ve asked them to plan on a further training day.

The website I’ve designed recently use Drupal, a powerful open source content management system. We like to say that running a website isn’t rocket science and tools like Drupal make it easy for anyone to have a feature-rich website that’s easy to maintain.

That’s not exactly true. Judging by the number of issues which have come up with the three unions I’ve been working with, when planning on a website of this type, the vast majority of your time will be spent training—not configuring.

I have long felt that trade unionists should have full control over their websites and not be reliant upon techies to do the work for them. Maybe that’s part of the reason why I find myself doing so much training. I don’t want to get an email or a phone call from the union every time there’s a small problem. The fewer emails and phone calls I get the more time I will spend entirely on how well I’ve trained the union.

Often the documentation for the tools we use is written by people who don’t remotely resemble the actual users. Fresh-faced university graduates in Silicon Valley are the ones who write the documentation, but when ordinary mortals read it, they often don’t get it.

That’s why to properly train trade unionists to use a newly-created website, you have to know them—and it is best to be one of them. There are a whole range of reasons why people have a hard time with technology, so we have to start out with certain degree of empathy.

The other day I was training a group of low-paid service sector workers in London to use their new union site. The subject was ‘how to create an account’. I think there is little need to say much about that. I usually just click on the ‘create an account’ link, a no-brainer.

I spent probably 20 minutes with the group just on this subject. And it’s not because these people were particularly slow.

We can’t forget that even though most people we work with are now online, that doesn’t mean that they’re proficient in using complex websites. Mostly, people use email, surf the web, maybe they buy stuff.

Most trade union members have never created an account for themselves on a Drupal site, even though techies think that this is the easiest thing in the world.

We also need to keep in mind that many of the workers we are dealing with are not working in their native languages. So the on-screen instructions and error messages will not necessarily be clear to them. So when you show someone a screen and it asks them for their user name, you hit the first hurdle. Does it want their real name? Their full name? A nick-name? What if the name is already taken? And where does it ask for their password? (Answer: it doesn’t.)

I find out just how hard it can be to use what we might think of as a simple website by actually sitting down with working people and training them, answering their questions, and seeing what is difficult.

The guru of website usability, Jakob Nielsen, calls this kind of testing of websites absolutely essential. But I’m certain that most unions don’t test and don’t train properly. Big unions will use large and expensive design firms and training will be minimal. Techies will handle any problems that arise.

Local unions will have websites designed by an enthusiast and he or she will be the only one who actually knows how to use Dreamweaver or FrontPage or whatever tool they used to create it.

Training makes the difference between a state and boring union website and a great one, between a website that’s just an online brochure and one that’s an online community. It’s not enough to use the latest, coolest tools nor is it enough to rely on buzzwords like “open source” and “content management system.”

If I’ve learned one thing in a decade of designing union websites it’s this: the most important skill is the ability to listen.

Martyred Sacco & Vanzetti are honored in Boston

On August 21, Boston city council passed a motion to make August 23, 2008, Sacco and Vanzetti Commemoration Day. It was the 81st anniversary of the two anarchists’ execution.

Ferdinando Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were convicted and later executed on August 23, 1927, for the murder of a guard and paymaster of a shoe factory. The conviction was in part due to discriminatory attitudes against Italian immigrants and two outspoken communist dissidents.

Boston city councillor Chuck Turner put forward the resolution honoring the two anarchists. Turner attended the commemoration event and spoke. Other speakers included Pasquale Colombaro, Dorotea Manuela, and Molly Adlestein.

See www.saccoandvanzetti.org.

Woman Worker's History

The coming of the sewing machines caused women to lose thousands of jobs. Women who were employed in factories and garment factories were laid off which caused women to lose their earnings. Women who were employed in garment factories and factories were laid off which caused women to lose their earnings.

The introduction of the sewing machine in the 1860s and the foot treadle in 1873 caused the demand for women to work for wages, while adding millions to the profits of the men who employed them. With a sewing machine, one woman could do the work of six to seven hours a day.

In 1900, nearly three quarters of the 95,000 workers in garment factories were women. But for years ahead, most women garment workers worked at home. Bosses found the home, they had control, and they were paid less. Women had to buy their sewing machines.

One million signatures sought for Employee Free Choice Act

Union advocacy organization Jobs with Justice is trying to collect one million signatures supporting the Employee Free Choice Act being considered in the US Congress and Senate.

Jobs with Justice claims that the legislation, if passed, would “strengthen the middle class” by making it easier for workers to join unions. The petition will be delivered to the new US president and Congress.

“It’s no coincidence that as union membership has declined, the gap between rich and poor has widened. Workers in unions earn 28 percent more wages, and are 62 percent more likely to have employer-covered health coverage, and they are 386 percent more likely to have guaranteed pensions,” said the email appeal. “Allowing more workers to freely join unions and bargain with their employers will help rebuild the middle class by expanding health care, improving retirement security, and raising the standard of living for all working families.”

With unions, American workers would be better equipped to cope with an economy where “quality employment opportunities and paychecks are shrinking, the cost of fuel and health care continues to skyrocket, and working families are struggling to make ends meet.”
Youth must organize at school and work to win power

By Rhiannon Edwards, Wobbly Dispatch

It may come as a surprise to many that the de facto minimum working age in Alberta, Canada, is 12 years old. Not 16, not even 14, but 12.

A few years ago, the provincial government removed the process for monitoring young workers: while the same restrictions still exist on paper—for example, restrictions on hours (no late school nights) and types of work (no deep fryers)—there is now no way for the government to keep track of how many kids are working, where they’re at, and whether or not their special rights are being respected. In short, in Alberta there is no specific mechanism for enforcing the law governing child labor. Twelve-year-olds are kids; the government may as well have told business that child labour is A-OK in this province.

This particular legislative shift reflects a larger trend that now sees youth and student workers become a particularly exploited and marginalized portion of the work force. Developments in other places, such as the implementation of the “first job/entry level wage rate” in neighboring province British Columbia which enables businesses to pay primarily young workers $2 less an hour for the first few months, are other examples of this same trend.

When young workers do attempt to enter the workforce full time, they are often kept underemployed in low skill, low wage, so-called “flexibilized” jobs that give them just enough wages to get by but then deny them any job security or benefits. Furthermore, it goes without saying that union membership is entirely unfamiliar to the vast majority of young workers. The same governments that legitimize oppressive working environments for the young also actively promote the idea that unions today are unnecessary and unimportant; minimizing the potential power held by a conscious workforce. As a result of this propaganda, the vast majority of young workers remain unfamiliar with the idea of solidarity and the effectiveness of organizing in unions.

So, if we as young workers are so significantly alienated in our workplaces, where are the spaces where young workers can together, represent themselves and fight for their conditions in their lives? The other places we spend most of our time is in our schools; from elementary to high school to trade school, university and college. These are also incredibly alienating spaces where students are taught to respect authority and to hold in awe the very system that exploits them.

One result of this alienation is that the organizations that purportedly exist to represent students’ interests—the various forms of students’ unions or councils from high school onward—are generally reduced to a mockery of a “by students for students” democracy. Instead of being organizations that concern themselves with the issues that really affect students’ daily lives, such as asserting more influence over curriculum development, staff or student finances, etc., the elected student leaders take on planning school dances, scheduling graduation photos, renting lockers, running bars, cafes and beer gardens, and providing microwaves.

This is not to say that dances and microwaves aren’t important nor that existing student associations are entirely lost causes. Rather I mean to point out that the overwhelming role of most student association is to provide a distraction for students, who might otherwise see great problems in the relations of power and control within their schools, and the social systems of which they are a part.

What is the alternative then? Well, we could start by fighting for, and building autonomous, independent student associations. The president of the University of Alberta Students’ Union serves at the “behest” of the largest bank in the world—a limitation that must go. At the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina, by contrast, elected students from each faculty sit on the primary governing body of the University and have a say in all the important decisions that are made, including financial matters. When these student representatives aren’t listened to, students often go on strike, running alternative classes with sympathetic professors, sometimes in the street, until their demands are met.

To build true, effective democratic students’ associations, that are distinct from the popularity contests that student body elections are today, the elected students will have to turn their attention to matters which bolster student power and are of real importance in students’ daily lives. Why shouldn’t students have a say in who gets hired as the next Chemistry teacher, how much money is allocated to space or research programs, or how fair a particular teacher’s discipline is, just to name a few?

In the absence of representation, students should stop organizing strictly as students. Except for the heirs of the propertyed few, we all have to enter the workforce and deal with another. We’re workers too, and members of working class communities. Until we recognize this fact, and build students’ organizations that are concerned with our well-being outside of school, we will collectively remain irrelevant.

By Nate Holdren

“Some people in the IWW think we need to organize small companies instead of big ones. We are tiny compared to a multinational company or even a “Local” of 1,000 employees. However, compared to a small ‘mom-and-pop’ grocery store or a locally owned restaurant with 20 employees or a fast food franchise where the owner has 5 stores and 75 employees, we are huge.

We have branches that are bigger than companies of that size. We can run pickets and developments that pit ourselves against those companies which can hurt them economically (as opposed to picketing, say, Walmart) because every shop is a huge portion of the company’s total income. This will maximize the relative power of our branches and make for more winnable campaigns in a shorter time frame. Those wins will result in more members with greater organizing experience and higher morale. It might also reduce organizer burnout by giving us more victories to restore our spirits in the long run.

Of course, gains in smaller companies will be limited by the conditions in the industry which are mostly set by industry leaders. We’ll have to explain this to the workers we organize and turn them into organizers dedicated to organizing their whole industry. The small shops will provide us with a larger base and more concrete examples to work from as we turn to organizing larger companies in those industries.
UK inquiry reveals chronic neglect led to death

By Mike, IWW Edinburgh

A Fatal Accident Inquiry in Glasgow, Scotland, heard testimony from a health and safety inspector that the lorry that killed temporary agency driver, Graham Meldrum, "should not have been on the road."

Dr. Meldrum, a chemist by trade who was working as an agency driver, was killed in an accident on July 12, 2003. His widow, Karen Thomson, along with their two children, family and friends founded the Graham Meldrum Memorial Campaign which has campaigned for three years, resulting in the prosecution of the companies involved and testing fatal accident inquiry.

The main health and safety inspector attending the scene told Glasgow Sheriff Court that the lorry tail-lift that killed Meldrum at Allied Bakeries’ Glasgow depot was not operational.

"The lorry should not have been on the road," he said. The inspector testified that there was long-standing corrosion in the lorry's tail-lift and that there were missing pins, brackets, and springs. Little or no maintenance had been carried out. Meldrum was killed when crushed by the broken tail-lift.

The testimony came in the fourth week of the hearing and added to other evidence of corporate disregard for workers' safety. Zurich Insurance inspected the vehicles but ignored these obvious safety faults. Ryder had the responsibility for repairing the vehicles, but only carried out the repairs they were ordered to do, ignoring most of the blatant faults.

Graham was employed as a contract driver by the temporary employment agency Syrisline. Syrisline boss Val Brown testified at the inquiry on June 17 that he had no knowledge of any employers' legal responsibilities nor did he know about the safety laws governing driving and lifting nor did he know anything of employers' legal obligations under Section 2 of the Health and Safety Work Act 1974, which applies to everyone with a contract of employment. Brown dissolved Syrisline several months after Meldrum's death—and then started another agency, Staff Depot, based in Uddington, near Glasgow, doing the same work.

"If this Fatal Accident Inquiry had been called to his attention, then the array of charges would have been much the likes of Mr Keith Thompson—transport manager—who would face individual criminal charges," Karen Thomson, Graham's partner, told the Industrial Worker. "Graham's death was brought about by this faulty tail-lift.

"I gave evidence and reminded them all that we are talking about a man. That had got lost a bit," said Thomson. "I also spoke of him working for a workers co-op, Greenecy, for 16 years as opposed to using his PhD in chemistry because he couldn't accept the lack of morals of big business and their refusal to take any responsibility for their actions against individuals, communities, and the Earth. I felt shattered afterwards, but this was my justice."

"I am convinced that my beautiful Graham was murdered for profit, he wasn't the first and he won't be the last. My fight goes on."

Graham Meldrum, right, and his brother Karl at a biker rally.

Campaign continues

The Graham Meldrum Memorial Campaign (www.myspace.com/gmmemorialcampaign) sees their fight as part of a larger struggle to protect workers from injury and death on the job.

"Undoubtedly what we are doing is something we will have to discuss further. We won prosecution, we won a fatal accident inquiry, a small band of people with love on their side can change things but what of justice?"

"We have effectively taken on global giants ABF Grains (Allied Bakeries), Primark, Pataks, Twinings, British Sugar, etc., TNT and at the same time highlighted the biased unjust machine we call prosecution services."

"The public enquiry into the Stockline Disaster in Glasgow is currently under way and the 20th Anniversary of the Piper Alpha Disaster where oil giants got away with mass murder. So the killing of workers with no repercussions, except for the families, isn't new. It's weart for us all, grief, loss, poverty and the whole weight of the law for us."

Karen Thomson, widowed partner to industrial accident victim Graham Meldrum, marches with family members, friends and supporters to the site of the crime at Allied Bakeries in Glasgow. He was a temporary agency driver.

"In the face of this we have rediscovered each other, our courage, our love for Graham and our love for justice... real justice not just money justice."

Faults ignored

The tail-lift, lifting platforms on the lorries concerned, were especially constructed for Allied Bakeries, so that enormous amounts of bread could be loaded and unloaded in one operation, saving the company time and money. The platforms, capable of holding up to 2.5 tonnes (5,600 pounds), were described at the Inquiry as "heavy and unpredictable."

Allied Bakeries failed to build sufficient loading bays at their depot, which would have allowed a safer working system than one that relied on the tail-lifts.

The inquiry heard that Allied Bakeries cut corners on health and safety to prevent lorries going off the road to be repaired. They scrapped a maintenance contract because it was too expensive and only carried out repairs, often ignoring defects altogether. They introduced a policy of not repairing the automatic mechanism on the tail-lift, so that it had to be operated manually.

Graham Meldrum: My fight goes on.

Allied Bakeries maintenance manager Keith Thomson told the inquiry that there were six defects found on the lorry being operated by Meldrum the day before the fatal incident. He told the inquiry that there were no checks that repairs were carried out.

Driver John Kane testified that he had reported a series of defects on the tail-lift mechanism which killed Meldrum: no internal button for the tail-lift to go up, the tail-lift was sticking on the near side, and the bracket and locking pin of the tail-lift were missing. Faults in the tail-lift mechanism had been detected on that lorry at three separate checks in the months preceding Meldrum's death.

The inquiry will resume for its seventh week on September 15. Thomson asked for people to "come to court with us, an hour here or there, a chance for your good heart and shiny face to counteract the dark and powerful suits. You will never know how important it is to see good faces in that court where nightmares come true."

Visit www.myspace.com/gmmemorialcampaign for updates. For more information about workplace injuries and deaths in the UK, visit the Hazards Campaign www.hazardscan.org.uk, the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign www.simonjones.org.uk, and Families Against Corporate Killers.
The Industrial Workers of the World held its first General Assembly outside of North America in London, England on August 30-September 1, 2008. Hosted by the IWW British Isles Regional Organizing Committee (BIROC), 89 confirmed delegates from Canada, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland and the United States met to discuss proposals, hear officer and organizing reports, and make international officer nominations for the November referendum.

Observers from the French Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT) and Courant Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire (CSR), Workers’ Initiative of Poland, and Solidarity Federation of the United Kingdom also attended.

General Secretary-Treasurer Mark Damron began the meeting with “excellent table-thumping sangalong,” as one wobbly described it, and on the last day it concluded with the traditional chorus of “Solidarity Forever”.

The meeting was co-chaired by the treasurer of the British Islands Regional Organizing Committee (BIROC), Frank Syratt, and Sarah Bender of the United States. Ant Ives, Stuart Melvin, Nick Durie, and Louise van der Hoeven took minutes.

Notably, a new Assembly committee to address the critical issue of gender in the union was formed, with Rhiannon Edwards of Canada elected as chair.

Delegates made reports on their local and regional activities. IWW Regional Organizing Committees (ROCs) reported making progress in building the IWW outside of North America. In addition to the BIROC, which has about 500 members, delegates reported organizing in the Netherlands and Portugal that may lead to new ROCs. Delegates from the Frankfurt and Cologne branches of the IWW German Language Area Regional Organizing Committee (GLAMROC) reported that this new body had 45 members and was growing.

In the United Kingdom, a number of BIROC branch members are involved in the National Shop Stewards Network (www.shopstewards.net), which is slated to be a rank-and-file cross-union means of rebuilding the grassroots of working class solidarity and unity in the United Kingdom. The network’s first conference was backed by the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT).

The West Midlands branch in England reported that it has organized a print shop and is agitating in the health sector with the National Blood System campaign, alongside the London and Leeds branches.

The Clydeside IWW of Glasgow, Scotland, reported that it has an education job branch at Glasgow University. The Edinburgh IWW reported that it has formed an education industrial organizing committee. It has also focused on doing outreach to Polish workers who are eligible to work in the UK, but are unfamiliar with their British labor rights.

From the United States, the Chicago IWW reported that the Chicago Couriers Union was holding a conference on the same weekend. The Philadelphia IWW also reported organizing with couriers. The Olympia IWW delegate said it has an organizing drive with bike mechanics.

The New York IWW branch reported that 20 more workers have been fired for participating in the Industrial Union 466 food warehouse campaign.

Meanwhile, the Providence IWW delegate announced a $55,000 fundraising campaign to pay for the legal expenses of Alexandra Svoboda, who in August 2007 was badly injured by police during a solidarity march with New York’s food warehouse workers.

**Solidarity**

An emergency motion to support the Workers’ Initiative in Poland “to defend both victimized workers sacked recently in several industries for organizing” passed. The BIROC and the Polish union signed a Solidarity Alliance last year that committed to card recognition between the unions, mutual aid, exchanges, and closer ties.

The Assembly also endorsed a statement to support the world’s migrants who are under attack in North America and Europe. The statement denounced the “detention and deportation or removal of foreign nationals for purposes of immigration control, whether they are asylum seekers, migrant workers (documented or undocumented), or any other category of immigrant, is a breach of basic human rights and class solidarity.” “[IWW] members should therefore refuse to participate in detention, deportation or removal processes. Members are also encouraged to support action in solidarity with immigrant workers and asylum seekers (such as supporting the right to work whilst claiming asylum).”

**Proposals**

Assembly delegates faced a packed agenda of 11 proposals for consideration. The much-debated proposal to change the General Assembly into a Delegate Convention was amended and sent to referendum, with two-thirds of the votes and proxy ballots in favour. If approved by the members, this proposal would allow the Delegate Convention to make union policy, if it is sustained by a referendum vote. Currently, the General Assembly cannot make policy decisions; it can only endorse a proposal and send it to referendum. The convention would be made up of elected delegates elected by each chartered branch. Individual members who attended the convention would be able to speak but not vote on motions. Currently, any IWW member in good standing who has the means to attend Assembly has vote and voice.

The International Solidarity Commission proposal for branches to elect a liaison person “to build greater collaboration between the IWW and the general membership of the union” passed.

The charges reform proposal to clarify jurisdiction and procedure for the IWW’s internal disciplinary process was amended and passed. A proposal to introduce a conflict mediation procedure that branches could use to deal with internal conflict, rather than rely on charges, also will be on the ballot. In the 2007 referendum, two competing charges reform proposals both failed to get the two-thirds of votes cast necessary to amend the constitution.

**Nominations**

As of the Industrial Worker’s press date, the complete list of confirmed nominees is not available. All positions have one-year terms, save the post of the Industrial Worker editor, which is a two-year job. Members should check their General Organizing Bulletin for details.

Delegates sing “Solidarity Forever” to end the General Assembly meeting.

General Assembly co-chair and Starbucks Workers’ Union organizer Sarah Bender facilitates the discussion at the London meeting.
Dave Douglass, Geordies—Wa Men-

Review by P.F.

Geordies—Wa Mental is the first volume in the autobiographical trilogy (Staurust and Coalcloud) of David John Douglass, a coal miner for 40 years in northeastern England along the River Tyne. He tells the fascinating story of the radicalization of a working-class Geordie (northeasterner) ‘baby-boomer’ during the first 20 years of his life and provides a unique and valuable insight into the political and cultural movements of the Sixties.

Column

Working Family

By X348328

Getting laid off is a hard situation and it is worse still when you have a fam-
ily and you’re the only one working. I work in the non-profit sector, which is notorious for short-term fund-
ing, relentless insecurity and a constant scramble for funds to finance the work.

A great American author once ad-
vised anyone wanting to become a real
writer to tell the truth until it hurts and
then to go on telling it. David Douglass’
authobiography is far and away the most
honest piece of writing I have read for
many a long year. Whether or not it
hurt him to write it, it certainly hurts to
read it as page after page is so hilarious
that personally, I laughed till I cried. For
bravely, I’m not even a Geordie,
but rather the sort of hard to impress
Yorkshireman who will glibly stuff a
comedian: ‘Aye, he’s all right, I suppose,
if you like laughing.’

Not that Douglass sets out to be a
comedian. Far from it. His book has a
serious purpose.

He dips his pen in vitriol as he de-
scribes his childhood in a damp pit cot-
tage and the dismally barren schooling
that turned him into a rebel at an early
age. What else could a highly intelligent
boy become, relegated to the despised ‘C’
stream of the British education system?

I work in the non-profit sector, so I
return home. It’s hard to accept that,
when she was growing up.

Douglass was, and remains, a work-
class writer to tell the truth until it hurts, and
the dismally barren schooling
that turned him into a rebel at an early
age. What else could a highly intelligent
boy become, relegated to the despised ‘C’
stream of the British education system?

I want my job back the most when
my father was a Chimney Sweeper
by Hans Marchetto, IU 330, Switzerland

My father was a chimney sweeper
in the morning, just after getting out of bed, he spat black mucus
then he smoked the first Gauloise out of the two packages he smoked every
day and he was proud of it

my collar was always black
from the soot entering the pores
no matter how much he scrubbed
under the shower at night
it stuck like a second skin
the soot were pushed aside
in the bars in which he drank
he belonged to the old-fashioned fellows
who drink while they stand
when I was a little boy he left early
every day at about five
at night he would return at eight
or he wouldn’t
then my mother would send me out
to look for him in the bars
and bring him home
a long tour for a boy like me
the damned neighborhood
had many bars
fortunately, my dad was known
colorful like a black dog
this helped
my father joined the union when he was sixteen
when he was sixty-five he left
with a voucher in his hand
worth 500 francs
they did not want to give it to him at first
the usual reward for leaving a mines was a hotel in tain which they said was cheaper
but my old man had a punctured lung
due to an accident at work
he had a hard time breathing
he lived another two years
and was burned to ashes when he was sixty-seven
i buried his urn in the ground
quite some time has passed
since this happened
i think it is fortunate that i did not become
another job. The cheerless economic
timelines and ongoing election certainly
does little to reinforce my optimism.
Yet, I am optimistic. I am using the

time off to explore other ways of making
a living that doesn’t involve going into
an office and being at someone’s beck-
and-call. Maybe it will turn into a part-time
job that I can work around taking care
of my daughters. Maybe something good
will come out of being laid off.

Maybe, I’ll get my job back sooner
than later.
SweatFree Communities press state governors

By Kenneth Miller

Members of the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance (PASCA) went to Philadelphia on July 11-13 to attend the Fifth Annual SweatFree Communities National Conference, which coincided with the national meeting of the National Governor’s Association. Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell reaffirmed his commitment to his 2004 Executive Order prohibiting the state from procuring sweatshop apparel. His commitment demonstrated that the National Governors are continuing to chair a committee of state, city and county governments with similar mandates that are still struggling to implement them effectively. This governmental committee continues to work closely with SweatFree Communities (www.sweatfree.org).

Rendell demonstrated his commitment to the workers by sending a representative from the Department of Labor and Industry to a Workers’ Rights Board hearing organized by Philadelphia Jobs with Justice and listening to worker testimony.

Kansas next to go Sweatfree

PASCA is currently doing outreach to the Governor of Kansas and our friends at the Hope School/Lucinda Todd Academy in Topeka, Kansas. Based on conversations in early July and follow-up discussions the relationship, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius has said that an Anti-Sweatshop Executive Order is within reach.

PASCA and its “Civil Rights Bridge” partners from the Bias Busters of Kansas are announcing the awaiting appointment and preparing for her presentation at the Lu

Thai women workers strike back against Triumph’s union-busting

By Maqilah Solidarity Network, msn.org

On July 30, 2008, a Thai subsidiary of Triumph International, one of the world’s largest makers of intimate apparel, fired union president Jitra Kotchadej for wearing an unflattering t-shirt.

She wasn’t wearing the t-shirt at work, and it wasn’t the colour or the design of the t-shirt that caused outrage.

It was the message on the shirt: “Those who do not stand are not criminals. Thinking differently is not a crime.”

Those who do not stand are not criminals. Thinking differently is not a crime.

Turkish trade unionist acquitted after waiting 8 months in jail

By Public Services International

Turkish woman trade union leader Meryem Özoğut has been released from jail with a full acquitted and record as the First Seventh September 5 trial. She was imprisoned for eight months, since her December 2007 arrest which followed a press conference she gave on behalf of her trade union organization of public employees in health and social services union, the SES.

She was facing charges on two accounts, the first for “being a member of a terrorist organization” and the second “for making propaganda in favour of the terrorist organization”. A key issue at stake was the prosecution’s contention that her union was a “terrorist organization.”

In a statement issued on September 8 by Public Services International (PSI), Meryem’s union “thanked the international community for its support and solidarity via the LabourStart campaign as well as PSI affiliates.”

Over ten weeks, 8,386 people sent messages via LabourStart to protest her arrest during May Day 2008 protests.

On the first charge the Court ruled that there was insufficient evidence and Meryem Özoğut and other defendants in the case were fully acquitted.

On the second charge, the court ruled that Özoğut had indeed been using the Press Conference to make propaganda in support of a terrorist organisation and sentenced her to 15-months of prison—the maximum for this so-called crime. The court agreed to release her as she had already served eight months of her sentence.

Özoğut’s lawyer will be appealing to the high court of Yargıtay on this second charge. PSI will continue to monitor the situation and support Ms Özoğut’s appeal.

In a message to PSI on Ms Özoğut’s behalf, SES thanked the international community for its support and solidarity via the LabourStart campaign as well as PSI affiliates, the ILO, the EPSU and ETUC, and the European Union Commissioners.

PSI especially thanks EU Parliamentarian Mr Joost Langedijk, Chairman of the Turkish delegation to the European Parliament who had personally handed over the campaign signatures to the EU leaders.

With files from LabourStart.org and the IW.
Wobbles and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History
BY STAUGHTON LYND AND ANDREJ GRUBACIC

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

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

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

—David Graeber, author of Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology and Direct Action: An Ethnography

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The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years
BY FRED W. THOMPSON & JON BEEKEN

For a century, the IWW has been a guerrilla legal force of the rank and file, a hard-hitting labor union, a model of organizing, writing, and utilizing direct action to win. This new revised and expanded edition includes new chapters called "Solidarity Unionism" that can help workers avoid the pitfalls of the legal system and utilize direct action to win. This new revised and expanded edition includes new chapters called "Solidarity Unionism" can help workers avoid the pitfalls of the legal system and utilize direct action to win. This new revised and expanded edition includes new chapters called "Solidarity Unionism" can help workers avoid the pitfalls of the legal system and utilize direct action to win.

The IWW’s 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 also 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.

253 pages, $19.95

Labor Law for the Rank and Filer: Building Solidarity While Staying Clear of the Law
BY STAUGHTON LYND AND DANIEL GROSS

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

Labor Law for the Rank and Filer is a guerrilla legal handbook for workers in a precarious global economy. Blending cutting-edge legal strategies for winning justice at work with a theory of dramatic social change from below, Staughton Lynd and Daniel Gross deliver a practical guide for making work better while re-inventing the labor movement.

Labor Law for the Rank and Filer demonstrates how a powerful model of organizing called "Solidarity Unionism" can help workers avoid the pitfalls of the legal system and utilize direct action to win. This new revised and expanded edition includes new chapters governing fundamental labor rights as well as an added section on Practicing and ignoring the will of its members?

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Illegal suspension, firing of Cambodian union leaders

The ISC wrote a letter to the government of Cambodia and several international monitoring organizations expressing alarm at a wave of suspensions and firings of union leaders working at and for the political, economically, and socially driven...and for the political, economically, and socially driven...and for the political, economically, and socially driven...and for the political, economically, and socially driven...
The ISC further demanded the immediate release of labor activists in Iran and the Minister of Justice Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi info@dadjoo-tehran.ir.

Peaceful May Day demonstrators in Sanandaj were also harshly convicted. Souad Allah-Ibrahimi, a teacher, Kamangar was brutally beaten, batons and using tear gas to disperse the police charged his detention and the recent death sentence against him has also been imposed. To save Kamangar from execution, email the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dr.ahmadinejad@president.ir and the Minister of Justice Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi info@dadjoo-tehran.ir.

A mail carrier from Marseille in the Bouches du Rhône region of France is under attack in the wake of the May 2008 postal strike and needs international solidarity, according to the International Committee of the Confédération nationale du travail.

The ISC also pointed out that many of the seamen in question have worked for world-renowned cruise ship owners that now face possible deportation. In its letter, the ISC also demanded the withdrawal of special measures for all seamen and an immediate end to all harassment of these workers.

Justice for Kashmiri/Pakistani Seamen

The ISC sent a letter strongly protesting the unfair dismissal of 19 Kashmiri/Pakistani seamen, members of the Central Organization of the Workers of Sweden (SAC), working aboard the cruise ship Bjerl-Jurt owned by Rederi Allianza shipping company.

The ISC further demanded the immediate release of all detained union members and activists of the KMWW, the dismissal of all charges against them, and the lifting of all pending arrest warrants against other union activists related to the July 2008 postal strike. The statement declared that these individuals have done nothing more than to carry out their mandate as trade unionists. The ISC's resolution was adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, which provides for the right to organize, the right to represent workers, and the right to strike.

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Solidarity with the workers of Egypt

The ISC has called on the government of Iran to unconditionally and immediately release all prisoners of conscience and repeal all charges and sentences against labor activists in Iran. The ISC further demanded the immediate recognition and realization of human rights to all workers in Iran, including the rights to organize freely and to strike.

By John Kalwicz

Protests and strikes have rocked the African kingdom of Swaziland, surrounded by South Africa, one of the world’s last absolute monarchies on the occasion of the king’s fortieth birthday. On August 22, 1,500 HIV positive women gathered to protest an expensive European cruise ship putting dockside in the port of 13 wives. The protesting women claimed that the money would be better spent treating patients with HIV. Swaziland has the highest HIV/AIDS infection rate in the world, with 38.8 per cent of its 1.2 million people infected and as a result life expectancy for Swazis is 30.

The ISC wrote a letter to the government of Iran expressing outrage at the government’s recent wave of repression against different political activists with convictions of activists by its courts. This pattern of arrests and repression clearly shows that the IWW is facing the entire labor movement in Iran.

On July 20, Farzad Kamangar was sentenced to death for nearly two years after being arrested on charges of terrorism, after just a seven minute trial. Kamangar’s lawyer heard the charges at the trial itself and had just four minutes to state his defense. A teacher, Kamangar was brutally tortured during his detention. Iran accused him of collaborating with organizations it considers terrorist, such as the Kurdish People’s Congress and the Iranian Workers Party (PKK), and for having allegedly transported explosives. He was a member of organizations from Iran and abroad have protested his detention and the recent death sentence against him has also been imposed. To save Kamangar from execution, email the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dr.ahmadinejad@president.ir and the Minister of Justice Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi info@dadjoo-tehran.ir.

Swazi workers organized a general strike to protest the King’s decadence as well as his absolute rule in the government. The strike turned violent after police arrested Jan Sithole, general secretary of the Central Organization of the Workers of Swaziland. Neighboring South African trade unions are now launching an international solidarity campaign with their unions and pro-democracy activists in Swaziland and Zimbabwe.