

# TRUCKERS UNITED

Newsletter of the Motor Transport Workers Industrial Union 530 - Volume 1 - Issue 3 - Winter 2009

## NC Truckers to Formalize Union Over MLK Weekend

### Negotiating Committee Already Formed in Preparation for Talks

by Trey Levy

On the weekend of Martin Luther King Day, log truckers and container haulers from Eastern North Carolina and Virginia will be gathering to formally charter the United Truckers Union. This event will be the culmination of a nearly year-long organizing drive that led to a work stoppage on the morning of December 8, 2008. That action, which saw small but lively pickets outside of Weyerhaeuser mills along coastal North Carolina, reduced the amount of logs entering the New Bern mill by approximately 35% and shut down several tree stands in the Plymouth area. Only six trucks left BTT's yard, one of Weyerhaeuser's primary subcontractors and a target of the strike.

Following the morning's stoppage, an unnamed Weyerhaeuser representative announced to local media that management agreed to the workers' key demand: that mill management recognize the drivers' organization and arrange a meeting between the drivers' negotiating committee, Weyerhaeuser, and

representatives of the subcontractors who employ the drivers. Accordingly, the union has directed a letter to the Vice President for Southern Timberland in Seattle, Washington offering several dates and places for an initial meeting.

ment has been a source of moral as well as real world support. The drivers would like to take this opportunity to thank the unionists and environmental activists who picketed Weyerhaeuser corporate headquarters on the day of their recent strike. Likewise, they are extending their sincerest appreciations to USW Locals in North Carolina and Washington State, UE 150, and the Northwest Log Truckers Cooperative.



Community support has proven integral to the drivers' success. In particular, local churches have vocally supported the organization. "Preacher," a union member and an ordained reverend, described this relationship: "The drivers represent the community, the church represents the community. What affects one of us, affects all of us. We're all in this together." Along much these same lines, the solidarity shown by the larger labor move-

The drivers have already announced their intention to affiliate with the Industrial Workers of the World Motor Transport Workers Industrial Union (IWW IU 530). Founded in 1905, the IWW is a democratic and militant rank-and-file industrial union. The IWW believes that only through self organization can drivers break the pattern of injustice they face in their industry.

### Inside this Issue:

- Teamsters jump on lawsuit...2
- Weyerhaeuser profits up.....2
- Worldwide truckers.....3
- Join the IWW.....4

# California Responds to Union Demands, Public Pressure and Begins Prosecuting Exploitative Trucking Companies

by Staff Writer

In February of 2008, California Attorney General Edmund G. Brown Jr. authorized a state task force to investigate abuses committed against port truckers who are inappropriately and often illegally classified as “independent contractors.”

In September, California initiated a string of lawsuits against exploitative trucking companies. Investigators found that the intentional misclassification of drivers as “independents” allowed trucking companies to avoid payroll taxes and that their drivers—who by law should be recognized as employees—were denied basic rights. In many instances drivers worked up to 60 hours per week, drove company trucks, and were paid directly by a single subcontractor who determined drivers’ routes and set a company-wide pay scale. The investigation found that drivers were essentially paid on a ‘piecework’ basis and should be given the safety protections and overtime allowances given to employees.

The Teamsters Union supported the investigation and the lawsuits. The union is active in many of California’s ports and has spearheaded a legal campaign to see that other misclassified “independent” truckers—most notably the drivers of FedEx Ground—are rightfully recognized as employees.

“By unlawfully labeling the port drivers independent contractors, these trucking companies exploit the system to deny workers

and their families their right to benefits and fair compensation,” said Jim Santangelo, Teamsters Western Region International Vice President. “Attorney General Brown is doing the right thing by standing up against these trucking companies who cheat the harbor communities out of good middle-class jobs.”

“This is an exploitive practice that exists in every port across the country,” said Chuck Mack, international vice president and director of the Teamsters Union Port Division. “It is our hope that these lawsuits will be the beginning of the end of this independent contractor scheme.”

## The Wealth We Produce: Weyerhaeuser Profit Doubles in Third Quarter 2008

by Trey Levy

Weyerhaeuser Corporation has announced its net income doubled to \$280 million in the third quarter of 2008. Up from \$101 million the same time last year, Weyerhaeuser’s stock rose from 47 cents to \$1.33 a share in the same period. Yet despite such wealth, Weyerhaeuser, the largest landowner in the world and North America’s leading lumber producer, systematically underpays the log drivers and container haulers who are vital to the company’s success. Like Federal Express and other unscrupulous employers, Weyerhaeuser has discovered it can manipulate employment laws by classifying its truckers as “independent contractors.” Although Weyerhaeuser unilaterally controls the rates and routes of its drivers through a complex and unaccountable sys-



tem of subcontractors, by claiming the truckers are “independents” the company avoids having to provide the basic protections and benefits granted to regular employees.

Joining a worldwide wave of trucker militancy, Weyerhaeuser drivers are organizing and fighting back. In Washington State, log drivers have come together to form the Northwest Log Truckers Cooperative. Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists, the cooperative is lobbying to change laws that unfairly classify its drivers as independents. Taking a more direct action oriented approach, log truckers and container haulers in North Carolina have formed the United Truckers Union. Having already taken strike action, the IWW-affiliated union has formed a negotiating committee and will begin talks with Weyerhaeuser management in the new year. United in their belief that self-organization is the only way for Weyerhaeuser truckers to achieve justice, both organizations have been in contact and plan to coordinate efforts in the future.



## ***Truckin' Round the World***

# **Truckers in Peru Hold National Strike During APEC Leaders Summit**

In late September truckers in Peru began an “indefinite” strike to demand the government address a growing list of drivers’ grievances. Hoping to highlight the power of truck drivers in our global economy, Peru’s trucking unions saw to it that the strike coincided with the start of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Summit in the Peruvian capital of Lima.

The drivers want the government to address nine issues, eight of which concern the passage of new laws that can lead to jail sentences for drivers. Besides facing the possibility of arrest and imprisonment in the event of a fatal accident, under the new legislation drivers can be incarcerated when they break transit laws. The unions

argue that instead of the threat of jail time, governments should enact safety laws that protect drivers and penalize the companies that force drivers to work in unsafe conditions.

the union to arrange a meeting with the government. “Business people have understood our reasons, in the sense that the problems we have are not because we have not attempted



National Strike in Peru

Alfonso Rivas, the head of the national truckers union explained that the action was called only after the Ministry of Transportation rejected numerous attempts by

to negotiate or because we want to start trouble during the APEC summit,” said Rivas.

Trucking unions around the world have long believed that instead of criminalizing truckers, governments need to ensure that drivers are paid enough so that they can secure a living wage without having to work excessive hours. Recent history has shown that only organization and action—

much like the strike of Peruvian drivers—can force governments and trucking companies to respect the rights, safety, and livelihoods of truckers worldwide.



**Got a Story about your Company???**

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

# 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

## SPECIAL INVITATION

**Log and Container Drivers of  
NC and Virginia - Be a Part of History!!!**

**Join us to form the United Truckers, a membership run union of all truckers**

**Saturday January 17th, 12pm-4pm  
Jamesville Rec Center, Jamesville NC  
309 New St, at cross of Old 64 and 71  
BBQ provided!  
Info? Billy 646-645-6284**

Interested in joining?

Email us at:

**mtw530@IWW.org**

Write to us at:

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

Visit us on the Web:

**<http://truckers.IWW.org>**

Phone us at:

**847-693-6261**



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PLACE  
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HERE

To: