

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER



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## Work To Rule: Organizing The One Big Union At Starbucks

By FW Sarah

### The Match That Started the Fire

Weekends are notoriously crazy for a Starbucks barista. These are the days when people have time to vent their frustrations from the previous workweek on some unsuspecting worker. Customers come in with their screaming children, busloads of tourists struggle to understand why a small drink would be called “tall” and the stores themselves are almost always understaffed to handle the demand. It is therefore fitting that it was a Sunday when an event triggered Starbucks baristas to engage in a clever power play to make work conditions better.

Anna, also lovingly known as “Momma Bear” for her fiercely protective attitude, is originally from Florida. She told me her story once as we walked around the neighborhood where we work; the abuse

she endured at home, the rape that resulted in the birth of her son, bullying at the hands of other girls at school and the death of her best friend. Anna has been a Starbucks barista for the last three years. She likes the job because her co-workers are nice and show her respect. She knows almost every customer who comes into our high-volume store and sometimes even decorates his or her cup with hand-drawn pictures. Anna’s ability to work is often hampered by chronic health issues. I have worked shifts where she leaves the floor to cough up blood. The intensity of the work we do when we are understaffed, amplified by other environmental factors that come from being poor and living in the projects, causes her to fall ill and catch every cold and virus that she comes into contact with.

This particular Sunday, Anna needed to leave early due to illness. She had

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IWW Starbucks Workers Union protest in New York City.

Photo: libcom.org

## Boston Wobblies Defend Harvard Workers And Local Bus Drivers

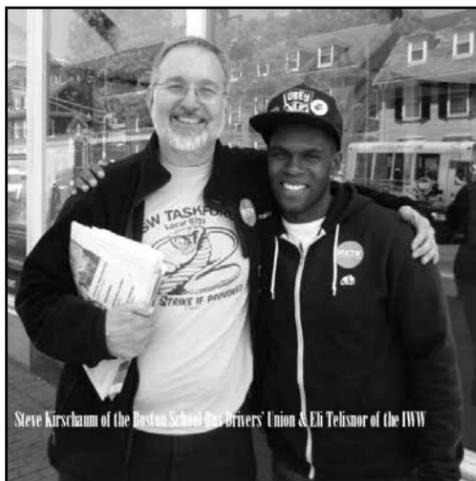


Wobblies and bus drivers protest at Harvard University's commencement.

By Geoff Carens

On May 29, Wobblies who are members of the Harvard Union of Clerical & Technical Workers (HUCTW) helped organize an action at the world's richest university's commencement. The Student Labor Action Movement (SLAM) helped us build for the event, and mobilized their members to turn out. SLAM has been fiercely defending campus workers for

many years. Participants in the visibility action included HUCTW's Johany Pilar, who has been facing ongoing retaliation for reporting sexual harassment. Johany was called an “embarrassing Latina” by a manager in Harvard's Campus Services. HUCTW representative Nassim Kerkache, who also attended, was demoted three salary grades by the same manager, who said his English wasn't good enough to



Steve Kirschbaum of the Boston School Bus Drivers' Union & Eli Telisnor of the IWW

Photos: Steve Kirschbaum

be a coordinator—the position he'd occupied for years! HUCTW member Marvin Byrd was another subject of the protest. Marvin, who uses braces to walk, was called “that dirty black man” by the very same administrator, has been kept in a lower salary grade than co-workers with the same job duties, and recently threatened with termination. Paul Casey, laid off after 30-plus years of service shortly after he returned from a disability leave, was another participant in the visibility action. Paul was supposedly laid off for “lack of work,” although he was very busy in his job. His duties were simply distributed to other employees. Flyers we distributed to hundreds of graduates, families and

passers-by also called attention to the case of Judy Rouse. Judy, a member of UNITE HERE Local 26, was fired by Harvard in retaliation for being an active and effective shop steward.

Highlights of the action included the large surrealist puppets which were kindly hauled to the protest and hoisted by local anarchists from the Lantern Collective. They got a lot of attention and made it easy to pass out flyers! Everybody wanted to know what was going on when they saw the striking figures, one enormous one bearing the motto “Mentiri” or “to lie,” a play on Harvard's Latin motto, “Veritas” (truth). Wobs and HUCTW members were also heartened by the solidarity from United Steelworkers (USW) Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers' Union. Drivers Steve Gilles and Steve Kirschbaum, terminated for union activity, helped us hand out flyers and support Harvard workers under attack.

On June 2, Wobblies returned the favor and mobilized in support of the school bus drivers at a community meeting. Boston's unelected Boston School Committee

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## Steel Valley Turns Into “Deal” Valley

By Fellow Worker Martin Zehr

Steel jobs in Monongahela Valley, Pa. have been an issue for decades. For the last 30 to 40 years workers have seen mills shut down and threats of other closings held over the heads of those still working. Workers have seen the mill close in Homestead; the United States Steel Corporation (U.S. Steel) mills in Duquesne and Clairton closed in 1984. In an eight-year span, from 1979 to 1987, the Pittsburgh region lost 133,000 manufacturing jobs. Today, there is new cry from the steel bosses—the Keystone XL pipeline and fracking is a “U.S. Steel right,” say steel industry bosses.

On May 19, workers in orange flame resistant suits stood out at a rally in Munhall, Pa., where steel bosses, United Steelworkers (USW) reps and local politicians shared the stage and the message. Somewhere in the crowd was the IWW. A

worker passed by on the way to the rally and said: “Good to see the Wobblies here.” While there was not much time for discussion on the IWW at the rally, the workers remember Homestead Local 1397's rank and file. They still know the name of Local 1397 President Ron Wiesen who fought the steel bosses and the closing of the Homestead mill. Even the speakers at the rally pointed to the site where steel workers fought the company's Pinkerton thugs for union recognition in 1892. There were no promises from the bosses back then, just the exercise of brutal force.

Everything is packaged today: the bottled water brought to the rally, the bags of chips handed out to rally participants, the speeches from local politicians telling us all how hard they are working to save steel jobs, and the promises from USW

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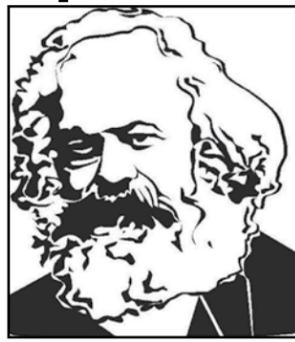
IWW members, branches, job shops and other affiliated bodies can get the word out about their project, event, campaign or protest each month in the *Industrial Worker*. Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to:

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- \$12 for 1" tall, 1 column wide
- \$40 for 4" by 2 columns
- \$90 for a quarter page

## Easy On The "Capital"-ism

Left wing, right wing—it all tastes like chicken to me, but it seems a shrinking faction on the left will forever wave Karl Marx's "Capital" like Cotton Mather waved his Bible. Yet we are never treated to anything new or particularly exciting by those who think our anti-capitalist actions will improve vastly from the writings of yet one more dead white European.



Graphic: lostsambista.wordpress.com

Some of Marx's musings are worth remembering. My personal favorite is when he said, "I am not a Marxist," because Marx knew his followers would get it wrong; indeed, no revolution which claimed to follow his ideas ever attempted to abolish the wage system. Mikhail Bakunin butted heads with Marx by warning against the dangers of vanguardism and the oxymoronic idea of a workers' state. In Pyotr Kropotkin's words, Marx's vision of how to achieve socialism was antagonistic to the strategy of "direct economical struggle against capitalism, without interfering in the political parliamentary agitation."

Marx also said that if you tell a capi-

talist you are going to hang him, he'll try to sell you the rope. But most workers find out quickly a boss will do anything for a buck, sometimes at the expense of everyone involved. Thanks, Karl! And while you're at it, drone on about the value of labor and commodities, but those of us who are actually working have a good idea of what needs to happen, and we don't need a fat stifling book to show us the way!

I can appreciate that Marx's ideas evolved during his life, and that at one point he wrote words which the IWW would include in its Preamble. Fortunately the idea of the One Big Union is simple: workers coming together industrially to democratically decide how to protect their interests and improve their lives. A strong campaign doesn't need its workers gnawing on "Capital," but instead feasting on a serving of syndicalism and a delicious dish of direct action. They'll find out it tastes better than chicken.

**Benjamin Ferguson**

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## Wobbly History

## Exploring The History Of IWW Activity In Grand Rapids, Michigan

By Ruhe

In recent years, the Industrial Workers of the World branch in Grand Rapids, Mich. has received attention on the pages of *Industrial Worker* and across the world for its organizing efforts. In the mid-2000s, a campaign to organize workers at Starbucks received considerable attention, while a more recent campaign to organize workers at Star Tickets in Grand Rapids was undertaken beginning in 2010. The cooperatively-run restaurant Bartertown Diner also affiliated with the IWW when it opened back in 2011.

These contemporary acts are essential to the continued presence of the IWW in the city. However, beyond these recent struggles, there is a history of IWW activity in Grand Rapids that is largely unknown. Owing to the IWW's legacy of 100 years of struggle, it isn't a surprise that Grand Rapids—a mid-sized city in the Midwest that once had a strong industrial base in the furniture industry—would have attracted the interest of the IWW. In cities like Grand Rapids, workers were fed up with the tactics of craft unions and the continued exploitation by the capitalist class, and the IWW's militant approach had an undeniable appeal. Going back to the earliest years of the IWW, workers founded the Grand Rapids Industrial Workers Union No. 327. There isn't a lot known about the union—it formed following a visit by a national organizer and almost immediately was attacked by other labor organizations in town who saw it as a threat to their power. Industrial Workers Union No. 327 was like hundreds of locals that formed and fell apart in the IWW's early years, vanishing largely without a trace.

In 1910, a group of workers and former members of the Socialist Party in Grand Rapids established Grand Rapids Furniture Workers Local 202. Despite its name, Local 202 was a mixed-local with workers in various industries. Only half of its 30 founding members came from the

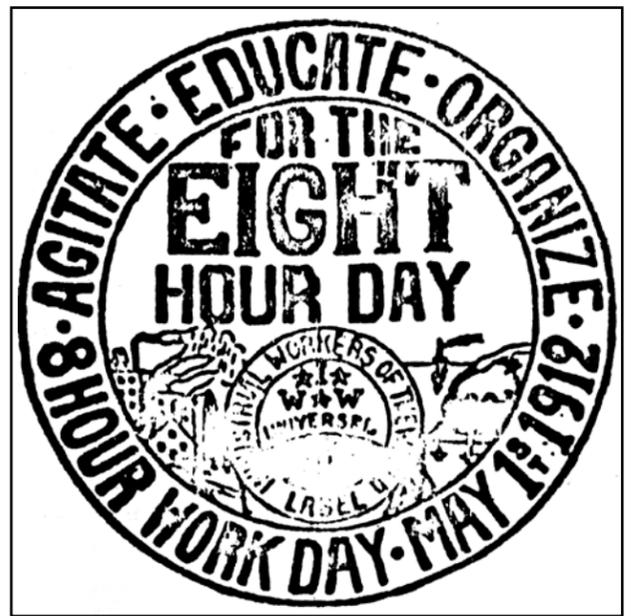
city's large furniture industry. Its name reflected the importance of the furniture industry in Grand Rapids and showed the union's interest in organizing within it. Efforts to organize furniture workers proved to be relatively unsuccessful, but it was not for a lack of trying. Local 202 intervened in one of the most well-known labor conflicts in Grand Rapids' history, the Furniture Strike of 1911. While never having a strong base of workers in the furniture industry, the IWW nonetheless played a role in the strike. Members of the IWW provided frequent updates on the situation in Grand Rapids to the national IWW via the pages of *Solidarity*. The articles written for *Solidarity* reflected the development of IWW theory in the early 1910s, with the IWW in Grand Rapids encouraging independent worker organizing, rejecting the gradualism of craft unions, urging the organizing of unskilled workers, and advocating for sabotage and passive resistance. Whereas the official unions distanced themselves from instances of worker militancy including relatively limited acts of property destruction and attacks on scabs, the IWW defended them. During the strike, the IWW held regular weekly meetings designed to agitate and promote self-organization of furniture workers. At key points in the strike, the IWW invited national organizers such as Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to fan the flames. When the strike ultimately failed, the IWW organized a massive distribution effort of a piece titled "Why This Defeat?" that explained the failure of the strike in light of craft union tactics.

Along with its efforts in the furniture industry, the most prominent campaign that the IWW engaged in was an effort to organize garbage workers in 1912. Workers went on strike in 1912, and while the workers were initially unrepresented, several workers were Wobblies. As the strike progressed and was criticized by the

city government and other labor organizations, workers affiliated with the IWW. Ultimately, the involvement of the IWW didn't do anything to help the strike as the city government was determined to crush it. The workers were eventually fired and the local government used the strike as a pretext to attack the IWW, banning it from soapboxing in town and preventing IWW members from getting their jobs back. Reflecting on their organizing efforts a few years later, a member of Local 202 wrote that this was a critical defeat for the IWW in Grand Rapids.

Beyond these two organizing campaigns, Local 202 organized a number of public events throughout its existence. It hosted a wide range of IWW speakers, including visits by Frank Bohn and Ben Williams. In addition, members of Local 202 wrote for IWW publications such as *Solidarity* and the *Industrial Worker*, providing coverage of events in Grand Rapids and weighing in on strategic debates within the national IWW. Some Local 202 members would gain national prominence within the IWW, among them were A.M. Stirton, an editor of *Solidarity* who worked with Local 202 in 1910, as well as T.F.G. Dougherty, who wrote a pamphlet published by the IWW titled "How to Overcome the High Cost of Living." Dougherty left Grand Rapids in 1913 "after a particularly strenuous IWW campaign" but later was arrested in Seattle under criminal anarchy laws.

The last activity of Local 202 seems to have taken place in 1914. That year the union published a lengthy analysis of its



A sticker that was for sale in the *Industrial Worker* on April 20, 1911. This propaganda reflects one of the demands of the furniture strike in Grand Rapids. Graphic: *Industrial Worker*

organizing efforts titled "What's the Matter with Grand Rapids?" that explored the inability of the IWW to catch on in the city. Among its insights, the IWW cited the high turnover within the local, opposition from the city liberal government, and the lack of talented organizers who worked within the industries they were trying to organize. The union also identified the pacifying effect that the high rates of home ownership had on workers in Grand Rapids, arguing that because so many workers were tied to their homes, they were dependent on capitalism and adverse to taking real risks.

The IWW appeared in Grand Rapids again in 1917, with brief accounts in the mainstream press reporting that anti-conscription stickers produced by the IWW were used to vandalize military recruiting posters. Additionally, three IWW organizers were arrested in Grand Rapids as part of an investigation involving local, federal, and private detective agencies. In both cases, the government had a zero-tolerance policy for IWW organizing and acted aggressively to stop potential organizing against the draft and job actions. This reflected the larger campaign of repression that was directed against the IWW during World War I. Again reflecting larger trends in the IWW, a branch was formed in the late 1970s when workers at Eastown Printing Co. affiliated with the IWW. At the time, the IWW was actively organizing small printing shops and co-operatives and such efforts made up the majority of shops organized at the time. It was the third such shop to be organized in Michigan. It lasted until most employees found jobs elsewhere in the private sector.

The activity of the IWW in Grand Rapids is an example of a tradition of struggle that has largely gone unexplored in the study of the IWW's history. While not as well-known as the more prominent events and individuals in IWW history, there are countless hidden histories of resistance waiting to be written that explore the activities of the hundreds of locals that have formed over the years. These histories, scattered throughout the pages of IWW newspapers, in pamphlets, and in hostile mainstream newspapers, can provide valuable insight into a variety of organizing efforts that made the IWW an appealing option for those struggling for the abolition of capitalism. While disconnected in terms of continuity to current struggles, these histories have the potential to develop into stronger traditions of resistance, situating present struggles within a larger history.

For those interested in reading more about the IWW's activities in Grand Rapids, the zine "Mob Work: Anarchists in Grand Rapids, Vol. 2" tells a more complete story. You can get it by sending \$3 well-concealed cash to Sprout Distro, P.O. Box 68271, Grand Rapids, MI 49516 or downloading it at [Sproutdistro.com](http://Sproutdistro.com).

## IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up 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 organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, 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 ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

## Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially—that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. 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.

**TO JOIN:** Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 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*.

# To Bridge The Divide Or Burn Our Bridges?

By Jerome Baxter

I've been involved in a number of workplace disputes over the past couple of years. Despite those disputes happening at different workplaces—some union and some not—and even on different continents, they all had one thing in common. In each instance, the workforce broke down into two camps: those who supported the dispute and those who supported management.

That's the thing about workplace disputes—they force people to take a side. Old, underlying tensions between co-workers are brought to the surface. Friends encounter each other in staff meetings where one is defending management and the other is maintaining a stony oppositional silence. Sometimes, they even meet on opposite sides of a picket line.

I've come to the conclusion that this divide is probably an inevitable part of workplace organizing. As such, it is something we should take seriously when stirring up trouble at work.

I'm not totally unsympathetic to those who take management's side. Everywhere I've worked, there has generally been a pretty young workforce with little experience of open, organized conflict at work. In situations of tension, it's often easier to side with existing structures of power and authority—especially when doing otherwise brings you into conflict with the people who sign your paychecks.

In my experience, it's generally the conscious organizers who seek to avoid alienating these co-workers. We hope that, if they witness a victory now, it will bring them on board in the future.

Despite this, I've often had advice from pissed-off workers to write off certain individuals as untrustworthy snitches and sycophants. And they've been right.

I don't know which is the correct position to take. I'd like to think that people change through struggle. Even if they're on the wrong side of a dispute, simply seeing others stick together and fight back can change perspectives. That said, I have at times shared information with some of these less-trustworthy folks, and this sharing has come back to bite me.

Another point worth reiterating is that



Graphic: themoroneditorial.com

it's often a mistake to assume politicians are somehow inherently trustworthy or supportive of struggle. I had one workmate who liked Noam Chomsky and Slavoj Žižek and who often spoke about the economic and social perils of inequality. However, when this individual had the opportunity to directly challenge that imbalance, this person was one of management's strongest supporters. Others, who were far less overtly political, came down on the side of us workers.

I'm not sure there can be any hard and fast advice here. I do think it's worth remembering that good organizing is a long, slow process of preparing our co-workers to take action. Prepping our co-workers for what to expect is arguably the most important step in that process.

Perhaps just as important, however, is building up social connections with our co-workers. In all the years I've been attempting to organize at work, it's been in those workplaces where I talked the least about workplace organizing where I've had the most success. What makes a good organizer is not talking about organizing, but being the person your co-workers know as both knowledgeable and trustworthy.

All that said, sometimes the fight comes to us. In those instances, the pro and anti-dispute divide will probably be the strongest. It will involve making judgment calls and preparing workmates for how both management and co-workers might respond to a campaign or public action.

Having a solid plan about what level of information will be shared with certain individuals is a good place to start. Getting advice from trusted, longer-serving workmates about who's trustworthy and who's not is a good idea too.

If we choose to believe that people change through struggle, it's worth remembering that we never want *this* action to be our final action. Start small; start trusted. After all, chances are that, even as a small group of organized workers, we have more power than we think if we're smart and strategic in using it.

As for that divide, it will be easier to bridge if we've already demonstrated the protection we have when we stick together.



# WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 74

Trouble in the City of Spindles

Priding itself as the "South's City of Spindles," Gastonia, North Carolina in the 1920s was the region's leading textile center — and the first to be controlled by Northern capital. The Manville-Jenckes mills were also the first to impose "stretch-out" — more production with fewer workers. A majority of the workers were women; as in Passaic (see Chapter 71) the mills wouldn't hire a man unless his wife was already working.

In early 1929, Gastonia workers met with Fred Beal and Ellen Dawson, veterans of the New Bedford strike (see Chapter 72), and decided to join the militant National Textile Workers Union (NTWU). Firings of union supporters provoked a walkout of some 1,700 of the 2,200 mill workers. Strikers drew up demands that included a five-day week, \$20 minimum weekly wage, equal pay for equal work, and lower rent and electricity charges in the company-owned housing.



The mill superintendent took only three minutes to reject the strikers' demands. Four days later, National Guardsmen patrolled the mills, their guns aimed at workers. Court injunctions made picketing illegal. Arrest meant a \$50 fine and 30 days on the chain gang.

"The strikers were clubbed and beaten in the streets and carted off to jail en masse," wrote observer Tom Tippet. "Their parades were broken up by force every day, and just as consistently the strikers would form again the following day to march, with full knowledge of what they were doing, into the clubs and rifles."

On the night of April 18, armed and masked men demolished the union headquarters and then broke into the Workers' International Relief store. They dumped food into the street and torched the building. When the troops finally showed up, they arrested Amy Schechter of Workers' International Relief and some of the strikers. Worse violence — and greater injustices — lay ahead.

(To Be Continued!)

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

# Embodied Wobbly Solidarity

By Nicki Meier and Amity DuPeople

We keep hearing fellow workers saying things like "you people do x" or "you need to do y" and jumping immediately to assumptions, accusations, and blaming without first asking for clarification, on listservs, in emails, on social media and in meetings. We're finding ourselves frustrated and exhausted because we need to feel mutuality, inclusion, and support from our fellow workers, and we suspect we're not alone. We believe this behavior is extremely harmful to our efforts to create a unified movement that can resist capitalism and other forms of oppression so deeply embedded within our culture and ourselves in any real way.

What may seem at first like passionate opinions or speaking "free of folly" is actually directly harming and silencing those with whom we aim to organize, support, and love. By behaving in these ways we're acting against our own self-interest, acting against the cohesive cooperative community which we are working so hard to build. We cannot—in any real, efficient, substantial, and sustainable way—resist systems of exploitation and violence with a divided movement that often reproduces many of the very forms

of oppression we are working to eradicate.

We're here to ask everyone—as individuals and as a unified group—to please be willing to think about what things we're saying and how we say them. We're asking that if a fellow worker "calls us out" or otherwise tells us we are harming them, to please take our fellow workers' words seriously. We're asking everyone to spend some honest time looking inward at our actions and intentions, at why we behave how we do, and why we are often so resistant to admit our complicity in these systems. We're asking everyone to please be willing to re-examine the ways we speak, relate, and interact with each other.

Organizing workers requires communication—communication with individuals of all sorts of social and cultural backgrounds. If we cannot learn to interact respectfully with diverse groups of people, if we cannot value what others have to say and where they are coming from then we cannot organize against the employing class.

Just because we may disagree with a

fellow worker does not mean we cannot remain civil, ask questions, seek clarification, and when all is said and done, still love and support them as a fellow worker.

We all have a lot to learn. We do not remove ourselves from this call to action to address and eradicate such problematic behaviors. The oppression and violence is force-fed to most of us from birth, so we are bound to slip up. We're submerged in a world that is not set up to love and support each other, but isn't that what we're here to do—to create a world that does love and support everyone? So when we do slip up isn't it important we admit it to ourselves and to others in order to avoid reproducing the problem over and over again? Aren't we sick of being pawns in a system that's harming us and those we love?

The way we see it, we need to stop fighting each other. We need to commit to removing harmful communication and behavior from our daily interactions, which includes the way we speak to people, not just what we say. We need to hold ourselves and each other accountable.

We need to believe our fellow workers when they tell us we're contributing to their oppression, even if we don't quite understand. We need to resist the urge to default to defensiveness and listen to our fellow workers. We need to start caring about each other in material ways—not just by joining a union whose aim is to do so. As the saying goes, "actions speak louder than words." Some of the most important actions we can take on a daily basis as Wobblies are to set aside our egos, to admit we are coming from a particular standpoint because of our life experiences, to listen with the intent to understand as opposed to responding, and to actively decide to step into the shoes of our fellow workers. By doing so, we engage in revolutionary empathy—empathy determined to level the playing field and build connections so vital for the work we do in the IWW.

If we can learn to do this we will show ourselves and others the way to value diversity and care about our fellow workers, and we can build a solid movement that non-Wobbly fellow workers flock to because we're embodying the solidarity and support that essentially everyone is aching for. Let's be that movement!



Graphic: Rini Timpleton

**Wobbly & North American News**

**Around The Union: NJ & Seattle Updates**

Compiled by FNB

In **New Jersey** we have been meeting major success organizing restaurants in the Philadelphia metro area. We have held meetings with several workers from one restaurant that will be undertaking direct actions against chronic workplace safety issues. Additionally, we are leafleting a chain of rubber factories in hopes of helping them organize after receiving a message from an assembly line worker detailing near-sweatshop conditions. From Paterson 1913 to 2014, the IWW is still kicking in New Jersey!



Seattle's Central Co-op. Photo: isoseattle.blogspot.com

The shop at Central Co-op in **Seattle** is rallying around Fellow Worker Chuck Kirschman to get him reinstated. After 10 years of incident-free service to the food co-op, Chuck was unfairly fired in late May when he forgot to pay for a \$1.99 bag of chips he needed to eat with his diabetes medication. Now Chuck, who is 55 years old and living paycheck-to-paycheck, stands to lose his apartment, his son and his healthcare. Without a zero-tolerance policy on the books, the co-op's heavy-handed action is unprecedented and bewildering. We have so far delivered a petition signed by two-thirds of the store's unionized staff and a letter detailing the points of inconsistency and inhumanity to the co-op's management as well as organized a well-attended com-

munity call-in for the co-op's owners to voice their concerns. We will continue fighting until Chuck and his family's livelihood is restored. During this struggle we would appreciate messages of solidarity and donations to help Chuck pay his bills. Donations should go to PayPal (specifyseattleIWW@gmail.com) or to our P.O. Box at 1122 E. Pike Street, #1142, Seattle, WA 98122-3934.

Central Co-op is a consumer-owned natural foods cooperative located in central Seattle. The IWW has a contract for 11 members of the co-op's administrative and custodial units, with the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) representing the rest of the staff.

*Get published! Send your "Around The Union" reports to iw-reports@iww.org.*

**Kentucky GMB Officially Chartered**



The Kentucky GMB.

Photo: FW JP

**By Mick Parsons (X373896), Secretary-Treasurer KY GMB**

The statewide Kentucky IWW General Membership Branch (GMB) received its charter from General Headquarters (GHQ) in May. The GMB grew out of a Facebook discussion group with the

diligent work of delegate JP Wright. Elected officers include Secretary-Treasurer Mick Parsons, and Press Relations Officer Regan Sova.

The Kentucky GMB has already been in front of the public, setting up an informational table/store at the Mighty Kindness Festival, held Saturday, April 26 at the Waterfront Park's Brown-Forman Amphitheater in Louisville. Members have also participated in an informational action against Insomnia Cookies, a Jobs for Justice rally in the West End, and the March Against Monsanto on May 24.

*Anyone interested in being a part of the Kentucky GMB should contact Secretary-Treasurer Mick Parsons at papamick.iww@gmail.com.*

**Albuquerque: Under The Iron Heel**

**By FW Martin Zehr, Pittsburgh GMB**

In the "Land of Enchantment" (a.k.a. New Mexico), there is a rage and an outrage rising in the hearts of its people that matches the desert sun in summer in its intensity. Ever since the televised shooting of James Boyd, people in Albuquerque have begun to struggle to get control of the police department. A major mobilization was planned on June 21 against the militarization of the police and police shootings in the city of Albuquerque.

The brutal images caught on the video recording of Boyd's shooting stunned city residents. Boyd, a 38-year-old man, was camping in the Sandia Mountains on the outskirts of Albuquerque when he was gunned down by police after a police dog attacked him and police fired a flash bang grenade at him. Two police officers fired on James Boyd and from the moment people saw the incident, like the murder of Oscar Grant, the people were determined not to allow this to continue.

Demonstrations followed and people went to City Council to demand that someone accept responsibility for the crime. In a city of 550,000 people, Boyd was the 22nd person to be killed by the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) since 2010. On March 25, over 1,000 protestors marched through the down-

town area to APD headquarters. Hundreds protested in Albuquerque for 12 hours on March 30, resulting in four arrests and hundreds being tear-gassed. On May 5 anti-police brutality activists and community members in Albuquerque shut down the City Council and issued a people's warrant for the arrest of APD Chief of Police Gordon Eden.

On Monday, June 2, 13 people were arrested in the Albuquerque City Hall for attempting to meet with the mayor. Assistant professor David Correia was charged with felony assault on a police officer. Those arrested included family members of people killed by the Albuquerque Police Department. There have been no civil rights violations filed against the APD despite a 16-month investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice that condemned the APD for its conduct and "a pattern or practice of use of excessive force." The University of New Mexico, where Correia worked, appeared to move towards sanctions or disciplinary action against the professor when it released a statement that it is monitoring the situation.

Since the protests and demonstrations, organizers are being surveilled by the APD and there remains the whiff of a police state in the air. The police state was seen in the demonstrations when horses clad in armor and plastic face shields were

**Unions Matter To Albertan Workers**

By Peter Moore

A new study says that unions are "critical" to the well-being of unionized and non-union workers in Alberta, Canada.

Alberta is known as a province with hostile labor laws where unions are vilified by the ruling conservative party and their supporters in business and the media. However, a study by the University of Alberta's Parkland Institute, "On The Job: Why Unions Matter," says that, despite these difficult conditions, Albertan unions still make a big difference in terms of wages, worker safety, and income equality.

While wage growth in Alberta is "far lower than in any other province" in Canada, union wages are a lot higher, on average \$4.75 per hour more, than non-union wages. Women and young workers take home more pay as a result.

Construction workers who are building trade union members also earn benefits worth \$3.92 per hour (56 percent) more than members of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, which is described by the Alberta Federation of Labour as the "choice of employers, not workers" for negotiating boss-friendly

contracts across Canada.

In terms of worker safety, Alberta is one of the most dangerous provinces to work in, with 145 occupational fatalities and 27,745 serious workplace injuries in 2012 alone. These are the ones officially reported to the government. Recently, a 27-year-old electrician died on the job on June 2 while working at a Suncor Energy oil sands site. Shane Daye is one of four people killed at Suncor alone this year.

A lack of government enforcement and a lax attitude by employers regarding safety regulations puts workers in a difficult spot: refuse the work and get fired or shut up and hope for the best. This study says that unions are a "central force" for worker safety, not only through training and stewardship, but also through their ability to pressure the government and back up workers to refuse unsafe work.

The report also says that unions are a key means for workers to decrease the gap between the rich and poor. "Income gains over the last three decades have gone almost exclusively to the wealthiest Albertans," says the report. Unions give workers more power in the workplace than they would as individuals.

**Support The IWW Gender Equity Committee**

**Fellow Workers,**

We are writing you today in preparation for the 2014 IWW General Convention to encourage your branches to discuss not only who your delegate(s) will be and how they'll vote on behalf of your branch, but also who they will nominate to be on the various committees and the general administration.

In past years there has been some confusion at the Convention when nominating individuals for committees (including for the Gender Equity Committee), and subsequently this has taken time away from these committees getting straight to official business because nominations were not considered by branches prior to Convention and/or those that were nominated did not give their consent before they were nominated.

The Gender Equity Committee (GEC) greatly encourages branches to consider who they would like to nominate for the various roles within the union and to get those individuals' consent before doing so. This will ensure our committees are being filled with the best candidates and can

therefore efficiently roll the union forward, paving the way for truly revolutionary industrial unionism.

The GEC would also like to encourage fellow workers to participate in the Toronto IWW's competition to raise money for the GEC-administered Sato Fund, which is in effect until Sept. 30, 2014. More details about this can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1430700147193549/>. If your branch would like to participate email the Toronto IWW at [toronto@iww.org](mailto:toronto@iww.org) to let them know you're in the competition.



Graphic: X378461

The Sato Fund provides money for women, genderqueer, and trans\* IWW members to travel to IWW events. If you are think you are eligible and need financial support getting to an IWW event please contact us at [gec@iww.org](mailto:gec@iww.org) to get started on the application process! Please be aware that all applications to the Sato Fund must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the IWW event you will be attending.

In love and struggle,  
**The Gender Equity Committee**

ridden by APD officers with gas masks and truncheons. It was seen in tanks being rolled into positions and police snipers being positioned atop building during the demonstration. It was seen in unmarked cars outside the homes of those who sought to demonstrate. It was seen in the clouds of tear gas used on the protests against shootings by police.

Meanwhile, police are given a 5 percent raise in the face of acts of brutality and the U.S. Department of Justice's report. The National Rifle Association (NRA) has scheduled a national police shooting competition in Albuquerque for Sept. 13-17, 2014. At the same time residents face a fine of \$3,000 if they demonstrate in silence during the City Council's public discussion. And the U.S. Department of Justice still has not followed up its report-to-date with charges regarding violations of civil rights or other federal offenses.

**People are continuing to stand up for their rights.**

The despair of family members grieving their losses is matched by the total



Protesters shut down City Hall in Albuquerque on May 5. Photo: answercoalition.org

disregard for their feelings by public officials. Family members have been escorted from the public podium of City Council in an effort to silence even a silent testimony. "You're not worth addressing," said the father whose son was shot and killed two years ago by Albuquerque police officers.

On June 21, a demonstration in Albuquerque at Roosevelt Park raised the issue to the national agenda, to expose the crimes of the APD to the American public and show the world that the people of Albuquerque deserve justice, not police militarization.

## Special

# Work To Rule: Organizing The One Big Union At Starbucks

Continued from 1

already worked shifts sick that week, but today she just couldn't do it. She knew that she wouldn't be paid for the hours she took off and risked losing her health care benefits by falling short of the hours required to qualify. Anna walked into the back room where our store manager was sitting to make a much-needed request.

Our store manager, Dan, transferred to our store four months prior. We all gave him a chance to pull things together. As previously mentioned, our store is very high volume. It is common for us to serve 100 customers in a half hour and pull in \$10,000 in coffee sales before 10 a.m. Dan was in over his head, he struggled to make a single drink and if he was on the floor for more than 30 minutes he would be covered in sweat. He was scattered, barking orders that caused confusion and refused to take advice from the many baristas who had worked in our store for over five years. The result was mass confusion, low morale and being subjected to humiliating comments from frustrated customers. Dan played favorites and if you questioned his decisions you had your hours cut or were transferred to another store. Anna knew that she jeopardized more than just that day's pay when she made her way to the back room to ask to go home ill. But she never expected what would happen next. Anna timidly approached Dan while he was sitting at his desk pretending to check the product order forms that will nonetheless be incorrect. Not even turning to acknowledge Anna while she is explaining how she almost fainted, Anna finally made her request. The words "I need to go home" triggered Dan. For a man who never moves fast, Dan spun around at the speed of light and in his frustration flung a three-inch metal ringed binder full of paper at Anna while barking "are you really that sick?" Anna was speechless, so stunned at this childish aggression, she backed away. Retreating to the backline where the rest of us continued to work, we all agreed that she should just clock out and go home. Dan was completely out of line.

## The Bat Cave

Word of our Starbucks store manager, Dan, throwing a binder at an employee spread through the store like wildfire. Everyone was furious. We have tolerated inconsistent scheduling, low wages, ongoing verbal abuse and much more. This, however, was the last straw. We decided it was time to meet up. Enrico, a 61-year-old Puerto Rican busser; Anna, a 25-year-old Puerto Rican woman; Gabrielle, a 19-year-old Jamaican nursing student; Alejandro, a 22-year-old Dominican; Sam, a 23-year-old Columbian; Thomas, a 27-year-old Texan; and I, a 28-year-old woman from Kansas, decided to meet up Tuesday after our morning shift and figure out a way to fix the problems in the store. We met at a bar down the street from work. The spot has dozens of empty pool tables and

cheap drinks before 7 p.m., which is perfect for a group of people who are all up at 3 or 4 a.m. for work. We started frequenting this spot as a place to go and vent about work. The bartenders are all very nice and often look the other way if we don't order any drinks and just hang out on the overstuffed couch

for an hour or two after a rough shift. We started calling our spot "the Bat Cave" as we secretly spoke about ways we could take back power at work and make our jobs better. That day at the Bat Cave we pulled two tables together and Gabrielle took notes. We all decided we had had enough and it was time to take action. The group came to the conclusion to use two tactics at the same time to pressure Starbucks to fire or transfer Dan, but also to immediately resolve the issue of being understaffed.

To implement the first tactic, we came up with a list of issues we had with Dan. We decided to call Partner Resources, a third party phone line that is supposed to resolve issues that affect baristas. We thought, somewhat naively, that if everyone in the store called over the next week they would have to listen to our issues and investigate. Gabrielle diligently wrote up our grievances and offered to email them out to everyone who was at the meeting. We gathered email addresses, but most importantly we came up with a list of other people in the store who would likely be interested in contacting Partner Resources with us. We divided up the list of people, so everyone at the meeting was responsible for telling a co-worker about our plan. Gabrielle also drove home the fact that we should keep this secret and not talk about anything while at work. In addition, we decided to make our calls anonymously, no matter how much we were pressured to reveal our identities. We all knew that if word of our plan were to leak out we would be subjected to cut hours or write-ups, which would affect our already small raises.

Our second tactic was designed to immediately address the issue of understaffing. We were working ourselves to death under Dan's reign. Our store is so big that we should always have seven to nine people scheduled to work the morning rush. At that time we had as few as three and an average of only five people working. The result of this cost-cutting measure was that the customer line reached out the door, customers were mad that service was taking so long, baristas were getting cussed at and verbally abused, we were constantly burning and cutting ourselves



Graphic: IWW Starbucks Workers Union

because we were moving so fast, we often put ourselves in dangerous situations to save time—for example climbing on counters to reach supplies because it takes too long to grab the ladder—and new untrained baristas, due to the lack of training, messed up orders. It was during our meeting at the Bat Cave that we decided as

a group to not kill ourselves anymore for a company that did not have our best interest at heart. We decided if we were going to be arbitrarily yelled at for taking shortcuts to speed up service, we would stop. From this point on we would follow every single rule. This meant getting customer names and spelling them correctly, making each drink using the method Starbucks created—rather than the short cuts every good barista learns—we brewed coffee in a particular order according to a beeper rather than keeping an eye on things so we didn't run out of fresh coffee. We would leave the floor to change rags every two hours instead of when there was a lull in the rush, and every 10 minutes someone would leave the floor to clean the lobby.

We adjourned the meeting feeling empowered and optimistic. We would no longer be working for a low wage; instead we were working to rule.

## Behind the Line

The day after Starbucks workers met at the Bat Cave we found ourselves working an understaffed morning shift, but this time it was different. Instead of feeling the normal frustration, those of us who were at the meeting exchanged knowing glances and began implementing our plan of following every rule, thereby slowing down service. We also whispered to partners who were not in the know to "slow down, don't kill yourself." It was as if everyone took a deep breath and began working at a safe and thorough pace. The effects were instant. The speed of service dropped immediately. We ran out of brewed coffee because we were only brewing when the beeper signaled it was time. Everyone stayed in the positions they were assigned and acted only at the directions of the store manager. Every 10 minutes when someone was assigned to clean the lobby, we did a thorough job, ensuring everything was clean and properly stocked. Every drink and food order was perfect.

Dan, the store manager, lost his mind. He was running around like a crazed man. It was the most any of us had ever seen him work. The best part was he couldn't get mad at us; not only were we doing our jobs but we were doing them exactly as we

should. Each drink was made perfectly, every pastry was cooked one at a time on the correct oven setting and each cleaning task was done exactly as it should be.

We continued to do this all week. We found ourselves giggling and sharing secret exchanges of encouragement. It was common to hear "Wow, look, Dan is working today! Now he knows what we go through every day." We were working as a team instead of blaming each other for a situation that none of us could control.

Meanwhile, baristas were calling Partner Resources. Everyone called the hotline number, with the exception of two baristas and two supervisors. We all stuck to the issues we came up with in the initial meeting with the hope that our calls would tell a consistent story.

Nothing seemed to be happening but at least we felt in control. We felt like we were doing something to make our jobs and our lives better, rather than hoping things would change. These were our jobs, our store and our customers, without us there would be no Starbucks. Our ability to slow down the rate of business reinforced this fact.

A week after we started our work to rule and coordinated contacts to Partner Resources we saw the results. An investigation was launched into our store. Dan's bosses were in our store every day. Interestingly enough, the investigation was not the result of our phone calls and complaints, but because we had cut business in the store by over \$10,000 that week by slowing down. Dan's bosses were furious at the loss of business. They watched as every fifth customer left the store because the line was too long and slow moving. When baristas were asked why this was happening we all replied, "We are understaffed. We need between seven to nine people to do our jobs well and keep customers happy." The next week's schedule had already been printed but suddenly Dan was asking everyone if they wanted more hours. He added at least two people to every shift. After that we always had enough people scheduled to do our jobs right. Dan now knew what would happen if we were understaffed and he knew the loss of business we could cause him would likely affect his future at the company.

Sadly, we were not able to get Dan removed as a store manager; he continues to make our lives a living hell. However, the power we felt that week will not be forgotten. The ties of solidarity amongst those involved in the planning and implementation will be long lasting. We all tasted what it would be like to have control over our jobs and that can never be taken away.

**Addendum:** Almost exactly a year from his first day at our store, Dan was removed from his position as store manager. Of the 21 people who participated in actions to remove him, seven baristas had transferred, four were fired and eight quit.

## Boston Wobblies Defend Harvard Workers And Local Bus Drivers

Continued from 1

is trying to throw 4,500 middle school students off school buses and onto the often overcrowded buses and subway trains. Rather than relying on a trusted bus driver who typically knows the kids by name, and who can intervene in case of a medical crisis or to break up fights, the children would have to make their own way to school. Children and youth of color in particular already face brutality by the Boston cops when they take public transportation. There is the clear danger that more working-class and poor children will be caught in the web of the racist "juvenile justice" system as a result of the plan. The Boston School Committee is trying to ram their reckless initiative down the throats of outraged parents and students, as well

as bus drivers, some of whom could lose their jobs if the scheme goes forward. Most of Boston's bus drivers are of Haitian descent. At the well-attended and stormy meeting, several Boston Wobblies displayed placards denouncing the plan to throw local kids off the school buses, and a member of our General Membership Branch (GMB) spoke forcefully against the Boston School Committee's racist initiative. Local schools are severely segregated, and the treatment of students of color continues to deteriorate. The Boston IWW has supported our local school bus drivers as they battle the many-tentacled, anti-union vampire squid Veolia Corporation, which is trying to destroy their union. We'll continue to stand with our fellow workers in struggle.



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Special

# The Truth About The Million Dollar Coffee Company

By Lyssa

I think back to the last day I worked at Starbucks and recall what a beautiful day it was outside; that day was a nice break from the harsh winter we had this past year. As I walked into the store that day, I just couldn't shake the feeling that something was not right. However, I still clocked in for my shift at 2:15 p.m. to close the store with one of the new supervisors, put on the "happy barista persona" required of me, and went on the floor to work. About 15 minutes after I had clocked in I watched my supervisor Margret waltz in (15 minutes late and out of dress code) with her sister (another Starbucks partner) in tow. She had the most confused look on her face at the sight of me. She said to me, "Lyssa are you closing?"

I looked at her with an even more confused face and responded to her. "Yeah I am. Why?"

To which she replied, "So why did Jennifer have me bring my sister in to close?" At her response I simply shook my head, shrugged my shoulders, and thought to myself, so this is how it's going to go down.

A few minutes later my other shift supervisor Julian pulled me to the side and said to me, "Jennifer asked me to write a statement about the incident that occurred on Saturday even though I wasn't here, but I told her that I wasn't going to write it because I did not witness anything. After I told her I wouldn't write it, Jennifer instead asked me to write a statement about what a bad partner you are, stating that you give me an attitude and that you're insubordinate."

I asked her if she was serious, and she said, "Yes. I didn't feel comfortable writing a statement like that when we work well together and that I've never had any problems with you. I also told her that I think you're shift material, and it's unfair for her to treat you the way she does."

All I could say to Julian was "thank you."

It almost brought a tear to my eye to know that she was on my side, especially

because I knew that I was fighting a losing battle. I told her it was okay, that I knew Jennifer wanted to get me out her store because she couldn't control me—I'm a strong partner who will not let her walk all over me, and I'm not afraid to voice my opinions or my concerns. It just hurt that Jennifer would get the satisfaction of firing me, for a situation I had no control over, and handled to the best of my ability.

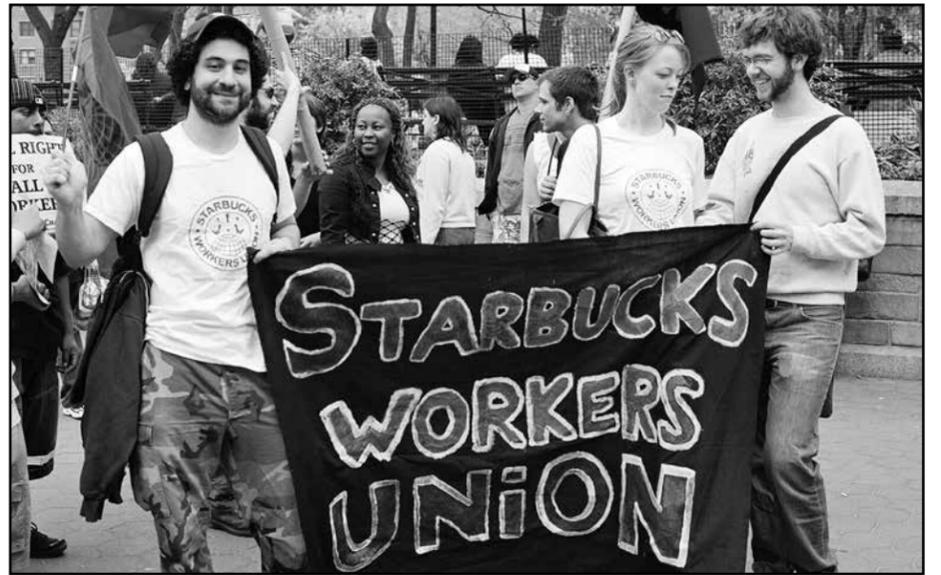
Around 2:35 p.m. Jennifer and Katrina (the district manager) asked to see me in the back; it's not like I didn't already know what was coming. I knew it from the moment I walked into the store on that beautiful March day, from the moment I saw my supervisor Margret and her sister walk into the store, from the moment during my shift when Julian pulled me to the side to clue me in on Jennifer's sneaky plan, and from that final moment I looked at the front door and saw Katrina walk into the store. They had finally figured out a way to give me the boot, and I had no control over what was about to happen. I took my time and finished the task I was doing before I slowly walked to the back and sat down between the two of them.

Jennifer broke the silence first by saying, "Based on the investigation (that lasted three days) and the statements we collected from partners and customers (falsified reports, one of the statements being her own), we're going to have to separate with you."

I thought to myself, "separate"? That's an odd word to use; I didn't know we were dating.

She continued with, "Although you may not have done anything wrong, you didn't protect yourself and you put your partners as well as customers at risk by not saying anything to your supervisor (who witnessed the situation and didn't do anything to prevent it) to prevent the situation from arising."

I said, "So I'm getting fired for handling the situation the best way I knew how, even though my supervisor was present and didn't do anything to help or



May Day 2007 in New York City. stop it?"

Photo: Tom Good, Next Left Notes

She nodded her head "yes" and proceeded to ask me to sign the separation papers (which I refused to sign). She then tore off a carbon copy of the separation paper which was so faint I couldn't even read the reason she wrote why I was being "separated" from the company, handed it to me and said, "I wish you the best of luck."

As I sat there looking at these two women there were so many things running through my mind, things I felt I should say, things I know I had no business saying, violent things I wanted to do to Jennifer because of what she was doing to me. While I sat there I recalled the number of times that I had come in to cover shifts for her, working six, seven, eight days straight while going to school full-time, working 13-hour shifts, coming in early or staying later because she had no coverage; this was the same woman who had turned against me. I had done countless favors for her, looked out for her when no one else had her back, and this was what I got in return. Jennifer knew that this job was my only means of supporting myself, of paying my rent, feeding myself and pay-

ing for transportation to get to school, but she didn't care. I was fired to protect the brand. A brand that feels their partners are replaceable, and if a partner won't do everything they say, well, they can find someone who will. This is what Starbucks does, once they feel threatened in any way by a partner, they find a way to get you out, because you are replaceable and they figure someone else will do anything and everything for your job. In that moment I had come to accept that this was the reality of working in food and retail jobs; this was why the corporation is so successful and why baristas cannot come together to organize for better work conditions. By the time partners come together to organize, they are so broken down by the corporation that they have nothing left in them to fight. Instead of doing something rash I kept my composure, I thought if I'm going to go, I'm not going to give them the satisfaction of seeing me break. I got up, handed them my hat and apron, cleared out my locker, packed my bag, said goodbye to partners and took my last mark out. As I walked out that I door I took one long last look at the store, winked at Jennifer and said, "Don't worry I'll be back."

## Steel Valley Turns Into "Deal" Valley



Wobblies rally with Steelworkers on May 19.

Photo: USW

Continued from 1

reps and the AFL-CIO of better days ahead. Speeches glorified U.S. Steel as the source for dynamism in the years ahead: make U.S. Steel tubes for Keystone XL, use U.S. Steel in fracking neighboring communities. USW sings the praises of U.S. Steel with the all-too-familiar guarantee that "we've had our differences [with U.S. Steel] in the past" but we're all in this together. And the question becomes who is "we"? Do they mean our neighbors, friends and co-workers throughout Allegheny, Beaver and Butler Counties whose spring waters are being turned to black? Do they mean the people that our kids have gone to school with and their parents who are getting sick? Always with the USW it's "Better THEM than US," and the THEM grows, while the US decreases. They keep us in line for U.S. Steel and they serve no free lunch.

Today, 35,000 full-time and part-time

jobs in primary metals manufacturing remain in the state of Pennsylvania, down from 75,000 in 1990, according to the Pennsylvania Economy League of Southwestern PA. Primary metal employment is down 29 percent in Southwestern Pennsylvania since 1990, and down from 28,000 in 1969 to 17,000 in 2006, according to the Pittsburgh Regional Economic Modeling, Inc. (REMI) Model. So it can be said, the deal cut between USW leaders and U.S. Steel has not worked to the advantage of saving steel jobs up to this point. In 1954 the USW had 1 million members. As of 1996, USW had only 150,000 members employed in the American steel industry.

But what about the new words, the new promises being made at Munhall? Can we predict a new realization of peace and prosperity for steel workers in the decades ahead? Are the future generations economically secure with the promises of fracking and an XL pipeline? While the

state AFL-CIO officials and the USW local reassured workers at the rally that such is the case, even national AFL-CIO, USW and United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) safety and health officials warned of the danger of fracking in May 2012 in a jointly signed letter to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA): "In addition to health threats, there are serious safety hazards in the oil and gas extraction industries that put workers at risk."

Perhaps we should give U.S. Steel the benefit of the doubt after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an order to them for dumping at the Fairless Hills site and in Ohio and Indiana for dumping pollutants into our waters. The un-bottled water that we drink from the springs, streams and rivers and use every day, as do our rural neighbors and friends in Allegheny, Butler and Beaver Counties, is putting us at risk. That's the same water that you drink and use, fellow workers, but U.S. Steel isn't about to make guarantees about that.

Maybe U.S. Steel's improved rank from the second worst air polluter to number eight in 2010 is a real sign of a good dog. And maybe those lawsuits by River Rouge and Granite City, Ill. were all smoke with no fire. Maybe we should ask the 300,000 folks in West Virginia what they think about reassurances of safe drinking water from state officials and corporations. Or we can take the word of a corporation that is a leading supplier to the Marcellus Shale at face value and trust it. Didn't they give people their word that Donora's smog

air inversion had nothing to do with them?

Does U.S. Steel really care about what happens in our communities when they promote schemes like fracking and the XL pipeline? Not when they get contracts for 50 miles of tubes to be run in Pennsylvania by Texas crackers. U.S. Steel doesn't have to live with the consequences of fracking and the pipeline where they live. They are here today and gone tomorrow. No worry about the water table or subsidence. No worry about aquifer depletions or fault lines. U.S. Steel won't get sick from the crap pulled up from the shale beds. They are not around to even deal with a cleanup if a waste disposal truck tips over into a stream.

The IWW is back; the giant has awakened. Not to echo the speakers, but to say the forbidden word: "Strike. Strike, fellow workers, for your jobs." We are the INDUSTRIAL Workers of the World and steel is the ground from which our union grew. From the Western Federation of Miners to the workers of the Pressed Steel Car Company in McKees Rocks, the IWW was in the frontlines. Maybe we should stand side-by-side with our neighbors and not fall for yet another con job that promises to give us more jobs and cleaner water while giving us neither. Maybe we should recognize that we have more in common with our neighbors and co-workers than we ever did with the employing class. That's what the IWW believes. That's why we organize, not just for more bread and butter, but for bread and roses. Roses from our gardens can grow with good clean spring water from Western Pennsylvania. For a better life for working men and women that is not at the expense of others.

Organizing

# Disunited Food & Commercial Workers: A Case Study

By E.A. Martinez

The United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) is one of the largest unions in the United States, primarily representing retail workers. In recent years, it has been known as one of the forces behind the recent “Fight for 15” movements and has been engaged in a protracted campaign to unionize Walmart workers across the country. While industries that have been historically rife with union activity are seemingly disappearing from the American economy, retail is the one industry that has been surging. Everywhere, old factories are being torn down and replaced by shopping malls and outlet stores. Indeed, you would be hard-pressed to find someone who *hasn't* worked at least one retail job in their life. As the retail industry grows, more and more of the workforce will be on the radar of the UFCW. Therefore, it is important for labor activists to understand how the UFCW operates and what its reputation is amongst its membership.

Like so many other teenagers and young adults, I work as a cashier for a regional supermarket chain in New Jersey. My workplace is unionized by the UFCW. Perhaps “unionized” is not the best word, as that would imply that workers are involved in the union, or united in some way. More accurately, my co-workers and I are governed by a contract negotiated between the UFCW staff and our bosses.

Allow me to begin explaining this with a particularly poignant anecdote: at one point during one of my shifts, I suspected that my manager was violating the provisions of the contract. Still relatively new, I began asking my co-workers who the shop steward was. Of the six cashiers to whom I inquired, two of my co-workers said they didn't know who the shop steward was, and the other four didn't know *what* a shop steward was, or what they do, in the first place. “Steward? What's that?” This is an accurate representation of life under the UFCW.

How is the UFCW supposed to protect workers when the workers don't even know how to contact the union for help in the first place—or worse yet, if workers don't even know what the union is, how it works, or what it does?

After my initial surprise at this incident, I decided to begin a more in-depth study. During the day, I would bring up the union and ask my co-workers what they thought of it. Each one told me the same thing: “All I know is that they take \$8 out of my paycheck every week.” Needless to



UFCW: Bringing new meaning to the term “yellow union.” Photo: blogs.ocweekly.com

say, none of my co-workers have ever, at any point in their employment under a UFCW contract, been contacted by a union representative. They have never seen a copy of the contract, what it entitles them to (which, the way the UFCW bargains, is not much), or what it protects them from.

For all they know, the UFCW contract could say that all workers are entitled to \$50 per hour and three breaks per shift. But after all, what good is a contract to workers who can't stand up to defend it? Our contract, for example, *does* say that workers have the right to be free from public reprimand in front of customers. What good does this do for my fellow workers, all of whom have never read the contract, and who would not know who to contact or what to do if it was violated anyway? In fact, there have been dozens of instances where public reprimands have taken place. The contract alone does not protect workers from management.

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Despite the level of negligence handed to us by the UFCW, my local boasts that it is “30,000 strong.” Of course, they are including in that number all the workers who do not know the name of the union, who have never been invited to a union meeting, who do not know the shop steward, and who have never been educated on their rights and protections. We are not members of the union; we are governed by its contract.

Perhaps this behavior can be shrugged off with the justification that young workers are not the locus of the labor movement

(which, ironically, is the same argument utilized by the right wing to oppose reform in the fast-food industry). “You are young workers,” they might say. “Though it is certainly unfortunate that you are excluded, most high school-aged cashiers would probably be uninterested in union affairs anyway.” Besides the fact that this is probably untrue (outside the front end, everyone in a supermarket is an adult, including the many adult cashiers who have worked there as long as 35 years), this is the most tragic part of the whole situation: *the UFCW is raising a generation of anti-union workers.* That is why this matters to all unions, all union activists, and the entire labor movement. When we move on to new jobs—whether in manufacturing, transportation, construction, or service—and are approached by a co-worker about unionizing, what will we say? “When I was in high school, I worked at a union supermarket. They took my dues and didn't do a single thing for me.”

The arrangement is not bad for everyone, though. Our local's president enjoys a salary of over \$300,000, and the secretary-treasurer also reaps \$280,000. Meanwhile, my co-workers come to buy their groceries with food stamps. Pocketbooks full of coupons are the only way we “union workers” can afford our meals. At this point, it would be easy for me to say that the union leaders care only about making money or making careers off of us, but I can't say for certain. I can't say for certain because I've never met them. They, and the whole union, have managed

to remain so elusive that the vast majority of my co-workers do not even know it exists, despite the fact that this same union would be the first to shoot down any of its opponents with the oft-repeated “you are the union!”

I cannot say what it is they care about, but it is certainly not us workers.

For my co-workers, the issue of the union is a mixture of resentment and apathy. They are angry at an invisible drain on their paycheck but too apathetic to organize against it. Ironically, it is this very apathy that unions often try to break during union campaigns: we try to encourage workers to not simply shrug off the injustice they've been served, but to unite and fight against it. But in a stretch of irony, the injustice is the union, and the union has made the workers so disorganized that they cannot fight against it.

## Whose Fault?

Who is to blame for the negligence of the UFCW and all unions like it? The shop stewards? The organizers? The workers themselves? I am confident that UFCW organizers are honest people who, like me, are dedicated to building a powerful, self-directed movement of working people. This is coupled with the fact that many union organizers are themselves young people working long and tiresome hours under the direction of their supervisors. If they were not union organizers, they would probably be working alongside me in a supermarket.

Nor is the problem the personalities of individual union leaders. Rather, the dislocation between union and worker is the product of a set of labor laws that forces “the Union” to be a third-party mediator between labor and management. Under the law, a union is no longer a group of workers, properly speaking; a union is a group of representatives, a party, that we vote for in workplace elections. At the ballot box, we are compelled to vote for the “lesser evil,” never feeling as though it is we who hold the power.

Workers don't join the union we agree with most; we pay dues to the union that “represents” our “bargaining unit” and that is considered membership. Labor laws that were once heralded as a sign of progress have turned the labor movement into a stage-managed performance of the power workers once held. These labor laws, and the contracts they gave birth to, can win us quantitative gains but they can never win workers power over their own lives.

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## Reviews

# Soapbox Rebellion

May, Matthew S. *Soapbox Rebellion: The Hobo Orator Union and the Free Speech Fights of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1909-1916. University of Alabama Press, 2013. Paperback, 192 pages, \$39.93.*

By FNB

Every five years or so I come across a work on IWW history that messes with everything I believe about our union—a writing that makes me reconsider all my assumptions, shut my yap and think. “Soapbox Rebellion” by Matthew May is one of those works.

“Soapbox Rebellion” is a rhetorical doctoral dissertation-turned-book. May is a Wobbly, and an experienced one at that. Not only does he bring up the usual historical stories, but at places he also ties it in with current IWW discussions.

There have been some points of contention about the legacy of the free speech fights in the current IWW. Most of the history of the IWW has been written from the perspective of the Communist Party and its splits. May’s take on the free speech fights can be seen as a “political” perspective. The free speech fights were seen as civil liberty fights that would protect other forms of organizing in the future.

There has been a Wobbly current which disagrees with the free speech fights. They (and I have been part of this current) see the free speech fight movement as a disaster for the formal organizing of the IWW. A number of important IWW organizers at the time, led by American Waterways Operators and Philadelphia Longshore organizer Walter Nef, believed the free speech fights undermined shop-floor and industrial organizing. Pacific Northwest organizers such as Timber Workers W.I. Fisher and John Panzer (later of the United Automobile Workers) were critical of the free speech fights. While “professionally rated as a great victory, it (the Spokane free speech fight) was a great defeat. Before it we had an enthusiastic paid membership of over 3,000 in Seattle, Spokane and Portland alone, with a solvent organization, a rapidly

developing job organization of over 100 delegates in the field. At its close we had one fourth of the membership,” said W.I. Fisher.

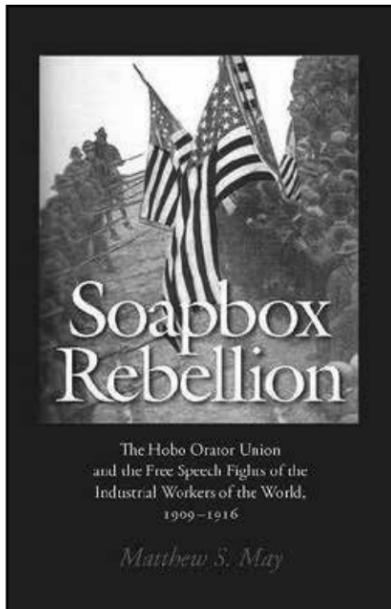
May’s perspective is from his study of rhetoric and the work of Autonomist Marxists and the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari. In many ways this makes sense. The Autonomist Marxists, both French and Italians, were very inspired and influenced by the IWW and its “hobo army.” The fluid nature of the IWW’s 1910 fights spoke to the conditions of especially young workers of Europe who were often outside of the workplace and either semi-employed or on unemployment. Though they couldn’t replicate the boxcar organizing or the organization of agricultural workers, they certainly took inspiration from the IWW by breaking out of the constraints of “con-

ventional” union organizing.

I’ll leave your reading of “Soapbox Rebellion” to pick up Deleuze /Guattari’s descriptives and their specific meanings. FW May’s basic argument is that we cannot look at the free speech fight movement in a traditional manner. It is in the creative and original methods/engines of organizing the free speech fights that created a new work culture that spread IWW-ism into other industries and cultural spheres, which certainly gives a new explanation for the outsized weight of the IWW in terms of membership to North American working-class culture.

More than the recent IWW academic works, even the ground breaking ones such as “Philly Docks” and “Harvest Wobblies,” down deep this is an activist and a Wobbly book. It advocates a specific perspective on organizing convincingly.

For current Wobblies, “Soapbox Rebellion” gives a framework to see not only the free speech fight movement in a new light but also understand IWW “direct unionism” organizing, such as the Starbucks Workers Union, in a new manner. Or potentially giving an outlook for how a spreading and dynamic movement such as “Fight for \$15” can push past its funders’ planned electoral/governmental strategy.



Graphic: bookdepository.com

## Anita!

Anita. Directed by Freida Lee Mock. Produced by Samuel Goldwyn Films (2013).

By Jane LaTour

For the generations who have come of age since 1991, the name Anita Hill has become separated from her narrative. Many young people recognize the name but have no story to go with it. For others, the events of that summer are seared in our brains. We retain the image of Hill in her blue suit and snippets of startling dialogue—such as an accusation of being “a little bit nutty and a little bit slutty.” The saga of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas unfolded publicly, gluing viewers to their TV sets. Fortunately for all of us, both those with vivid memories and those with no knowledge at all of the impact that Anita Hill had on the nation’s consciousness regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, a new documentary is available to fill in the blanks. “Anita” was released this spring amidst a low-level publicity campaign. This film deserves more attention. Race and gender travel in tandem, and both make up the foreground, background and subtext of the story. But for purposes of this essay, I want to deal with some of the gendered aspects that typically are overlooked.

In the aftermath of the hearings, a number of books covered the subject. The absolute best of the lot is “Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas” by Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, a finalist for the National Book Award in 1994. Documentary filmmaker Freida Mock enlists the two ace reporters as the talking heads who provide the spine for the movie. Revisiting this chapter of women’s history opens up many avenues

for exploration. One is the distance women have traveled since the Yale Law School graduate Anita Hill, a law school professor from Norman, Okla., sat down in August 1991 before a group of exceptionally clueless, all-male members of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee to testify about her experience of being sexually harassed while working as an aide to Commissioner Clarence Thomas, then the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). As she did so, members of the committee, under the leadership of their chair, Senator Joseph Biden, subjected her to a humiliating and exceptionally hostile grilling. Hill’s participation in the Senate hearings on Clarence Thomas’ confirmation for a spot on the U.S. Supreme Court, the opening that resulted from the retirement of legendary civil rights icon, Justice Thurgood Marshall, triggered a nationwide debate about sexual harassment.

In my book, “Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality,” the Anita Hill story is included in a chapter called “Uncivil Service,” about the experiences of Ann Jochems, the lone female carpenter working for New York City’s Board of Education:

“In 1991, Anita Hill placed sexual harassment on the national agenda. Up to that point, the tortuous experiences of many women in the workplace had largely escaped attention. Hill had left her job at the EEOC in 1983. The harassment she alleged was well in her past. The irony that this harassment was directed at Hill, an attorney, working for the EEOC—the agency charged with enforcing the law on sexual harassment—at the hands of the head of that agency, only underscored the complex reality of the nature of sexual harassment.

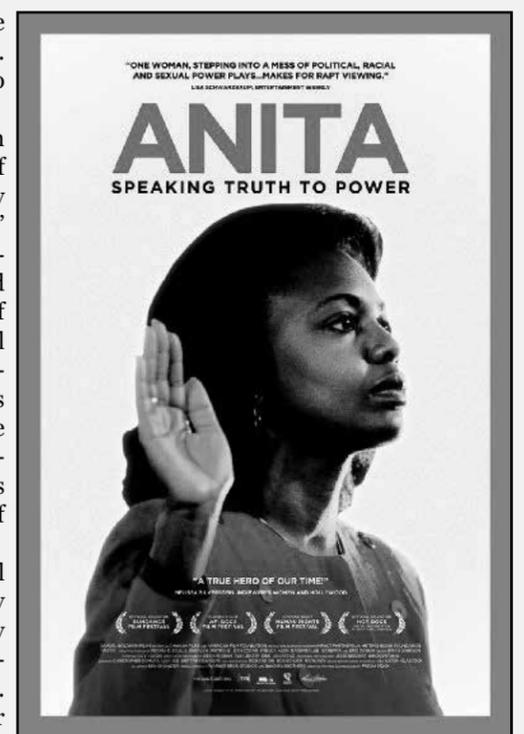
“Until that point, the fact that sexual harassment in the workplace is no laughing matter but a serious violation of the law had escaped the attention of many people. But Hill’s riveting testimony about the behavior of her boss, Clarence Thomas, before a very condescending Judicial Committee of the U.S. Senate had a great deal to do with changing that reality. As the committee considered Clarence Thomas’ suitability for a position on the U.S. Supreme Court, the national audience got a

tutorial from Professor Hill on the painful topic of sexual harassment. Anita Hill became an inspiration to women all across the country.

“A scene in the movie ‘North Country’ about the class action suit of the first female miners employed by Eveleth Mines shows ‘Josie Wales,’ the fictional stand-in for lead plaintiff Lois Jenson, standing transfixed before the televised testimony of Professor Hill. The glaring national spotlight on sexual harassment resonated deeply for women such as Lois Jenson, Ann Jochems, and all of the other women who had endured similar crude and humiliating incidents in isolation as just another part of going to work every day.”

The gross examples of sexual harassment that the women in my book experienced were echoed by those that Lilly Ledbetter experienced on the job at Goodyear Tire. While the story about Ledbetter has centered on the pay inequity she experienced, sexual harassment was equally part of her story. In her book, “Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay and Fairness at Goodyear and Beyond” (written with Lanier Scott Isom), Ledbetter describes the litany of abuses heaped upon her as she performed her duties in a job that was considered “nontraditional” for a woman. For those women working in the nation’s firehouses, on construction sites, power plants, telecommunications, and other blue-collar skilled jobs that remain “nontraditional” for women, their low representation and consequent isolation continue to result in incidents of sexual harassment. These stories appear with frequency in tabloids and other publications. What’s changed is that the landscape of sexual harassment has been mapped. Oftentimes, harassers can no longer operate with impunity if their victims have the courage to pursue a remedy and drag their oppressors into the light of day. However, outrageous misconduct is still an all-too-familiar reality in the workplace. These cases are not limited to women in blue-collar environments. A recent lawsuit charges that a sales representative working in the Westchester Mall for a high-end handbag company was transferred to toilet duty after refusing her boss’ sexual advances.

Toward the end of this powerful documentary, Anita Hill talks about the



Graphic: imdb.com

thousands of letters she has received—walking in front of file cabinets, she describes the hate mail and death threats directed at her after her testimony. Then she points to the last cabinet, which holds the letters from supporters. She notes that women who have experienced the same thing can now talk about it. “Hopefully, they won’t be deterred from coming forward.”

After not speaking about the Thomas hearings for two years, Hill started to open up. She became an advocate for women, putting her experience in perspective. “Sexual harassment is just part of the larger problem of gender inequality,” she says. As the filmmaker visits a teen workshop at the Brooklyn-based program, Girls for Gender Equity, the question is posed: “Who knows about Anita Hill?” This generation is being groomed and engaged in the broader discussion. “We have been building on an understanding of equality and of what it takes to get there. It’s better than it was in 1991. Honesty, dignity, and courage will be remembered,” Hill says. She exhibited these qualities in abundance. Find the film and watch it. Read the gripping book by Mayer and Abramson. A good stock of history in your toolkit will make you a more powerful and effective activist.



Anita Hill in 1991.

Photo: politicalgates.blogspot.com



## International Organizing

# New Management Versus Old-School Organizing: The Long Strike Against Restructuring And Precarity At La Poste

By Monika Vykoukal

On a rainy and unseasonably cold morning in mid-May a crowd of several hundred people, including several unions and political parties, gathered in front of the police building of the Sûreté Territoriale to show their solidarity with four striking post workers and union organizers who had been called in for questioning. The workers were kept and interrogated all day to finally be let go after about 12 hours to cheers from the crowd. While the call before a police section, commonly concerned with public disorder and violence rather than labor struggles, was the highlight of repressive measures against the ongoing strike at La Poste so far, many union delegates involved in the strike are still threatened with firings.

Initially the strike had started on Jan. 29, 2014, amongst mail delivery workers of the Rueil-Malmaison post office in the suburbs of Paris, organized by the union Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques - Postes télégrammes et télécommunications (SUD-PTT), with the demand to hire a co-worker whose temporary contract—part of a widespread government scheme to pay the wages of a worker for a limited period, ostensibly to aid them to find work—had ended after promises of a permanent contract failed to materialize. Three other former temp workers under the same scheme, who had already found themselves jobless again since La Poste had not hired them, joined the strike in solidarity.

Time went by and management refused to negotiate while the striking workers reached out to colleagues of other post offices to join them in order to be able to put real pressure on the company. As some of the SUD delegates explained, a strike in one post office can easily be dealt with by covering the workload elsewhere. Once two or three offices are on strike this is no longer an option. With the expansion to other workers at other locations, the demands grew from that to hire a co-worker to opposing restructuring plans of postal services more widely. Meanwhile, the strikers continued efforts to get management to negotiate. However, while talks formally took place, no real offers towards meeting their demands were made, and around March efforts to sanction and ultimately get rid of the union delegates began.

Demands across the involved post offices are centered on opposing the continued restructuring of La Poste, in particular the systematic use of government subsidized temp contracts (“contrats d’insertion”) which allows the hiring of less permanent workers, significant changes to the work of post(women), referred to as “facteur d’avenir” (which is roughly a pun meaning “postman/factor of the future”) in the managerial terminology of the company, and the closure of post offices. In Epinay, in another region just outside Paris, for example, the strike started on May 19 when management announced



Post workers rally in front of the Socialist Party headquarters in Paris on March 28.

Photo: grevedespostiersdu92.tumblr.com

that the post office would be closed within a year. Postal workers would, in the future, pick up the bags for their mail delivery on the curb and no longer spend part of their workday sorting mail, instead only delivering what had been sorted elsewhere.

The fight of the post workers is also one against the change of La Poste, which remains the biggest employer in France in terms of the number of workers, from a public service to a commercial venture. Since La Poste became a private company in 2010, although its sole-share holder is the French state, the company has created a myriad of subsidiaries, which are active around the globe—including Romania, Spain, and the United States. As the striking workers in Epinay researched in relation to the proposed closure of their center, those subsidiaries include Poste Immo, which owns the physical buildings (initially built with taxpayer money) and engages in what boils down to both internal and external real estate speculation. Thus Epinay would close because it can no longer afford the rent it pays Poste Immo, and Poste Immo would subsequently be justified in selling the building off. At least in this Paris suburb however, none of the post centers, which have been shut down to save money, have so far found a buyer and all lie empty.

While the need to operate in a commercially viable manner is a dominant argument against any contestation of restructuring, La Poste continues to rely on public subsidies for its profits. Again, according to workers at Epinay, La Poste (not including its subsidiaries) made a total net profit of 627 million Euros in 2013, but at 297 million, almost half of the profits were due to their use of the “crédit d’impôt compétitivité emploi” (CICE) scheme, hence ultimately a public subsidy.

Without the CICE scheme, which amounts to a reduction in labor cost for the employer and was created for this purpose (to boost the economic competitiveness of the nation, create jobs in the crisis, and so forth, according to the dominant rhetoric) in 2013, their profits would be decreasing.

The contrast between the very limited initial demand

at the origin of the strike and its duration, making it the longest strike at the post office in many years, begs the question as to why La Poste did not concede. The union delegates involved believe that management, rather than having an issue with the initial demand, wanted to use the struggle as an occasion to get rid of the delegates and their organizing methods.

The SUD organizers of Rueil-Malmaison have successfully averted, as the only post office in France, restructuring efforts since 1999 and attribute this to their rank-and-file organizing approach. This includes all delivery workers meeting up when they get to work before they go out on deliveries in order to discuss work issues as a group on a daily basis. During strikes general assemblies of all striking workers decide all issues by majority vote, and each person gets the same time to speak. Assemblies also elect co-workers to a strike committee, which enacts the decisions of the assembly and organizes the next assembly. This allows both a range of workers to serve on the committee and also to involve non-unionized workers equally to unionized ones.

In Epinay the strike is also organized in the form of general assemblies but does not include a strike committee, which, the local delegates feel, has not appeared necessary so far. Here, while union officials can speak in the assembly, decisions are voted on afterwards amongst striking workers without the presence of union officials to counter the potential of manipulation. The SUD delegates also make sure that negotiations always involve some of the striking workers and are not conducted by union officials alone. From the outset, striking workers from both Rueil-Malmaison and Epinay visited their colleagues at other post offices and discussed their strike, the reasons for it, and common workplace issues with them during their breaks, which allowed the exchange of information and the strike to gradually expand.

At the same time, while the strike continues to be largely one of delivery workers, there are conscious efforts to reach out to all workers at La Poste, such as those behind the counters. The strikers have also made efforts to create alliances with the current protests of the Intermittents and Précaires (intermittent and precarious workers, a coordination of mainly cultural workers, which already led a strong protest movement some years ago) against unemployment and social benefit cuts.

In Epinay the active union organizers are also SUD delegates. One of the other

labor unions present, Force Ouvrière (FO), which briefly supported the strike, decided after a couple of days to withdraw their support, negotiate with management, and make a proposal to workers that was unanimously refused by those on strike. However, management tried to discredit the movement and undermine the strikers’ demands by arguing in the media and in personal letters sent to all striking workers at their home address that the turn-around of FO showed that the struggle was unnecessary and could not be won. This initial lack of support from the labor movement at large, and to some extent arguably of SUD itself beyond the immediate regional organization, with exceptions such as the various anarcho-syndicalist Confédération nationale du travail (CNT) unions and the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (New Anticapitalist Party, founded in 2009, the successor organization to the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist League), is most likely another reason for its duration.

The staggeringly disproportionate repression, in particular involving public disorder police, occasional riot police vans in front of picket lines with workers not on strike being marched into their workplace by cops, and the ongoing efforts to fire union organizers, has brought more exposure and support to the movement. Now, after well over 100 days of striking at Rueil-Malmaison, post workers elsewhere in the Paris region, in the city itself, and beyond have begun strikes, which may well expand further, with SUD, now joined by the Confédération générale du travail (CGT, one of the biggest unions), having called for strike action in Paris itself in the coming weeks.

## To show your support:

Send protest messages to the director of La Poste: Arnaud Saint-Guilhem - Directeur La Poste Courrier 92 - DOTC du 92 - 3, Boulevard du Levant - 92014 Nanterre CEDEX

Sign and share the petition: <http://www.change.org/fr/pétitions/sud-poste-92-après-trois-mois-de-grève-soutenons-les-postiers-du-92>.

The piece included information from radio interviews with workers and delegates of SUD in the radio show “Vive la Sociale,” which can be found online here: <http://vivelasociale.org/les-emissions-recentes>.

For more information, visit the blog: <http://grevedespostiersdu92.tumblr.com>, and learn more on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sudposte.hautsdeleine>.



Post workers from the Hauts-de-Seine region at the agriculture trade fair on March 2.

Graphic: grevedespostiersdu92.tumblr.com

# World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

## ISC: Busy From Berlin To Buenos Aires

By the IWW International Solidarity Commission (ISC)

### May 1st Greeting

The ISC's May Day greeting sent "revolutionary salutes" to our sister unions, friends, and comrades around the globe. The greeting noted that "our international networks create fast and powerful actions against global capitalism" but that "we are still far from the ideal of an international labor movement." We need to "think of improvements to our global movement" and support each other in struggle.

### Support to the AWU in Ukraine

The ISC sent the Autonomous Workers Union (AWU) in Ukraine a letter of support in response to the tragedy in Odessa. Bloody clashes with firearms and petrol bombs resulted in the burning of the Trades Union Building and the deaths of 43 people. Upwards of 200 people were injured in the fighting. The AWU advocates class unity instead of participation in the nationalistic fighting, and the IWW agrees. Quoting from our statement: "As our comrades of the AWU stated recently, the clashes are instruments to split the working class into groups that follow interests opposed to the interests of any worker...The working class should stand together in a fight against authority, austerity, and racism." A comrade from the AWU responded:

"Thank you so much for your letter! We'll post it on our website. It is really important for us today to feel some support and solidarity, given the overwhelming support for the faux 'antifascists' who take Russia's side from most Western leftist organizations...I guess the most urgent form of solidarity needed today is some support for Alexander 'Tundra' Kolchenko...a member of antifascist movement in Crimea. Now he's arrested by Russian authorities, transferred to Moscow and charged with 'terrorism.' Russian media claim he's a member of the fascist Right Sector which is obvious nonsense: actually, he used to participate in bitter fights with nazis. So, he's in a really grave situation, facing a harsh prison term, and he needs both moral and material support. So far this is maybe the most urgent campaign...Also, in the end of August...we'll have a summer camp in the south of Ukraine. And we'll be glad to see comrades from IWW there!"

### ISC Signed on to Two Letters

One was a letter protesting repression against the student global justice "sunflower" movement in Taiwan. The students, followed by many other demonstrators, occupied the Legislature and Executive buildings in order to demand review or cancellation of the proposed trade agreement between Taiwan and China. Fellow IWW members in Taiwan are following this struggle closely and asked that we lend our name to the cause.

The other message was a statement of solidarity with the Zapatistas and against the recent attacks by government-backed thugs against the Escuelita Zapatista. First these paramilitaries destroyed the Zapatista Little School and the Zapatista clinic. Then they ambushed the school supporters, seriously injuring 15 people with gunfire, and finally targeted teacher Jose Luis Solis Lopez, "Compañero Galeano," and took his life. The IWW has always stood shoulder to shoulder with the Zapatista movement and now, as we have in the past, we affirm our commitment to the fight for a different world alongside our friends in Chiapas.



CTEP in Buenos Aires. Photo: Tristan Bunner  
**National Congress Invitation from the Freie Arbeiterinnen – und Arbeiter – Union in Germany**

In an effort to promote a stronger bond between the IWW and the Freie Arbeiterinnen – und Arbeiter – Union (FAU) in Germany, the ISC endorsed Fellow Workers (FWs) Chris and Jule from IWW German Language Area Members Regional Organizing Committee (GLAM-ROC) to attend the FAU National Congress in early June. They brought with them a statement affirming the IWW's solidarity with the FAU, providing some background on the IWW's campaigns in industry over the past decade, and our perspective on the international growth of the IWW over the past few years.

"The IWW is proud of its policy of solidarity and cooperation with all unions that call for the abolition of the wage system. We attempt to maintain cooperative relations with both the IWA-AIT [International Workers' Association - Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores] and the Red & Black Coordination. We also strive to build friendships with militant, independent unions in all parts of the world. Contrary to the way a bad rumor, or a sectarian individual member, might make it appear, IWWs are very fond of our sister unions and we only hope to live up to the fighting legacy of the anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist traditions. We're thankful to have strong allies such as the FAU and we enjoy every opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with you all."

### IWW ISC Ambassador in South America

The ISC has been following the travels and communications of ISC representative FW Tristan B., who, along with his partner, has been traveling through South America meeting with various worker organizations to build connections. From Argentina, Tristan reports that he made contact with or met with the Asamblea del Pueblo, Hotel BAUEN, Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA), Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), and especially the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular (CTEP). He is communicating with the federación Anarquista Uruguaya (fAu) in Uruguay and has plans to meet contacts in Chile. Here is a sample of FW Tristan's reporting:

"One of the first groups I made contact with was the Asamblea del Pueblo, Asamblea San Telmo. They are a community organisation that was founded during the economic crisis of the early 2000s. They have at least 4 store fronts that they have occupied and reclaimed over the last 13 years, including 2 comedors where they offer free food during the week, and a bookshop. The big campaign they are active in at this moment is [against] a project by the municipal government to build a new bus line that will mostly serve tourists, and destroy 5 blocks of San Telmo in the process. Gentrification in the neighbourhood has been a big problem recently, as tenement houses for poor workers were bought and turned into hostels for tourists. I have been

## French Tobacco Workers Hold Bosses Hostage

By John Kalwaic

On May 29, workers held five corporate executives of Imperial Tobacco hostage in the Carquefour cigarette plant in western France, near the city of Nantes. Seita, the manufacturer that owns the plant, announced the closing of its Carquefour plant in April 2014. Seita was bought by Imperial Tobacco in 2008 and has since cut 1,000 jobs at the Carquefour plant.

Workers went on strike at the plant when the employers asked for 50 percent more output from workers; the output had declined since Seita announced closure of the plant. The union which represents the workers also talked about how the company did not properly explain its "restructuring plan" to employees. The workers want to be paid for the days they were on strike, which is a common prac-



Photo: english.rfi.fr

tice in France. This is one of the reasons that the workers kidnapped their bosses, known as "bossnapping." Bossnapping is now becoming more common in France as companies lay off more workers and plants are closed down.

With files from <http://www.english.rfi.fr>.

## The TTIP: Time For U.S. Unions To Wake Up!

By Elmar Wigand

Most unionists in the United States, Great Britain and other European Union (EU) states may not be very upset about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) that is being prepared in secret consultations between a delegation of the EU Commission and U.S. trade representatives Dan Mullaney, Michael Froman and their staff at the moment (for more background, see "Toward The Universal Declaration Of Corporate Rights," June IW, page 3). In Germany, however, it has become the biggest issue in the run-up to the EU parliament elections that took place on May 24, 2014. Activists say they have not seen such a massive and broad response on the street and in social media since the Fukushima disaster in March 2011. A coalition of several German non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with civil rights, ecology and consumer protection have collected over 500,000 signatures demanding the immediate stop of negotiations on the TTIP. Also, the slightly recovering German union movement is becoming aware of great dangers in so called free trade. The defeat of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) in union recognition elections at the Chattanooga, Tenn. plant of Volkswagen (VW) in February 2014—the only VW factory worldwide lacking an institutionalized workers' representation—opened the eyes of Industriegewerkschaft Metall (the Industrial Union of Metalworkers, or IG Metall, with 2.2 million members) about the anti-democratic potential of the American "right-to-work" movement. Several other cases of severe union busting led by German based corporations in the American South (Mercedes-Benz, Thyssen-Krupp, and Deutsche Telekom) have put the "American way" (of defeating union organizing drives) on the map. On the other hand frankly, American corporations like the United Parcel Service (UPS), McDonald's and Amazon did reveal corporate union hostility in Germany. Also, Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (the United Services Union, or ver.di, with 2 million members) opposes the TTIP negotiations.

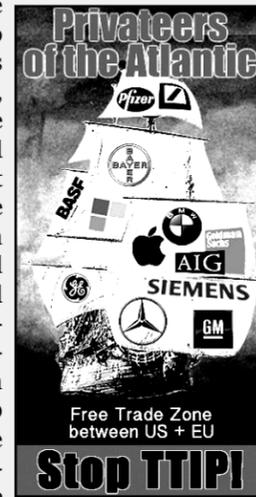
At the moment, General Electric (GE), the initial promoters of Ronald Reagan's career as a politician and PATCO-buster (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization—a United

States trade union that operated from 1968 until its decertification in 1981 following a strike that was broken by the Reagan Administration), is in a takeover battle with Siemens to incorporate the French technology giant Alstom. GE is reported to have a capital of \$69 billion hiding abroad from U.S. taxation. If such firms acquire a European company, they may virtually transfer their headquarters to the lower-taxing countries of the EU (i.e., to Ireland for 12.5 percent instead of the 31 percent tax in the United States). In general—the newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* estimates—U.S. corporations have parked \$2 trillion abroad, waiting to be invested in a safe harbor away from U.S. taxation.

All critics of the TTIP doubt that this free trade agreement is designed to stimulate traditional trading between Europe and the United States. There are almost no tariff-barriers left and the main stimulus for old-school trading would lie in fixed rates of currency exchange. But that is not on the agenda. The TTIP is a tool to

protect corporate investments (mergers and acquisitions) against regulations by states or municipalities. Private and secret arbitration courts—as implemented following the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) treaty of 1994—may sue governments if they set a minimum wage (a case already happened to Egypt recently), if they decide for nuclear phase-out (Germany is sued by Swedish nuclear energy provider Vattenfall) or if a city will re-municipalize its water supply (as Paris did when the city not renewed its contracts with private firms Suez and Veolia in 2011).

It is not only European standards that may be levelled down to the "American status quo." The TTIP could start a new trans-Atlantic race to the bottom on both shores. European giants like Airbus, EADS, and Lufthansa promote the TTIP because they want to enter the military and civil U.S. aviation market. "Buy American" clauses for public procurement may fall as well as comparatively high U.S. standards for class-action lawsuits against corporations or permissions for pharmaceutical products. While several American NGOs already mobilized against the TTIP (i.e., the Seattle to Brussels Network), the union movement in the United States should wake up now.



Graphic: arbeitsunrecht.de

to a meeting of the group, a blockade of the street and their May Day celebration. By the make-up of those at the meeting, I can tell that they are quite representative of the actual poor residents of San Telmo. I have befriended a member of the group who speaks English."

### Build the Direct Links Program!

We are also continuing to promote our "Direct Links" program amongst

ISC liaisons and IWW branches. One of the most concrete ways your branch can build international solidarity is to find a company based in your city; then find that company's individual workers overseas using social media; then offer to support them with coordinated action at the company's headquarters and operations. Send a message to [solidarity@iww.org](mailto:solidarity@iww.org) for help on finding that special corporation just waiting to meet the IWW.