

TRUCKERS UNITED

Newsletter of the Motor Transport Workers Industrial Union 530 - Volume 1 - Issue 2 - Fall 2008

We are Family:

IWW Truckers Build Community Support in North Carolina

By Trey Levy

On Saturday September 13, two members of the IWW IU 530 Transport Workers Local Organizing Committee were invited to the Jamesville Community Center to attend a fellowship meeting of the Hope Temple United Holy Church. Organized by the Church's newly hired minister—a local driver who goes by the handle of “preacher man”—the event had been planned as a community cook-out. The gathering would allow the Reverend and his congregation to introduce themselves to local families. However, the Reverend, an ardent supporter of IU 530, soon realized that the event would attract many of the container haulers and log drivers who live in Jamesville and the surrounding towns. The Reverend, along with other local union supporters, decided that the meeting would be the perfect opportunity to explain to their neighbors why truckers in Eastern North Carolina had recently been striving to build a community-based union of independent truckers, company drivers, and owner-operators. Once it had been established that IWW would be discussed, it was decided the get-together provided the ideal opportunity to unveil an exciting new organizing strategy.

In this way, the barbecue and pot-lock lunch became the latest event in a 6 month old transport workers' campaign in this part of North Carolina. The thinking way simple: the church, much like a union, is a family. Together they form two pillars of a strong community. Local rank-and-file drivers had long agreed on the need to build a firm base of community support. Their employers, large international and domestic corporations, are not in touch with needs of the community. Issues of pay, working conditions, and even the environment have been ignored by companies like Weyerhaeuser and BTT for too long. For all these reasons union supporters had decided it was time to introduce Wobbly organizers to their families,

fellow church members, and neighbors.

While any workplace organizing campaign worth its salt is also a community organizing campaign, community support is especially crucial in this southern state. North Carolina is one of the many southern states in which workers are legally denied many of the basic protections that are commonplace around the world. Community support for a Southern truckers' union is all the more pressing given the fact many towns along the North Carolina coast are dependent upon the logging industry for their economic livelihood. If a worker loses his or her job, it affects the whole community. Likewise, if drivers win a raise, it is a boon to the entire local economy.

For towns like Jamesville, with their tight-knit communities, a truckers' union begins at a great advantage: workers and community members already know one another. Events like the Holy Temple community picnic go on all the time. All it takes for drivers to achieve the

justice, fairness, dignity, and respect they deserve is for them to continue reaching out to their neighbors and friends. In this way the union snowball will quickly become an avalanche. (Real snow, however, is a rarity in these parts...) Contemplating and discussing these very issues, truckers, organizers, and community members enjoyed a full smorgasbord of Southern delicacies while they shared laughs, got to know each other, and developed warm friendships. After the meal, the Reverend once again led attendees in prayer and then requested that all truckers in the audience join him at the front of the room. He then began to explain why a union was so desperately

Continued on Page 2



NC Truckers

FedEx Drivers Continue Winning Legal Battles

An Indiana court has agreed to hear the case of Federal Express drivers who are suing the shipping giant in order to win formal recognition as employees. FedEx has long claimed its drivers are independent contractors, a position which exempts the company from federally mandated payroll taxes and undermines unionization efforts. However, if Indiana recognizes the drivers as workers—a precedent already set by courts in California and the Washington state NLRB—the drivers plan to sue for one billion dollars in damages.

FedEx CEO Fred Smith, who serves as co-chair of Republican John

McCain's presidential campaign, scoffed at the drivers' claims. Although he attempted to equate the subcontracting system with “freedom,” it appears his true concerns

Continued on Page 2

Inside this Issue:

- Teamsters avoid strike.....2
- Worldwide Truckers.....3
- Join the IWW.....4

Teamsters705, UPS reach tentative agreement

Under the threat of a looming strike deadline of August 1st, UPS reached a tentative agreement with its Chicago-area workforce on July 29th. Covering 11,000 workers who currently make between \$8.50 and \$28 an hour, the proposed contract increases hourly pay by four dollars over the course of five years. Beyond this, workers

Family...from Page 1

needed in this rural part of North Carolina. Drivers often labor 12, 14, or 16 hours a day just to make ends meet. Even after such excessive shifts, the truckers are denied any sort of paper trail to ensure they receive the proper pay for their work. This lack of transparency has seen truckers robbed of their rightful wages again and again. Moreover, they have no paid holidays, receive paltry benefits, if any at all, and the increasing price of gasoline has seen a marked decrease in weekly earnings. The Reverend concluded by explaining how workplace organization would not only see truckers make gains in pay and conditions, but that the very process of building a powerful grassroots union would deepen an already strong sense of community togetherness.

The second reason the organizers had been invited, geared more directly toward building industrial strength, was equally successful. It was at this meeting that the first of the North Carolina truckers placed a bumper sticker on his rig that read simply: ORGANIZE!. The idea for the sticker had first been hatched at organizing meeting in New Bern, just down the road from Jamesville. The truckers were devising ways to spread the word about the burgeoning truckers' union when they struck upon the idea of the stickers. The truckers concurred it would be a great way to create a 'buzz.' Fellow drivers couldn't miss the big red "ORGANIZE" and would naturally inquire about what it meant. Each time the question would be asked, it would be an opportunity to explain the union and discuss the benefits of organization.

Truckers, organizers, and community members alike left the meeting satisfied that beyond enjoying an afternoon in good company, progress had been made in taking the necessary steps to bring organization to this small town. All look forward to meeting again very soon.

secured an extra personal day off and an extra week of vacation per year, increasing the total vacation time of a 30 year employee from 7 to 8 weeks. Supported by a 93% vote in favor of strike action if the already-extended bargaining session faltered, the UPS teamsters fought the trend of downsizing and outsourcing by securing hundreds of new feeder shuttle jobs. The union also won improved contract language regarding seniority and bidding rights, air operation, and grievance procedure.



Colombian Truck Drivers on Strike Over Rising Fuel, Living Costs

Truckers, a necessary component in keeping Colombia's coffee industry running successfully, are continuing their strike after accusing Colombian president Alvaro Uribe of failing to implement a plan to improve truckers' freight rates and working conditions. The strike, which involves 150,000 trucks, keeps 30,000 60-kilogram sacks of coffee beans from reaching port every day. According to the National Federation of Coffee Growers, the strike is costing the Colombian coffee industry 6 million dollars a day. Colombia's coffee industry, the third largest in the world, provides for the livelihoods of over a half million Colombian families and generates billions of dollars in profit for multinational corporations. Colombian truckers understand the power they hold in the chain of production and Nemésio Castillo, the president of the Colombian Truck Drivers' Association, has vowed "The strike will continue until the government recognizes that the rate at which we are paid must keep up with our costs."



FedEx...from Page 1

lie elsewhere. FedEx, with a net income of \$1.1 billion, faces scrutiny from many directions. Thirty states are looking into the company's use of contractors while drivers throughout the country are hoping the Indiana case and others like it will lead to their proper reclassification.

Fred Smith knows that both the employee status and unionization will see FedEx workers make significant financial gains. As one investor put it, the company has "a cost advantage in being nonunion." Workers, however, are realizing this "advantage" comes at their expense, a contention that Marick Masters, a business professor at the University of Pittsburg, confirms. Masters estimates that by classifying its workers as subcontractors, FedEx Ground expends 30% less on labor costs than does its unionized rival UPS. Likewise, the Teamsters estimate that if FedEx paid its contractors the same as its company drivers, labor costs (and the money in its workers' pockets!) would increase \$425 million dollars a year. The Teamster's calculations assume FedEx would pay Social Security and Medicare taxes, unemployment and worker-compensation insurance, vacations, health insurance, and 15 hours of overtime, per worker, per week.

FedEx, however, has made it clear it will not submit to worker demands without a fight. In response to the previously mentioned California ruling, the company converted single-route drivers to multi-route. This move forced "subcontractors" to buy their own trucks and employ their own drivers if they wished to remain with FedEx. Yet even this shallow attempt to forestall rightful recognition has met with driver resistance. Already, in Washington State, employees of subcontractors are suing FedEx in response to its claim they are not entitled to overtime pay.

Got a Story about your Company???

Send your submissions to
CB SoapBox
C/O MTW IU530
PO Box 274
Waukegan, IL 60079

Truckin' Round the World



French Truckers and Cabbies Block Oil Refinery to Protest Fuel Costs

In June of this year, French truckers blockaded an oil refinery in an attempt to force oil companies and the French government to tackle the high and rising cost of fuel. In an act of coordinated solidarity, some 300 cab drivers, with the full support of their union, joined the blockade.

This was not the first time the refinery had been a target for protest action. The week prior the transport workers' action, fishermen too had blockaded the refinery and for much the same reason. The fishermen's militancy had been met with tear gas as French police violently sought to end the blockade. Although the striking truckers claimed they had not been in contact with fishermen, they pointed out that they intended to protest in a "peaceful way." When asked about the possibility of a second police intervention, an official of the truckers' union had this to say, "We'll avoid clashes and leave so as to be able to better return."

The refinery action was part of a wave of fuel related protests that has rocked Europe over the past year. On the same day as refinery blockade, vineyard workers blockaded a key French fuel terminal and an official of the French trawlers' union which had participated in first refinery blockade, made it clear that his union members had not ruled out the possibility of joining the truckers and cabbies in their blockade.

Friends and Fellow Workers,

So far this year has been an empowering one for truckers. This has been especially clear internationally. We should read about our fellow truckers across the globe and be inspired. They are fighting for improvements in the same industry that we are, and in an age of a globalized economy, we

are inextricably connected. Their struggle is our struggle. But there is still much to do to transform this industry for the better. We must continue to help one another, show solidarity to each other, and unite across regions to improve our work and our lives.

-T.U.



French and Spanish Truckers Blockade Border

Five Million Indian Truck Drivers On Strike

This July witnessed five million Indian truck drivers park their rigs and demand the government redress issues of high fuel prices, toll relief, and economy-wide inflation. Officially, the negotiations had broken off when the Indian transportation minister told union leaders that it would not be possible to reverse the recent increase in toll prices. However, the same transport minister is still holding talks with the Oil and Natural Gas Min-

istry to see if the truckers' demand for a reduction of diesel fuel tax can be met. The truckers will continue their strike until a satisfactory resolution is achieved.

Australian Truckers Begin Two Week Strike

Riding the wave of worldwide trucker militancy, Australian truckers began a two week national strike in late July. Predictably, issues of fuel cost were a motivating factor in the strike. However, issues over newly imposed fatigue laws and increased registration fees were also amongst the truckers' concerns. Striking trucker Peter Schuback explained the situation, "We've got laws out there that are going to cost the drivers \$10,000, plus \$1,000 for every 15 minutes they're over their log book, plus six demerit points, plus their bosses will get multiplier of five, yet the Government has failed to put any infrastructure in place for the drivers to be able to use." The National Road Transport Forum, which is helping to coordinate that strike, acknowledges that the shutdown could potentially cripple Australia's road transport industry. However, the average Australian is also feeling the pinch of high gas prices and Mick Pattell, spokesperson for the NRFT, is hopeful the public will support the strike.



Indian Truckers Strike July 2008

Join the IWW

And Improve your Life at Work

The Motor Transport Workers Industrial Union of the IWW is committed to building one big union of truckers across the globe.

The IWW has been organizing in transportation since its founding in 1905. We currently have members on four continents. Unlike other unions, MTW organizers also work in the trucking industry, so they understand the conditions that affect you. There is still a lot of work to be done and we welcome any help. We need your knowledge, skills, and creativity to help us improve the trucking industry for all.

MTWIU members are building a proud, member-run, fighting union willing to stand up for their fellow workers in the trucking industry. We know that improvements at work can only be realized when solidarity reigns among the workers of our industry. We invite you to join the IWW and to let other transportation workers know about us.

Joining the IWW Means

- ✓ Solidarity across the industry and beyond
- ✓ Members across the globe willing to take action for your struggle
- ✓ More members yield stronger negotiating position
- ✓ Already a presence in the transportation sector
- ✓ Large network of experienced people willing to help you
- ✓ Skilled organizers to assist you
- ✓ Free legal consul
- ✓ Free Trainings
- ✓ Structures give us most freedom locally and most power globally
- ✓ 100% democratic decision-making in our affairs

What We can Accomplish Together

- ✓ 100% fuel reimbursement
- ✓ Respect from our companies
- ✓ Pay Increases
- ✓ Paid wait times
- ✓ Paid overtime
- ✓ Sensible scheduling
- ✓ Voluntary overtime
- ✓ Protection from Firings

NC Meeting for Log and Container Haulers and Local Community

Saturday October 4, 2008

at the

Live Oak Church
Hwy 17 North
Bridgeton, NC

For Detailed Directions Call

Tom: 919-554-8015

or

Billy: 646-645-6284

If you are interested in joining please request an application at:

mtw530@IWW.org

or write to us at:

**Motor Transport Workers IU 530
PO Box 274
Waukegan, IL 60079**

Visit us on the Web:

<http://truckers.IWW.org>

The Motor Transport Workers IU is an affiliated union of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).



Truckers United
C/O Motor Transport Workers IU 530
PO Box 274
Waukegan, IL 60079

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: