

SOCIAL JUSTICE INCLUDES THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

# National Week of Solidarity with ACORN Workers

March 29<sup>th</sup> – April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001

Do you know what happened to workers in ACORN workplaces all over the nation when they tried to organize their office? ACORN management began union busting!

## Philadelphia

In late January, Philadelphia ACORN workers formed a union with the Industrial Workers of the World for eight hour work days and safe working conditions. Workers were sexually assaulted, harassed and robbed at gunpoint while working in the field. When they asked ACORN management to work in pairs after dark, management said 'NO!," refusing them their basic right to safety on the job. They were subjected to captive meetings with their boss, where he interrogated them about union activity. Management threatened a pro-union worker with termination if he did not meet certain standards, while allowing an anti-union employee to fall below standards without threat of termination. Within a week, two pro-union workers were fired and one was forced to quit.

**WHERE IS THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THIS STORY?**

## Dallas

In late February, hearing word of the Philadelphia office organizing, Dallas ACORN workers discussed organizing a union in their own office. They were tired of late and short paychecks. After the head organizer got word, the lead organizer was pulled aside, accused of union activity and told to get his things out of the office by 4:30 pm. Two workers mentioned that a union would strengthen the organization to the head organizer. The next day, both were fired.

**WHERE IS THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THIS STORY?**

## Seattle

In late February, ACORN workers also decide to organize a union with the Industrial Workers of World because of frustration with late and short paychecks, not receiving promised health care benefits and management's lack of response to reports of sexual harassment in the field and by other ACORN organizers. The boss began to interrogate workers about union activity. The workers asked their head organizer to recognize the union and he refused. The workers exercised their legal right to go on strike for union recognition. Four days later, ACORN management brought in scab labor, moved the office to an unknown location, and locked the workers out.

**WHERE IS THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THIS STORY?**

**SHOW YOUR SOLIDARITY WITH ACORN WORKERS!**

**Contact the IWW for more information on how you can help:**

IWW • P.O. Box 13476 • Philadelphia, PA 19101 • (215)-763-1274 box 5

IWW • 5215 Ballard NW • Seattle, WA 98115 • 206-706-6250

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IT'S NOT ANTI-ACORN TO BE PRO-UNION



# ACORN's People's Platform

The following are sections of ACORN's own People's Platform (full text at <http://www.acorn.org/pp-content.html>) which ACORN management has violated by its treatment of its own employees.

## Work and Worker's Rights

### III. Provide an adequate income to every American

- Guarantee a minimum annual family income at a figure equivalent to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics "medium living standard," adjusted for inflation.
- Extend minimum wage coverage to all wage earners and peg increases in it to the cost of living.

### IV. Establish the fundamental rights of workers, to include:

- The right to a job which does not endanger health or safety.
- The right to a job which is accessible from home.
- The right to a job which does not require overtime work as a condition of employment.
- The right to company or government financed child care for the worker's children.
- The right to a fair grievance procedure.
- Most fundamentally, the right to organize, which is to be promoted by:
  - a. Extending the National Labor Relations Act coverage to all workers.
  - b. Streamlining the union election and certification process.
  - c. Restricting the use of anti-strike injunction by courts.
  - d. Providing stiff penalties-back wages times five-for employers who fire or demote workers for their organizing activities.
- The right to company or government financed health insurance.

### V. Reform the National Labor Relations Act

#### For workers:

- Permit
  - a. sympathy strikes
  - b. secondary boycotts
  - c. picketing to support sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts.
- Permit automatic union certification when a majority of a bargaining unit has signed authorization cards.
- Permit workers to refuse to handle "Struck work".
- Permit striking workers to receive unemployment compensation, welfare, and food stamps.

#### For management:

- Prohibit the hiring of temporary replacements to fund anti-union campaigns.
- Prohibit all lockouts.
- Regulate management consultation.
- Regulate management consultants:
  - a. Require consultants to file financial disclosure forms with state labor departments.
  - b. Prohibit the use of tax dollars to fund anti-union campaigns.
- Prohibit employers from forcing workers to listen to anti-union campaigns.
- Require management to negotiate over what the National Labor Relations Board now calls "permissive subjects": Sale of the company, work schedules, pricing, choice of suppliers, organization of management, etc.
- Prohibit the use of bankruptcy as a tool to throw out valid collective bargaining agreements.

### VIII. Protect All Workers

- Part-time and temporary workers should receive proportionately the same benefits as full-time workers.
- Workers in unorganized work sites should be able to join unions, and receive the benefits of union membership.
- All workers whether public or private, in small or large numbers, should have the legal right to:
  - a. Organize;
  - b. Bargain Collectively;
  - c. Strike when necessary;

and these rights should be under the full protection of the law.

## Will ACORN live up to its principles?