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# INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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## Chicago factory occupation wins demands

By Jerry Mead-Lucero, [www.laborexpress.org](http://www.laborexpress.org)

It took the workers at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago a mere six days to defeat a recalcitrant employer, one of the nation's biggest banking corporations and to win all of their demands. The success of the workers at Republic, members of United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 1110, has raised the stakes for corporate America and raised the bar for labor unions across the country.

When the workers at Republic Windows and Doors first organized into UE, it was a significant development for the local labor movement. A mostly African-American and immigrant Latino work force had dumped a company union that had agreed to a wage freeze and had allowed dozens of workers to be fired without protest. It was an important gain for UE, which calls itself the "independent, rank-and-file, member-run union." Expelled from the CIO in 1949 because of the leftist politics of much of the union's leadership, it is small in membership relative to other unions, but UE has continued to hold fast to the principles of militant, democratic unionism. In doing so, much like the IWW, the UE has had an impact beyond its numbers.

The organizing of Republic in 2004 was part of a growth spurt for the union in the Midwest and demonstrated its

commitment to organize small manufacturing, a sector abandoned by many other unions. Little did the organizers or members know that Republic Windows and Doors would four years later make national labor history.

### Deciding to occupy the factory

Workers had suspected for a couple weeks that something was wrong.

"We've had a lot of our machines taken out of the plant at night...and along with the machine goes people's jobs," said Melvin Maclin, Vice-President of Local 1110 and a seven-year employee of Republic. The workers contacted their union representatives who questioned the company about the situation but got few answers. Workers set up patrols to try to follow trucks leaving the factory with equipment so they could learn where the materials were going.

Despite this, when company management announced on Tuesday, December 2, that the plant would close its doors at 10 AM the following Friday morning, the workers were shocked.

What is worse, the workers discovered that they would not be paid for accrued vacation time or for the 60 days notice they should have been given under the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN).

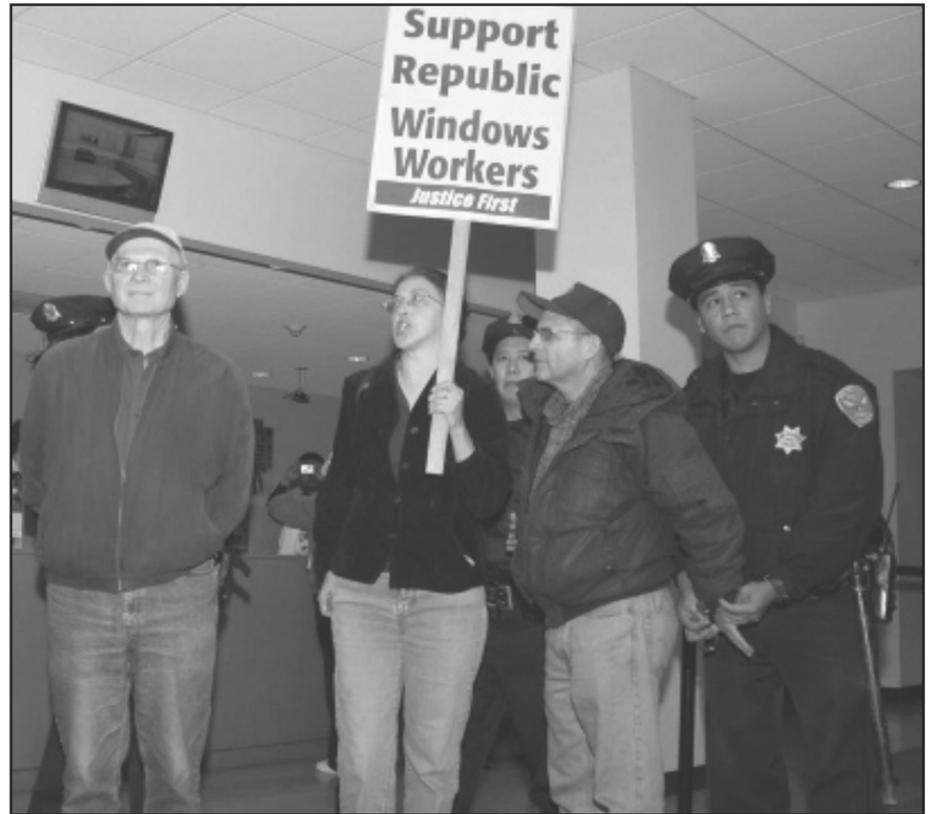


Photo provided by John Reimann

**Police arrest (left to right) Jon Britton, Gloria La Riva and IWW member John Reimann for protesting inside a San Francisco Bank of America in solidarity with Republic Windows workers occupying their plant in Chicago.**

WARN guarantees workers 60 days notice of a company's intention to cease operations.

The workers in Chicago had few options and little time to react. Their first effort was to reach out to community allies. Jobs with Justice helped the union organize an afternoon press conference on Wednesday, December 3, outside Bank of America's Chicago headquarters.

Company management claimed the reason they had decided to close the plant and the reason they could not pay the workers their severance was because Bank of America had cut off their credit. Speakers at the press conference focused on the fact that Bank of America had been provided \$25 billion by taxpayers through the federal government as part

**Continued on 9**

## Another Canadian Wal-Mart unionized

The Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board certified a union in the Wal-Mart in the province's rural community of Weyburn on December 8.

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) celebrated their long overdue win. The union had first applied to represent the Wal-Mart workers in 2004. However, the victory is overshadowed by the threat of another store closure to bust the union, as Wal-Mart did in October 2008 at the Gatineau, Quebec, Tire and Lube store that had won a first arbitrated contract. Wal-Mart justified the closure by saying that the Gatineau union contract was too ex-

pensive to be profitable. It is the second store closure in response to successful union drives in Quebec.

UFCW Canada Local 1400 is now calling on Wal-Mart to start negotiating a first contract. Wal-Mart twice appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada in a last ditch effort to prevent the Saskatchewan labour board from granting the union collective bargaining rights. Both times, the Supreme Court rejected the multinational retail giant's appeals.

The UFCW has two more certification applications for Saskatchewan Wal-Marts in North Battleford and Moose Jaw before the labour board.

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## Can we rebuild the labor movement with the Employee Free Choice Act?

By Adam W.

Much has been said in the United States labor movement around the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), a bill many mainstream leaders tout as the solution to the decline of unions. With the recent election of Barrack Obama and the Democratic Party holding the majority of seats in both houses of the US Congress, these same leaders have their hearts set that their millions of dollars in campaign contributions will pay off with the passage of the bill.

The meat of the EFCA would amend existing labor law in the US to allow unions to gain official recognition in a workplace through a majority of workers signing authorization cards and avoid the perilous and employer-dominated election route. Once a union is certified, employers have to begin sitting down with the union within ten days. If no deal is reached government mediators can force employers to sign a first contract, even without the vote of workers. The EFCA also would drastically increase the penalties companies face for violating workers rights, such as with firing workers for organizing, which happen at

record rates in the US compared to the rest of the industrialized world. Workers could receive up to three times the back pay owed and companies could be fined up to \$20,000 for willful or repeated violations.

What are members of the IWW to think of this? We are a small but growing international union with a vision of a completely different world. Not the vague change promised by both sides in the US presidential elections, but a world without bosses, where everyday workers are in the driver's seat, and where hopes and dreams for a better world can truly be realized. Will the passage of the EFCA move us closer to our vision of a new world? There is certainly a great deal of hope in the change that the EFCA could bring, but I think we need to look more critically whether substantial change will come even if the EFCA should pass.

### Weighing the EFCA

Let's lead off the discussion on the positives. With the harsh reality of unemployment, growing debt and

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## Letters welcome!

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### New Industrial Worker editors start next issue. Meet them on page 9.

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# The 'public mind' is against remembering

Dear Fellow Worker in Bellingham,

A good place to start in your questioning, is the book of interviews with Noam Chomsky called *Propaganda and The Public Mind*. In these interviews it is revealed that Civil War soldiers marched off with "Abolish Wage Slavery" on their banners. Fourier, the French socialist, conducted practical experiments in working without wages. In my readings of Thoreau I also have found contempt for wage working. This idea was also held by the Knights of Labor, an organization that came out of the Great Upheaval of 1877; a massive labor agitation that had to be put down by the US military.

The IWW was born in 1905, and sought to remember, and imagine. Apparently, at this time people valued independence and self-sufficiency, and viewed working for wages as something to do for a short while only.

Today, we are not allowed to imagine not toiling away for wages in a world of

wealth owned by someone else. In recently reading Paul Kivel's *You Call This a Democracy?*, I was struck by the incredible inequality in the US. The owning class, one per cent of us, and the managing class, 19 per cent of us, own over 90 per cent of the wealth in the Estados Unidos.

How did that happen? The "public mind" is against remembering and knowing. We are not free in this mind, but debased. The IWW has always positioned itself outside of this mind.

In regard to your fear of being turned into a "communist" by the pages of the *Industrial Worker*, remember that the Cold War used anti-communism as way of attacking people's attempts to improve their lives. In Iran in the Fifties, in Indonesia in the Sixties, in Chile in the Seventies, horrible crimes were committed, for profit, nothing else, under the pretext of a war against communism.

A Fellow Worker up here in Vermont, is from Indonesia, and comes

from an island that is digging itself down and down for gold; all conducted by a US company. Another friend sings a song in which he says "think free, be free, speak freely" and this is what we should do.

The wage system divides people, racism allows us to scab on others, nationalism also, and all of this has made the planet a piss poor place for most of us to live on.

John MacLean  
Burlington, Vermont  
United States

## All sectors need a union

In my five years as part of the adult workforce, I've worked in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Since high school, I've worked at a deli, a wildlife clinic and several public library branches. I currently work as a member of a collective bakery.

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## Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary  
Industrial Unionism

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# N. Carolina IWW truckers picket Weyerhaeuser

The drivers of the IWW-affiliated United Truckers Cooperative held a four-hour work stoppage on December 8 outside of the Weyerhaeuser Mills in Plymouth and Vanceboro, North Carolina, to demand better conditions and wages.

The workers are demanding Weyerhaeuser arrange a meeting between mill management, subcontractors, and representatives of the truckers to address the drivers' grievances and negotiate a formal agreement on wages and working conditions.

A Weyerhaeuser spokesperson told the media that it was willing to negotiate and the drivers have faxed a letter with several proposed meeting times.

"If they don't respond in a couple weeks, we'll do another strike," said Billy, one of the organizers. He said that

about 150 log truck drivers struck or stayed home.

"It was good for a first time out. It had an effect," he said, saying contacts within the factory had told him that of 100 containers scheduled to go out, only six were completed. He described the strike as a "major effort" on the part of the drivers.

"The vast majority of them had never done any kind of labour action in their lives," said Billy.

As founders of the Eastern North Carolina's first truckers' union, the members of United Truckers voted to affiliate with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW IU 530).

The strike also brought out community support. The workers were joined by concerned community members, with local church ministers attending,

including one union member who is an ordained reverend.

"The drivers represent the community, the church represents the community. What affects one of us, affects all of us. We're all in this together," said the minister.

Community support also popped up in Seattle, where Weyerhaeuser has its headquarters. A picket line of 25 unionists and environmental activists in Seattle delivered the truckers' demands to the company and were eyed by eight police officers and five private security guards, said Drew, one of the Seattle organizers. The solidarity picket went ahead without incident.

The United Truckers Cooperative also received expressions of solidarity from North Carolina Public Sector Union UE 150, United Steel Workers Local 1325, and is actively seeking solidarity from other labor unions. Nationally, the Northwest Log Truckers Cooperative, an affiliate of the International Association of Machinists, has endorsed the union and the work stoppage. The drivers, who

haul logs and finished wood products, have labored under a subcontracting system that has reduced them to little more than sharecroppers. Although many are misclassified as "independent contractors" almost all work for subcontractors of paper giant Weyerhaeuser.

Local driver, nicknamed Pork Chop, said that the drivers' demand is to be paid directly by Weyerhaeuser.

"What is good for one, is good for all" and that drivers were tired of management favoritism, he said.

Another driver, nicknamed Hollywood, said it was a moral duty.

"If you see injustice, there's something wrong and you are bound to stand up and say 'no more'. What is going on with North Carolina truck drivers is wrong, so we're standing up," he said.

Based in Seattle, Washington, Weyerhaeuser is the second largest landowner in the United States and owns over 600,000 acres of forest in North Carolina alone. Weyerhaeuser has a history of mistreating its workforce and poor environmental record.

## IWW referendum 2008 results

More than double the number of IWW members voted in this year's annual referendum than last year. They elected the international officers and approved eight constitutional amendments. Nearly half of the 472 ballots cast came from IWWs outside of the United States in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and other parts of Europe.

IWW General Headquarters will remain in Cincinnati for 2009 as Chris Lytle was elected to be the union's administrator and only paid officer, the General Secretary-Treasurer.

The slate of New York's Diane Krauthamer and Tyne and Wear's Phil Wharton are the new editors of the *Industrial Worker* for a two-year term, from 2009-2010.

The International Solidarity Commission will have all new commissioners, with Philadelphia's Justin Vitiello, Luxembourg's Michael Ashbrook, and write-in candidate, former GEB member and British Isles IWW secretary Adam Lincoln.

The General Executive Board will have new faces Sarah Bender, Stephanie Basile, and Koala Lopata joining veteran board members Nick Durie, Heather Gardner, Jason Krpan, and Bryan Roberts.

The Central Secretary-Treasurer of the General Defense Committee will remain Tom Kappas.

The high rate of participation this year was largely due to intense member debate over several proposals and constitutional amendments.

The proposal to convert the 2009 General Assembly into a Convention, with delegates voting at the direction of their branches, passed and will be implemented in Chicago. The dues proposal also passed and the new rates took effect on January 1.

The charges reform and mediation reform proposals also secured the majority vote required.

The by-laws, political alliance, and several minor constitutional amendments passed easily.

## Ottawa drops charges against panhandler organizer

Shortly before midnight on April 30, 2008, police arrested Ottawa IWW Panhandlers' Union organizer Andrew Nellis and searched his bag. Inside the bag, they found several packaged locks and a lock cutter. They charged him with mischief under \$5,000 and possession of break and enter tools, the latter a felony charge.

Police alleged that he planned to cut the lock off of a recently constructed fence built in the underpass on Rideau and Sussex streets in downtown Ottawa to prevent the homeless from taking shelter, socializing, and panhandling there. The underpass was the site of previous panhandler protests and meetings.

Nellis told the *Industrial Worker* that he wanted to replace the city's lock with a panhandlers' lock and then distribute key copies to Ottawa's homeless at the May Day rally the next day.

Prosecutors have since dropped all of the charges.

Nellis' attorney had pushed for a jury trial and said he would file a constitutional challenge to the City of Ottawa's right to strip access to shelter on public property from its homeless population. The city had previously fenced off spots under the Mackenzie bridge near a mall and the Rideau Street-Colonel By Drive underpass.

Nellis said he was "disappointed" that the city had dropped the charges against him. He is now planning to sue the City of Ottawa for "vexatious harassment" and false arrest.

Nellis spent five days at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre on Innes Road, a prison well known for its poor conditions. Nellis organized the prisoners to protest their "inhumane" conditions, resulting in citywide and national media coverage. The combined inside-outside pressure resulted in immediate improvements for prisoners.

He has petitioned the IWW General Defence Committee Local 6, based in Ottawa, for support in raising funds for his legal fees. To donate, send a cheque or money order to GDC Local 6, PO Box 52003, 298 Dalhousie St., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1S0, Canada.

## Minnesota baristas face intimidation

Members of the Starbucks Workers Union at the Franklin and Nicollet store in Minneapolis launched a campaign in December to stop management surveillance and intimidation practices at the store.

The union members 'went public' with their affiliation on November 12 and demanded a security guard be hired to guarantee staff and customer safety. In response, Starbucks management began to closely monitor employees in search of pretexts to discipline and fire them.

Barista Bliss Benson was disciplined as a result of this new monitoring.

To support the Minnesota Starbucks Workers' Union, call Regional Director John Addelia at 563-321-0548 and District Manager Caroline Kaker at 612-924-5158 to demand an end to this anti-union harassment.

## Join the IWW Today

**T**he 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 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 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*.

### 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.



# Know the Union, Hear the Union, See the Union

By Adam W.

On a 100 F degree (37 C) summer day, I was in Stockton, at the Sikh temple meeting room. A middle-aged trucker with a long, flowing beard asked me: "How do we show the other drivers who weren't at our meeting today what the union is and why they should join?"

I struggled to give him a good, clear answer on this one. I improvised an analogy on the spot. I think it paints a picture of our Solidarity Unionism organizing model in practice: "Know the Union, Hear the Union, See the Union."

Let me break it down.

First you give the whole saying: "Here's how our organizing works. Some workers will know the union, some will hear the union, but others have to see the union." If you have a marker and paper, draw three circles around each other (like a bullseye target). In the middle one write "know," the next "hear" and the outermost circle "see."

You'll get a raised eyebrow or maybe a "huh?" look on the faces of folks, which usually translates to "What the hell is this crazy IWW organizer trying to tell me now?"

Don't worry, this is actually good. If you get this reaction it means people will be interested to hear the explanation.

Point to everyone in the room and tell them that they are the workers who know the union. They are the workers that have attended meetings, are initiating the organizing and maybe have already taken out a red card. They already know collective action is needed to fight for change on the job and that this is the definition of a union. Usually this group is small, but it's the starting point for every campaign.

The people who know the union talk to other folks. Some of the people they talk to will be quickly convinced. They're the ones who hear the union. Maybe they won't come to the first meeting. They might want to know that it's a legitimate effort and not the malcontents of the

month. However, once they are asked, they will participate. This is usually the first layer of workplace leaders that are brought into an organizing committee.

Most workers are in the third camp, ones who need to see the union. They won't be meaningfully won over to the organizing effort simply by telling them something.

These folks are skeptical that collective action by workers can win. They're probably scared of losing their jobs or maybe had a bad experience with another union. You might be able to convince them to sign an authorization card, something we generally don't do in the IWW, but they can be easily flipped against the union. What the union is about isn't tangible to them.

Here's how we move the workers who need to see the union into action. The workers who know the union do the organizing and build relationships and leadership among the folks who hear about the union. Together both groups take action to change small issues. This demonstrates in practice what a union is. Other workers see the union in action and start to understand that change is really possible.

An important thing to remember is that this is where most campaigns get stuck. The campaign has brought together the workers who "know" and "hear," but they have trouble in moving the worker who needs to "see."

For myself, this is one of the most useful concepts when beginning to organize. Organizing starts with those who "know" the union, they bring in the folks who "hear" about the union and together they take action to move the workers who need to "see" the union.

How this plays out in the long run is that workers move from "seeing" to "knowing" the union by becoming involved in the organizing and action. This process builds the IWW and builds a conscious and militant working class.

ing unhealthy food, my bosses informed me that despite my good work ethic and amiable demeanor, I had to be let go because of slow business. A few months later the deli closed down. My time there proved to me that the private service sector has little to offer young workers apart from starvation wages, inconsistent hours and incompetent owners/managers.

My next job was more rewarding and better paying. I had been volunteering at a local wildlife sanctuary when management decided that the building could use two part-time staff workers (morning and evening shifts). I was asked to assume the evening staff member role. I eagerly accepted the job which was not only in line with my values but close to home as well (allowing me to bike to work rather than ride the bus). After working this job for several months I was able to get an additional part-time job at the public library as a low-level clerk. I moved into my first apartment shortly thereafter. Thus began a hectic



Continued from 2

Despite the diverse nature of my respective jobs, my overall experience has left me convinced that regardless of the type of work one performs, we are all wage slaves, subordinate to the harsh realities of low pay, hierarchical workplaces and a pervasive "every worker for him/herself" attitude.

I was attending classes at community college at the time my deli job began. My position was limited to 15 hours per week. It was a weekend job meant to earn me money and help me make friends. This, coupled with my long-standing vegetarianism, ensured that my job there would be short term. After four months of washing dishes and prepar-

# WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

## Chapter 20 "Strong in Union We Will Stand"\*

\*From a song sung by the N.Y. Working Women's Union.

At the time of the Civil War, sewing women were the largest group of female manufacturing workers. Their wages were desperately low, hours long, a situation worsened by the war-time introduction of the industrial sewing machine. Inevitably sewers began to strike and organize.



Philip Evergood, Toiling Hands

A mass meeting of workingwomen in New York in November 1863 led the following spring to the formation of the Working Women's Union. Ellen Patterson, secretary, explained the sewing women had organized to prevent wage cuts and to win "an advance of wages and shorter hours."

The New York organization inspired women doing war-related work in Boston and Philadelphia to organize. A delegation from the Philadelphia Working Women's Association met with President Lincoln and persuaded him to raise the prices paid to female arsenal workers. A month later Cincinnati sewing women appealed to the president for relief from the abuses of contractors; they requested direct employment by the government.



Sewing women organized in a number of cities, often with the help of workingmen's unions. In many cases the sewers' unions were also cooperative workshops; in Detroit, the union bought sewing machines to use right in the union hall -- bypassing and frustrating the clothing contractors.

multi-job arrangement that persisted for the next few years. It was during this time I realized that despite my working in the public and not-for-profit realms, I was still subject to the authority of a boss whose own standard of living was much higher than my own. I remembered reading about a radical labor union called the Industrial Workers of the World. After some deliberation, I sent in my first years dues and have remained in good standing ever since.

I should say that I live in a small Midwestern city with no sizable IWW presence. Like so many Wobblies, I often feel isolated from the bulk of IWW activity. Though I'm envious of folks living

in places like Madison, Portland and the San Francisco Bay Area, I'm nonetheless proud to be involved with the union to the extent that I am. Although I'm now part of a workers' co-operative, I see no reason not to stay affiliated with the finest democratic labor organization the world has ever known. As times get harder, it's safe to assume that the capitalist and management class will stick together. It's time for workers to do the same.

David Feldmann  
St. Louis, Missouri  
United States

Soapbox continues on 11

# Canada Post strike a case of David and Goliath?

By Ken Mooney, CUPW Pacific Region

From the start, the labour dispute between Canada Post and its smallest bargaining unit, the Union of Postal Communications Employees (UPCE), has taken on the proportions of the biblical tale of David and Goliath. A component of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the UPCE is a predominantly female workforce of approximately 2,400 union members.

Despite being Canada Post's smallest bargaining unit, the UPCE stood its ground after Canada Post attempted to impose a package of contract demands that would strip the current paid family leave entitlement from five days to two per year and reduce the current sick leave entitlement from fifteen to five days per year.

Canada Post also demanded that the UPCE accept a Short Term Disability plan that would eliminate current sick leave language, subject the administration and approval of sick leave benefits to insurance company Manulife Financial (without the right to grieve) and ultimately have the effect of transferring sick leave costs to an already overburdened public Employment Insurance system. Canada Post has referred to this

short term disability proposal as a best practice.

By insisting on these demands, Canada Post virtually ensured a strike. To no one's surprise, the UPCE voted 88 per cent in favor of strike action; the strike started on November 17, 2008.

Although Canada Post spokesperson John Caines publicly stated that a UPCE strike would have no effect on its delivery operations, the level of support for the UPCE picket lines countrywide has shown the opposite to be true. According to an affidavit obtained by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), the overtime costs resulting from the November 17 picket line activities at the Vancouver Mail Processing Plant tallied \$24,000. More significantly, Canada Post reported that 135,000 Vancouver residents and businesses did not receive mail delivery on that date.

Clearly, Canada Post did not anticipate such resistance. Rather than return to the bargaining table, Canada Post applied for and obtained an injunction limiting picketing activities at the Vancouver Parcel Distribution Center, the Vancouver Mail Processing Plant, and a Cambie Street parking lot. The injunc-

tion is proof of the resolve of the UPCE picket line.

Canada Post's refusal to return to the bargaining table remains disturbing. After a decade of profits, with \$547 million paid to the federal government in the form of dividends, there is no question that Canada Post has evolved into a self-sustaining Crown Corporation. Why then the necessity of stripping the sick leave benefits of Canada Post's smallest bargaining unit? Why would Canada Post seek to transfer the cost of those benefits to the Employment Insurance system?

The answers may well rest with the Canada Post Strategic Review. Initiated by Prime Minister Stephen Harper prior

to the October 2008 federal election, the Strategic Review Committee was appointed to review Canada Post's current mandate. One of the issues was the deregulation of Canada Post's exclusive privilege to deliver first-class mail. If the Review Committee were to recommend any form of deregulation, Canada Post's current delivery operations, particularly in the urban areas, could potentially be opened for tender. Is Canada Post CEO Moya Greene, a proponent of liberalization, attempting to prepare Canada Post for deregulation by using the UPCE as a model for transferring its costs to Employment Insurance? Or is Greene simply attempting to guarantee her 33 per cent performance bonus?

## Arbitrator lifts Canada Post ban on seasonal protest buttons

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) had an employer order lifted on December 5 that had banned its members from wearing a protest button during a day of action to protect universal postal service.

The buttons displayed the messages "Your public postal service delivers ... for now" or "Peace, joy and universal public postal service" for the December 4 Day of Action.

The arbitrator ordered the Canada Post Corporation to stop imposing disciplinary sanctions on members who wore the button and to retract its prohibition order.

While Canada Post tries to break the Public Service Alliance affiliate of its administrative workers (see above), trouble

is brewing between Canada Post and CUPW, one of Canada's most militant public service unions. Earlier in 2008, wildcat strikes in the Prairie provinces underscored the workplace tension.

Canada Post is undergoing a management review of its operations in the name of modernization. The postal union has denounced it as setting the stage for mail service privatization.



### Opinion

## Establishment union staff should not join the IWW

By John Reimann

Recently, there was a debate in my branch, the San Francisco Bay Area IWW branch, about a staffer from the UNITE HERE union who had applied to join the IWW. His application came on the heels of him asking our branch to endorse his union's "card check neutrality" campaign (where the employer promises to not say or do anything to oppose an organizing drive) at luxury hotels.

First off, why should the owners of some luxury hotels possibly be neutral about a union organizing their employees?

The only possible reason would be that there is an understanding – ei-

ther open or unspoken – that the union will not help the workers organize to really fight for higher wages and better working conditions. Put in another way, such neutrality agreements amount to a direct contradiction of the most basic tenet of the IWW – that the working class and the employing class have nothing in common.

Even more harmful is the message such a campaign sends to the workers. It tells them that they can win something without directly organizing and fighting for it themselves. Such a message lulls workers into a false sense of security at best and, at worst, plays into and actually heightens any fears, lack of confidence or timidity that they might have about joining a union and organizing.

The UNITE HERE staffer's IWW application is directly connected to this campaign because it shows the mentality of these unions. Establishment unions' officialdom is absolutely committed to the team concept in one form or another. The team concept is that workers and the employers are and can be on a common team. They carry this out on the industrial plane and they carry it out in the political plane through their adamant support for the Democratic Party.

This view has concrete consequences. It means that these union officials

cannot really help workers organize to fight on their own behalf, that they must constantly seek to rely on some other force such as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the courts, the "friends of labor" in politics, etc. They are opposed in principle to defying the

anti-union laws, even though the employers who, in the main, wrote the law, don't bother to obey it. The union staffers' jobs depend on carrying out these policies or else. This is the understanding from the very minute they apply for such a job. They may be perfectly nice, well-intentioned people, but

that is beside the point.

If there were not this fundamental difference between the IWW and the establishment unions, then what is the point of even having the IWW? Why not build one of the establishment unions?

Some might ask, "How can it hurt to have some of these staffers in the IWW?" The point is that they can only play the role of trying to draw the IWW and some of its members into their approach to "organizing" (really to disorganizing) the working class.

These unions will seek to recruit our members – and the IWW as a whole if they can – into being foot soldiers and cheerleaders for their failed strategy. The first step in this role was already taken when the UNITE HERE staffer recruited our branch's support for their card-check neutrality agreement in our previous branch meeting.

The overwhelming majority of the members of the establishment unions are absolutely disgusted with their unions. What role can we play with these members? We are not going to convince them to leave their union or to try to get their union decertified (and we shouldn't, if we could).

What this majority of union members will be looking for is a way to change their union as well as a way to

**The officialdom of the establishment unions is committed to the team concept... that workers and the employers are and can be on a common team.**

## Wal-Mart trampling death sparks petition

Brandworkers, an advocacy group for retail and food chain employees, has launched an online petition calling for a criminal investigation of Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and its senior executives in the November 28 trampling death of a seasonal worker at a Long Island store in the state of New York.

"Wal-Mart's marketing strategy and advertising blitz stimulated the Black Friday frenzy at its Valley Stream location," said Daniel Gross, the founding director of Brandworkers.

"Though the potential of a stampede was fully predictable, the company and its executives failed to implement a responsible security plan."

The group is urging Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice to assess whether Wal-Mart's recklessness rose to the level of criminality in the killing of the trampled Wal-Mart worker, Jdimytai Damour. The petition is available on the Brandworkers website at <http://www.brandworkers.org/en/node/45280>.

fight the boss outside the established structure of that union. The IWW can help them with that. But we cannot do that if we have any sort of alliance with the union staffers, whose job is to suppress all such efforts.

Finally, I think the experience of the carpenters' dissident caucus that ran the 1999 wildcat strike is useful.

There were probably about a dozen such caucuses throughout the country at that time. Ours was the only one that had an iron-clad rule that nobody who applied for or accepted a job on the union staff was allowed in the caucus. All the other caucuses collapsed as their links of one sort or another with the staffers sowed all sorts of confusion and weakened the caucus and its members.

I hope that a discussion on whether or not to accept establishment union staffers into the IWW does not stop with just our branch and just on this one particular part of the overall issue. What lies behind this question is the question of what is our relationship to the rest of the union movement as a whole.

I think that clarifying this also involves clarifying how we think the working class will move in the coming period and what role we in the IWW can play. This, in turn, will help clarify what we can be doing right now.

## Subway signs CIW tomato accord

Subway is the latest fast food chain to sign an agreement with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to help improve the wages and working conditions of Florida's tomato pickers.

The agreement commits Subway to pay an extra net penny per pound to the Florida farm workers who harvest the tomatoes it uses for its submarine sandwiches. It also includes a code of conduct barring violations of workers' labor rights that will be applied throughout its supply chain.

"With this agreement, the four largest restaurant companies in the world have now joined their voices to the growing call for a more modern, more humane agricultural industry in Florida. Now it is time for other fast-food companies and the supermarket industry to follow suit and for the promise of long-overdue labor reform in Florida's fields contained in these agreements to be made real," said Gerardo Reyes of the CIW. The CIW ([www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org)) is a community-based farmworker organization headquartered in Immokalee, Florida, with over 4,000 members. The CIW seeks modern working conditions for farmworkers and promotes their fair treatment.

## Opinion

# Good Jobs For All stands up for temps in Toronto

By Marc B. Young

On November 22, even as Torontonians were getting used to the idea that recession was closing its cold fingers around their collective throat, over 900 labour leaders, rank-and-file workers and community activists descended on the Metro Convention Centre to demand Good Jobs for All.

This was no hostile occupation of the cavernous facility on Front St. normally patronized by corporations. Rather, the Good Jobs Coalition—a network made up of some 35 unions and community groups and driven by the Toronto York Region Labour Council—had gathered to discuss the worsening economic situation, elaborate a broad sketch of what a pro-worker economic renaissance might look like, and plot an action plan.

Not surprisingly—and to the organizers' credit—the event also had an ecological flavour. This element of the program was most explicit in a keynote address delivered by David Foster, a former district director of the United Steelworkers (USW) and presently executive director of the BlueGreen Alliance. Composed of USW, the Communications Workers of America, the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defence Council, the Alliance's colourful name is not a reference to some coalition between the Democratic Party and another well-known if relatively small formation. Rather, it is descriptive of budding collaboration between "blue-collar" labour organizations and environmental outfits.

Foster's speech was built around the following thesis: the crisis of capitalism in 2008 is an opportunity for a

"new social mission," a sort of economic re-birth based on clean energy, green technologies, mass transit and extensive public investment. We need, Foster said, "profound change [and] we need it now." Those excited by the possibility that the ex-Steelworkers leader was demanding good employment via some system other than capitalism were sobered, however, by his call for a "Green New Deal"—presumably high on the Obama agenda.

To be fair to Foster, he also noted that well-paid work in industries with green purposes will not come by magic—or even due to the orders of well-meaning politicians. "What made blue-collar jobs good was a generation of struggle." The same, he added, will be true of jobs that involve the construction and application of wind and solar technologies.

On the theme of corporate bail-outs, this speaker also echoed those who have backed public money for companies like General Motors, but with considerable strings attached. Bailed-out enterprises should not be handed back to those executives who ruined them in the first place. GM, for example, should be transformed into the "green tech leader of the world." But genuinely radical demands were left unsaid from the podium. Some form of socialization of North America's bumbling if historically pre-eminent car makers? Substantial worker ownership and power? *Industrial Worker* readers shouldn't get excited.

An equally fiery speech—with less ideological fudging—came from Deena Ladd, coordinator of Toronto's Workers' Action Centre, an organization that

works with low-wage employees frequently ripped off by labour-law negligent employers. Ladd, who participated on the IWW public panel that opened the 2008 Wobbly organizing summit in April 2008, educated the audience about the mushrooming world of temporary work. There has been, she reported, a 50 per cent climb in this sort of employment arrangement over the past decade. Today, an "11-month contract... is job security for a lot of people."

"Our task today is to build solidarity," she said, adding that the claim that "we can't do anything about" the dire situations of pizza deliverers, cleaners, etc., is a shabby excuse for inaction. Nor, Ladd argued, can workers ignore the plight of immigrant brothers and sisters earning between 56 and 63 cents on each dollar brought home by Canadians born on these shores.

Employing the analogy of a house and its basement, Canadian Autoworkers economist Jim Stanford eloquently explained why societies need base industries (often but not always manufacturing enterprises) from which other sectors may grow. In other words, no healthy society can see all its job growth in retail.

More problematically, Stanford made a plea for not letting the powers-that-be play off Tim Horton's donut servers against auto workers, presumably if and when billions of new public dollars are made available to the latter's employers.

Fair enough as far as it goes, but Stanford didn't go into a lot of detail about how workers might achieve that unity, that lack of mutual rancour, when minimum-wage workers legitimately ask: "Why should my taxes fund a corporation that runs private jets for millionaire bosses incapable of maintaining market share? Where's my bailout?" Yet what could the researcher really say? The CAW's approach for some time has been to lobby government for handouts so as to limit the bleeding of auto jobs in southern Ontario. Socialization and the radical conversion of the car sector isn't on the CAW's agenda either.

rebuilding the labor movement, such as relying on government laws, rather than the hard work of organizing and fighting the bosses that is needed. This framing is a not an entirely subtle analogy drawn between the EFCA and the mass organizing of industrial unions in the 1930's under the breakaway CIO that was allowed by the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935.

But the analogy doesn't hold water. The worker insurgency of the 1930s in the US was a mass movement of workers who struck and occupied factories largely without any leadership by unions and before the formation of the CIO. The government reacted to this development by passing the NLRA in 1935, whose purpose was to cool disruptive strikes through offering workers the legal right to collectively bargain. In the next several years, the CIO was then able to sweep the insurgents into its membership as the wave of sit-downs peaked in 1936-37. Over the next decade, the CIO worked to create its own "labor peace" through signing no-strike clauses, curbing the ability of workers to deal with grievances on the shop floor, and channeling workers' energies into electoral politics (for

## Vibrant workshop discussion

A major strength of the event was that workers weren't merely spoken to, by voices radical or otherwise. Most of the day was spent in workshops, where rank-and-file opinions and recommendations flowed thick and fast. The content of these workshops, in this reporter's mind, generated two basic observations.

1. In a fashion not inconsistent with Wobbly folk wisdom, rank-and-file union members (when placed in an environment where being radical is okay) come up with notions and proposals substantially to the left of the postures adopted by their official leaders. At this conference, at the end of their workshops, participants came back to the plenary session with calls to, for example, alternatively ban temporary agencies or compel them to respect the law, bring the economy under public control and initiate "coordinated mass actions."

2. Green ideas, while regarded sympathetically by much of the working class, aren't always integrated into those individuals' economic perspective. Rank-and-file participants took this conference very seriously. What they took most seriously was the gathering's potential to be a launch-pad from which the labour movement might fight for decent-paying employment for themselves, their neighbours and families. To many of them, the green part prevalent in the plenary was fine, but something of a moral add-on. Participant discussion in the Community and Economic Development workshop, for instance, barely touched on themes like the absolute limits of growth and the need to share work as a way to help all live in harmony with each other and the Earth.

In short, workers at the Metro Convention Centre had little trouble dumping on the corporate capitalist model (even as they applauded certain American speakers' Obam-ecstasy). What remains essential is further grassroots discussion of how ecological values can be thoroughly woven through radical demands for a decent living.

more see Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's chapter on the CIO in *Poor People's Movements*). This background should be kept in mind any time we hear arguments that federal laws and union officials make history and not workers themselves.

So, in what light should labor radicals who want to rebuild the labor movement and create a new world, see the EFCA? First, we should not hold our breath or hold back in any of our organizing efforts by waiting for its passage. Second, should the EFCA pass, we should take every effort to take advantage of the increased discussion of unions. This may be difficult in practice as workers may approach us wanting to organize, but under the false impression that it is suddenly "easier" under the new check recognition. We need to stick to our guns, though, and continue our practice of solidarity unionism, even when it involves strategically using the card check process.

Above all, we should remain critically cautious and skeptical around the promises of the EFCA and even more skeptical of those in the labor movement who promote it.

## Rebuild the US labor movement with the Employee Free Choice Act?

Continued from 1

long stagnant wages that many workers throughout the US are currently facing, mainstream news coverage of Congress merely debating workers rights is enough to make millions consider the idea of a union at their workplace. This could provide an opening in the narrow, pro-business discussion that dominates US politics. Should it happen, members of the IWW would be wise to seize this opportunity to talk with more workers and expand our organizing wherever we can.

Further, if the Act should pass in its existing form (as it could easily be watered down) the increased penalties could provide us with greater leverage over resistant employers. A prime example would be New York warehouse employer Handy Fat Trading, which has fired IWW members and defied several rulings by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Both a national debate around unions and workers right and greater enforcement of labor laws would help us in the IWW.

Now let's discuss why I think we should see the EFCA in a critical light. Many labor leaders promote the bill in language that ranges from a 'great step forward' to a cure-all of sorts, which would usher in a new era of unionization such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) organizing drives of the Thirties.

I think these views have some serious problems.

First, I'm skeptical that it will pass and not just because Obama has appointed a centrist cabinet of former Clinton officials. Labor's betrayal by Democrats and the game of "wait and see, they'll deliver" every time a Democratic president comes to power is a river so deep, you may as well call it an ocean. Barring significant strikes or actions by workers that begin to scare business elites into wanting to offer labor a bone, I don't see this history changing.

The largest issue with the EFCA, though, is the use of card checks to gain official union recognition. To join a union, a worker would sign a membership card. If more than 50 per cent of the workers signed cards, the employer would have to recognize the union.

While the bill would undeniably make this process easier, I don't think this will lead to the huge membership increases we're led to believe. Canada, for instance, has similar card check recognition and enforced arbitration laws yet it has a declining private sector union rate of about 17 per cent, compared to eight per cent or less in the US. Despite the laws, Canadian companies have continued to effectively use union-busting to prevent workers from organizing and to decertify existing unions at higher rates than new ones can be organized—exactly the same situation as in the US.

Mainstream labor's embrace of this aspect of the EFCA is actually the most troubling in my eyes because it represents the same problem that has been plaguing mainstream unions since the passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in 1935: trading easier membership gains and labor peace in exchange for the shop floor militancy that can actually fight effectively to win against employers. If unions are able to gain recognition through card check that they wouldn't have been able to do through fighting for voluntary recognition, this drastically increases the likelihood that the large, centrally controlled business unions will be meeting employers at the table with stacks of authorization cards and passive bodies of workers, rather than the well organized rank-and-file committees needed to win. These unions would rely on two year, government-imposed contracts that workers will not be able to vote down and which will bar workers from striking.

Overall, much of mainstream labor's framing of EFCA promotes short cuts to

### EFCA lockstep rhetoric

**AFL-CIO.org:** "The Employee Free Choice Act, supported by a bipartisan coalition in Congress, would level the playing field for workers and employers and help rebuild America's middle class. It would restore workers' freedom to choose a union." (2008)

**Changetowinaction.org:** "So how do we level the playing field and get our economy back on track? Good union jobs are the place to start. The Employee Free Choice Act can help restore the American Dream by making it easier for workers to form unions." (2008) *Compiled by IW.*

# IWWs agitate at SUNY social justice conference

By Kenneth Miller

A contingent of Wobblies attended and spoke at the well-organized Social Justice Conference at the State University of New York-Binghamton University campus in Vestal, New York, on November 7-9.

The organizers worked hard to provide space for all kinds of social justice organizations such as the New York American Civil Liberties Union, Veterans for Peace, environmental organizations, vegans, United Students Against Sweatshops, and the IWW, which had literature tables surrounded by a constant buzz of conversation. Alongside the many workshops, there was a keynote lecture by people's historian Howard Zinn.

IWW member Paul Poulos was part of the "recent developments in the labor movement" panel. His basic soapbox presentation about what the IWW stands for made more sense than most of the discussion to everyone in the room. People cheered; they had wanted to hear that someone actually understood what solidarity is supposed to look and feel like.

The presentation of Victor Rosado, a Graduate Student Union member, also clearly presented militant and democratic unionism as a vision that earned many of the conference participants' support.

Poulos' presentation was somewhat awkward for co-panelist labor historian

Melvyn Dubofsky, who had previously declared that the IWW was dead, only to find himself sitting next to a Wobbly in the flesh.

While the panelists spent most of the time addressing one another's experiences with the labor establishment and the lack of democracy and terrible allocation of union resources, there appeared to be little idea of what Barack Obama's election to the presidency meant for the labor movement nor did it provide any unique insights into the impact of the Change to Win Coalition splitting from the AFL-CIO.

IWW member Rochelle Semel pointed out that the alternative to unionism was not very good either, which helped folks get back on track to discussing how they can contribute work and ideas to the part of the labor movement to which they belong.

Two national staff people from United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) were in attendance and chose not to discuss sweatshops at all. Instead, they focused on demonstrating student support for campus workers and an upcoming contract dispute involving UNITE HERE and Aramark on Binghamton campus. In effect, USAS appeared to be no different from a student version of Jobs with Justice. It is the opinion of this grumpy IWW/USASer that the unions should be perfectly capable of asking for student



From left to right: Steve Early, Melvyn Dubofsky, Paul Poulos (sitting), Victor Rosado, and Lee Conrad, spoke on a labor issues panel at the conference.

support without flying in national USAS staff who should focus all of their energy on explaining the urgency and opportunity presented by supporting workers in the global apparel industry.

The Binghamton IWWs produced a leaflet (see below) about the struggle of local graduate students that everyone seemed to be reading, with it emerging as an immediate issue to discuss.

## Another union is possible: SUNY grad students organize

By the Binghamton IWW, Binghamtoniww@gmail.com

As many of the graduate students of SUNY Binghamton are aware, there are some serious issues surrounding our conditions of employment.

One thing has become clear through this whole process: we cannot rely on other people, especially the bureaucratic reformist unions, to solve our problems for us. We have given our power over to the so-called representatives of our union. All we have gotten back is corruption and increasingly worse labor conditions. It is time that we take this issue into our own hands.

This is our campus. We teach a large proportion of the classes, we grade most of the papers and in return we are getting funding lines cut, we are being forced to teach more classes, and we are being forced to work without a contract, all while watching the university be stolen from under us by the reactionary SUNY administration.

Every day that we let this go unanswered, we lose more control over this situation. It is time for a challenge; it is time to stand up. If we fail to do it now, we may not have another chance. Lines need to be drawn in the sand or they just might sell the beach from under us.

A series of issues have arisen within our current union, the Graduate Student Employees' Union (GSEU). The union has spun out of control, becoming a bureaucracy that has no interest in actually fighting for its members. They seem to enjoy the process of contract negotiation so much that they have taken zero concrete steps to end these negotiations with a contract in our favor.

We in the Binghamton IWW are dedicated to building a better union, one which we control directly, not through intermediaries, not through representatives. Every step that the GSEU takes away from direct control is another step toward corruption and non-responsiveness. Numerous problems have come to light recently, due to this condition.

### The Money Controversy

Over the last six years Communications Workers of America Local 1104 (the union that the GSEU is affiliated

with) has paid a company called Crimson Technologies \$465,495 for "computer systems maintenance."

Now, you may say that this is a ridiculous sum of money for maintaining servers, and you are right, but the issue goes much deeper than this.

Firstly, this job routinely costs \$10,000-\$15,000 a year and the CWA is a union that "represents" IT workers who could have done the job at that price.

**We need a union that will not prevent us from using whatever means we decide to use to create pressure on the state, and nothing creates pressure better than shutting down a campus.**

Secondly, Crimson Technologies is a non-union company, which not only violates the basic principles of solidarity but also goes against the basic hiring norms of the labor movement, which has a strict rule about hiring union contractors whenever possible.

Thirdly, and most interestingly, Crimson Technologies is owned by the wife of the current Secretary Treasurer of the CWA, Ed Connelly. When confronted about this by rank-and-file members, the union leadership did everything they could to prevent us from accessing records about the spending of our money.

### The Ballot Issue

Three weeks before the elections, 30-40 per cent of GSEU members at SUNY Binghamton had not received ballots. Now there is some controversy over whether this was an intentional attempt by the GSEU to disenfranchise Binghamton students or just bureaucratic inefficiency and ineptitude. Either way the election has been a nightmare.

No wide-spread problems were reported on any other SUNY campus. Besides the 30-40 per cent of us that were disenfranchised, first year gradu-

ate students were purged off the voter rolls as the GSEU claimed that they have not been members long enough to be in "good standing". Whose union is this again?

### The Contract

We are confident that many of you know that we have not had a labor contract for the past year, going on a year and a half. This is completely unacceptable. What does our union do? Nothing!

We are banned from going on strike by state law, so the union does nothing but accept this. How are we expected to negotiate on even ground with the state when they are the ones who wrote the law that prevents us from taking action to force a negotiation? We have the right and the ability to strike and that is all we need. If we strike, the GSEU may get disbanded as an organization, but what good is a union that is not willing to take the means necessary to get a contract for its members?

Without the right to strike, the state has no need to negotiate with us; we cannot do anything to force them to do so under the law. They will just keep dragging the negotiations out until it gets referred to the Public Employees Relations Board, a state-controlled arbitration board. So we have to work through a state-run arbitration panel to negotiate with the state because the state itself is limiting our tactics, while our current union does nothing about this.

### For Worker Control Over Our Union

The Voices for Change candidate list is running for the leadership of the union. The only problem is that these issues are not going to be solved cosmetically. These issues, regardless of the

specifics, have arisen because we do not control our own union. As long as we allow the bureaucrats to organize for us, we will always have a union that does not respond to our needs.

This is not simply an issue of corruption or non-responsive "leadership;" this is an issue of power within the union. Right now we are asked to be relevant once a year—for the elections—and then we are expected to go away and allow the "leaders" to deal with our problems for us.

We have seen where this leads and we must say "No More!" It is time that our union is actually Our Union. It is time to take the conditions of our own labor into our own hands. Not only is this our workplace, this is our campus.

We need direct, collective control over our union. No more money scandals if we control our own money. No more voting scandals if all decisions are made locally and collectively. No more ineffective bureaucratic reactionary union tactics. It is time to step up.

We need a union that we control directly. We need a union that will not prevent us from using whatever means we decide to use to create pressure on the state, and nothing creates pressure better than shutting down a campus.

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## Review

# Staughton Lynd tackles Wobblies and Zapatistas

*Staughton Lynd & Andrej Grubacic, Wobblies & Zapatistas, PM Press, Oakland, 2008, 300 pages, paperback, \$20.*

By Paul Bocking

In an opening chapter of *Wobblies and Zapatistas*, interviewer Andrej Grubacic refers to Staughton Lynd as “something of a guru of the new IWW.”

The title is apt. Within the grassroots labour movement of North America and beyond, as a labour lawyer and advocate, Lynd has popularized the concept of Solidarity Unionism—building a union through the daily efforts of rank-and-file workers on the shop floor to come together and ‘act like a union’.

Lynd is the radical antidote to the many prominent union leaders, intellectuals and academics who claim that to address the contemporary challenges of production moving overseas, massive multinational employers and anti-union governments, unions must become more hierarchical, open to ‘partnerships’ with employers, and increasingly focused on lobbying politicians.

I have twice had the privilege of hearing Lynd describe his vision for a renewed, radical grassroots labour movement, delivering key note speeches at the 2002 IWW General Assembly in Ottawa and the 2005 IWW Centenary Conference in Chicago.

“Workers should look primarily to each other to accomplish their objectives, rather than depending on laws, government agencies, or distant unions,” said Lynd.

“Collective direct action is likely to resolve problems more rapidly than filing a grievance or bringing a complaint

to the National Labor Relations Board.”

Yet matching the diverse experience of its main subject, a reader of *Wobblies and Zapatistas* will quickly discover this book seeks horizons well beyond a radical analysis of the contemporary labour movement.

The core of the conversations between Lynd and Balkan activist intellectual Andrej Grubacic that comprise this book is an articulation of Lynd’s beliefs on the theory and practice of how grassroots social movements can radically transform our world.

The legacy of the IWW is briefly discussed in an early chapter. It receives pride of place in the title along with the Zapatistas (EZLN) of Mexico, because both serve as a short-hand for the mix of values that Lynd hopes will be embraced by a broader range of activists and organizers. While the IWW insists that “we are all leaders”, the Zapatistas say that “we lead by obeying” the people.

There is ample support for Grubacic’s opening claim that “it is virtually impossible to write or read about American radicalism after the Second World War without encountering the remarkable activist life of Staughton Lynd.”

What follows is a rich exploration through decades of Lynd’s personal experiences of movement organizing and of his own sources of inspiration. Beginning as a civil rights activist and leader of the ‘Freedom Schools’ of the American South in the early Sixties, Lynd engaged in anti-war mobilizing, Central American solidarity, workers’ rights advocacy and prisoner support work.

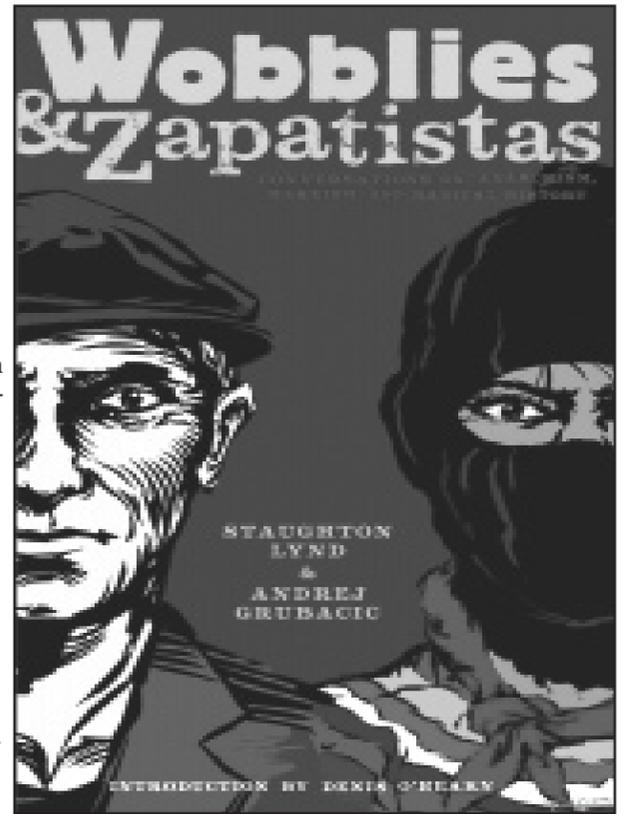
Drawing from these experiences, Lynd argues that the next generation

of radical activists and organizers need, and are increasingly discovering, a political perspective that combines the best, most liberating aspects of Marxism and Anarchism, while discarding elements that have held back or diverted popular grassroots movements.

“The IWW has been revived by a new generation of young activists. This phenomenon should no doubt be understood as part of a larger revival of libertarian socialist thinking all over the world. How those currents of thought and idealism survived or reached the United States from abroad is a story yet to be told.”

Identifying with Marxism, Lynd argues that it “provides the needed objective analysis” for understanding our contemporary society, but adds that it is “inadequate as a guide to practice, to personal decisions.”

Lynd draws inspiration from his spiritual beliefs as a Quaker for acting in solidarity and non-violence. The centrality of his own deeply held moral principles to his political outlook is evident as Lynd emphasizes the importance of ‘accompaniment’, a term he attributes to Archbishop Oscar Romero and Catholic liberation theology, describing working in solidarity and as equals with poor and marginalized peoples.



As a whole, through his dialogue with Andrej Grubacic, Lynd presents a wide-ranging book that illuminates a lifetime of struggle to create a better world.

*Wobblies and Zapatistas* is full of insights on how to build ‘horizontal’ grassroots social movements, as exemplified by the IWW and the Zapatistas, which can overcome divisions of race, gender and life experience, to create a new society within the shell of the old.

## Review

## Workers need ‘moral certitude’ to revolt

*Victoria Johnson, How Many Machine Guns Does it Take to Cook One Meal? The Seattle and San Francisco General Strikes, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2008, 200 pages, paperback, \$24.95.*

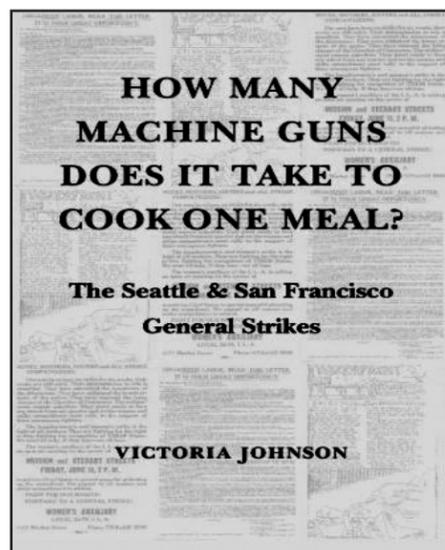
By Matt Jones

This book is a discussion of the Seattle and San Francisco General Strikes, of 1919 and 1934, respectively. The cool title is taken from an article published during the Seattle General Strike and it is a useful book for us involved in building the One Big Union.

The book focuses on identifying the political culture of the working class in these two cities. Political culture is the belief system that workers have about the just distribution of wealth and power in society, how this is expressed, and what actions are taken. According to Johnson, the working class in Seattle and San Francisco exhibited a form of political culture she identifies as “workplace democracy political culture.” Characterized by the belief that labor is entitled to all it produces, Johnson traces the history of this political culture, back to the writings of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, and shows them as a current throughout history. According to Johnson these traditions would go on to influence Jacksonian Democrats of the 1820s and 1830s, republicans of the civil war period, on through the National Labor Union, Knights of Labor, Populist Party up to the Industrial Workers of the World.

This political culture created what Johnson calls “moral certitude”. Workers believed in what they were doing and that their action was right and justified.

This raises some interesting questions for us in the IWW. Within our class we are striving to carry on this tradition, the belief that workers should democratically control production and



distribution of goods, and that the boss has no right to do so. How do we effectively make this argument to our fellow workers? How does it create its own strength to carry on the struggle against the capitalist class?

Johnson’s discussion of this culture does fall short in one respect. She gives little acknowledgment to the ways in which new immigrants and freed slaves changed these notions of workplace democracy. In arguing against the notion that radical working class politics was transported to the US from abroad, she begins to ask the wrong question. Not are these politics imported or homegrown but how have they changed as new immigrants, freed slaves, and women took them on as their own. It is an important question and can give us insight into how ideas change as new groups of workers take them on.

The Workplace Democracy Political Culture would fuel the actions and thoughts of the working class in Seattle and San Francisco, when they stopped work in both cities, shutting down pro-

duction and service, and establishing an order based on their power as workers.

In Seattle, the workers, in sympathy with shipyard workers, shut the city down for five days, ran the essential services of the city, and maintained order. They were urged on by the *Seattle Union Record*, the first labor daily in US history, which described not only their goals but also the legitimacy of what they were doing.

In San Francisco, in response to increased employer repression of the dockworkers strike, unions in San Francisco went out in sympathy, issued their own demands to the bosses and the unions. Again, workers ran essential services, fed strikers, and made decisions on how the city would function during the action. In both general strikes the city was shut down, except for the necessary services such as running electricity or laundry for hospitals. Elected committees of strikers, putting into effect the belief that workers can democratically run society, made these decisions.

These past struggles and appeals can inform the IWW strategy. Again what sticks out from both these general strikes as well as other struggles in US history, is the sense of right or what Johnson calls “moral certitude”. Creating this is something we should aim to establish with our organizing, even though these beliefs are not widely held today. As in the past, it will come out of workers’ direct experience, but it should be accompanied by education around these principles.

Do we attempt to tie it to past republican notions of right or do we forge it anew? I do not know the answer to this question. I suspect the education will include both, as the working class of today is currently changing and adapting as it struggles against the capitalist class. We can look back at those past examples as well as current experiences to establish this notion of right. Ultimately, the vision that our class has the democratic right to control the economy will fuel our struggle as much as material needs or reactions against oppression.

## Outgoing editor says goodbye

By Peter Moore

The *Industrial Worker* has two fresh editors! Fellow Workers Diane Krauthamer of New York and Phil Wharton of Newcastle, England will take over as the newly-elected editors as of the next newspaper. I will work closely with them to ensure a smooth transition and, of course, continue as a contributor.

The *Industrial Worker* is one of the few unions that has member-elected editors for its primary publication. This democratic foundation means the newspaper can be a forum for members and the broader working class, rather than a mouthpiece for union officials and staff.

As the editor and with my co-editor Mike Pesa (January-June 2007), I have

sought to boost member participation in the newspaper, through contributions and debate in the Readers’ Soapbox. Seeing how members rose and found their voice and contributed was most rewarding.

The new co-editors will continue on this path and through a collective effort, our monthly newspaper can reach its potential, attract new readers and satisfy our loyal base of members and subscribers. I look forward to taking part.

Finally, I must thank my proofreading wife and babysitting mother-in-law, without whose support I could never have published 20 newspapers in two years.

# Chicago factory occupation wins demands

Continued from 1

of the \$700 billion Wall Street bailout. They asked Bank of America why, if the intention of these funds was to guarantee access to credit, the bank wasn't using a small fraction of its bailout funds to ensure Republic compensated its workers? As the vice president of Local 1110, Melvin Maclin explained: "We have a saying, you got bailed out, we got sold out."

The press conference and mobilization of community support was just the beginning. Workers were particularly concerned that the Republic owners would remove or sell the remaining machinery at the plant, before they had agreed to pay the workers their severance. So at closing time on Friday, the workers refused to leave the plant, launching the first factory occupation in the United States since the late 1930s. For the workers, the decision was simple and was reached unanimously fairly quickly.

"I no have any choice. The company say, you fired. The company not give me the money for benefit and vacation time. You know what, I not lose anything I stay here and I say, you don't pay me, I don't move," said worker Ricardo Caceres. All the workers I spoke to during the Republic occupation expressed the same sentiment—we had no choice and nothing to lose.

As word of the occupation spread Friday night, supporters began showing up at the factory's entrance, bearing gifts of food, coffee, blankets and sleeping bags. They signed posters taped up to the factory's walls with messages like: "Thanks for showing us all how to fight back" and "You are an inspiration to us all." A Saturday prayer vigil became a rally, with hundreds of supporters showing up to demonstrate their solidarity.



Photo: X358360

Supporters rally at the worker-occupied Republic Windows plant.

Press coverage reached a level rarely witnessed during a "labor dispute." TV crew trucks remained parked in front of the factory during most of the six day occupation. A Google news search on December 7 generated 600 hits and by the press date was more than 4,000. The workers began to receive statements of solidarity from France and Argentina, places in which factory occupations are a more familiar form of working class struggle.

The bold action of the workers at Republic struck a deep chord. Working people and the organizations that represent them have been taking it on the chin for the past 30 years with the majority of labor battles ending in defeat, concessions and cooperation with manage-

ment. With the collapse of the ruling neo-liberal economic ideology these past few months plunging the country into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, we witnessed corporate America's answer to the crisis: a \$700 billion taxpayer bailout to the banks who created the crisis, to little effect.

The Republic workers' action was the first sign of a working class answer to the economic crisis. Among the first workers' organization to respond was the IWW, with Wobblies on the scene as early as Friday evening. Wobblies had a substantial presence at the Saturday prayer vigil and the Chicago IWW general membership branch organized a Republic Workers Solidarity Committee. Minneapolis and San Francisco IWW members organized solidarity actions. A caravan of Wobblies from St. Louis made the six hour trip to Chicago to demonstrate their solidarity.

Union support for the Republic workers was widespread. Unions such as SEIU, the Teamsters, AFSCME, UNITEHERE, UAW and UFCW all provided both moral and material support. Unions donated thousands of dollars to a solidarity fund.

The cross-union solidarity was inspiring but also ironic. Much of the mainstream labor movement has had little respect for UE in the past. SEIU's increasingly centralized and top down organizational model contrasts sharply with the UE's member-run union approach. UE has frequently raided Teamster-organized plants where the union was poorly representing the workers, including Republic in 2004. Witnessing these unions paying homage to UE was a symbolic victory for militant, democratic unionism.

By Monday, December 8, the politicians had taken note of the mass appeal of the occupation. Fifteen Chicago aldermen declared their support for a proposed City Council resolution calling on the city to divest from Bank of America if the bank refused to offer more credit to Republic's owners so that they could meet their obligations to their workers. Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich announced that he would direct the state to do the same. At the beginning of the occupation, the workers and UE organizers had dismissed the idea that the plant could be saved, but on Monday, UE Western Region President Carl Rosen's announced that he was working with various agencies to find a way to re-open Republic under new management.

## Victory for Direct Action

The occupation put serious pressure on the company and the bank to negotiate from the beginning. The scale of pub-

lic and political support for the workers made the eventual success of their fight for legally mandated severance and vacation pay inevitable. But nearly everyone agrees that if the workers had not decided to occupy the factory, the struggle would never have received the attention it did and success would have been much harder to achieve.

"When we found out what was happening, we said look, here is some options we can stay and fight or basically sit back and hope something will happen out of a law suit. And our recommendation is to fight and the workers said, yeah we want to fight and we are going to do everything it takes," said Leah Fried, an UE organizer.

Shortly after their victory was announced—full vacation pay and severance compensation for the 200 workers—Maclin and fellow Republic worker Ron Bender were even more blunt when they responded in near unison to the question whether they could have accomplished what they did if they hadn't decided to employ direct action. "No! No! No way! I don't even have to think about that. No, we would have been out the door."

At the massive rally held outside Bank of America's main Chicago offices just hours before the workers announced their victory, speaker after speaker emphasized the importance of the workers' bold move. Members of the UAW who spoke reminded those assembled that they were pioneers of the sit down strike in US history and seemed to indicate that their union needed to return to its roots.

## Will it spread?

But the big question is whether the occupation of Republic Windows and Doors is just the beginning of a working class fight back and a resurgence of the US labor movement.

"Hopefully this spreads," said Mark Meinster, International Representative for UE. "This is also a fight for the working class as well, and so we really feel like we got an obligation to working class people to win this fight [...] because of what it could mean for workers in this country." UE organizer Leticia Marquez echoed Marks words: "I just hope that we do see more workers in some way or another unfortunately having to violate the law, so workers decided to not wait to get a remedy months or years from now. They wanted to take action today, get an answer today."

The challenges to employing this strategy can't be underestimated. Larry Spivak, Regional Director of AFSCME Council 31 and President of the Illinois Labor History Society, on the eve of the workers victory said that "it takes a huge amount of courage and the workers here were forced to the brink. Whether or not there are situations like this where workers say hey we can begin to do this or we should do this I wouldn't predict one way or another because in some ways there is a lot of risk involved. [...] But what I am excited about is that Americans are excited and believe this is a good thing."

Of course the greatest risk of all is possible arrest or worse, by the police. In the case of Republic, Alderman Scott Waguespack of Chicago's 32nd Ward, where the plant is located, intervened early on to prevent an overreaction by the police. The company itself, apparently never asked for the workers to be removed according to public statements by the police. The intense press coverage and public scrutiny was most likely a factor in their decision. Future plant occupiers may not be as lucky.

The workers at Republic may have provided the spark, but it may be some time before it finds tinder.

## New Industrial Worker editors take over in 2009

By Diane Krauthamer and Phil Wharton

It is our distinct pleasure to take over responsibility as *Industrial Worker* editors beginning with the March 2009 issue. Current editor Peter Moore should be commended for the hard work and dedication he has shown in putting together this newspaper. He displayed a meaningful commitment to diversifying the content of the newspaper by providing a significant voice to members generally, and especially to those fellow workers who are typically under-represented within our Union. In particular, he and his former co-editor Mike Pesa put in a noticeable effort to encourage contributions from a wide range of people, including more coverage of issues affecting women and people-of-color.

As *Industrial Worker* readers, we have enjoyed the change in design, tone and coverage brought in over the last two years and we know that we're not the only ones. Now, our responsibility is to continue encouraging our Union's typically under-represented voices so they are heard loud and clear.

As a team, we will work together to ensure our Union's newspaper reflects the union's growing international strength and diversity. We plan to build and expand on our newspaper's progress and find ways to better market it and expand circulation. We need to share the good word and make the *Industrial Worker* a sustainable newspaper, too. This is hard work and we cannot do it without the continued support from you, our readers.

Please, keep sending your suggestions, news stories, and artwork to the newspaper. You may reach us at iw@iww.org.

### Who we are

**Phil Wharton** has been an IWW member since 2004 and was a founding member of the Tyne and Wear branch in 2006. Also in 2006, Phil was elected editor of *Bread and Roses*, the British Isles IWW magazine. *Bread and Roses* (named after the song) at that time hadn't been published for five years, and Wharton re-launched it as a vibrant, relevant magazine, written by wobs not only for wobs, but anybody interested in everyday class struggle. He served two terms as *Bread and Roses* editor.

He has continued to participate in branch activities, and was elected editor of a new branch magazine, a kind of local version of *Bread and Roses*. Phil has a BA (Honours) in Humanities/Social Studies, and qualified as a journalist in 2001 from the Journalism Training Centre in Mitcham, London.

**Diane Krauthamer** has worked for years as an independent journalist. In 2006, she wrote and produced the IWW Starbucks Workers' Union documentary, *Together We Win: The Fight to Organize Starbucks*, which has since screened nationally in the United States, and internationally throughout Canada, Europe and Japan.

Since joining the union, Diane has contributed to public relations and media support efforts for the IWW Food and Allied Workers Union, New York Local IU 460/640 campaign and has written a number of news stories on local and international organizing. FW Krauthamer recently received her MA in Media Studies from the New School, and has a BA in Journalism/Media Studies and Political Science from Rutgers University.

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**Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History**

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

The authors accompany us on a journey that explores revolutions, direct actions, anti-globalist counter-revolution, Freedom Schools, Zapatista cooperatives, Haymarket and Ferragosto, Huelga and Brigade, 'international' communists, wildcat strikes, early Protestant communism, Native American democratic practices, the Workers' Solidarity Club of Yugoslavia, occupied factories, self-organized councils and soviet, the lives of forgotten revolutionaries, Quebrer meetings, activist movements, and prison rebellions. Neglected and forgotten moments of interracial self-activity are brought to light. The book invites the attention of readers who believe that a better world, on the other side of capitalism and state bureaucracy, may indeed be possible.

"There's no doubt that we've lost much of our history. It's also very clear that those in power in this country like it that way. Here's a book that shows us why. It demonstrates not only that another world is possible, but that it already exists, has existed, and shows its massive potential to burst through the artificial walls and divisions that currently imprison us. An exquisite contribution to the literature of human freedom, and nothing but a matter of time."

—David Greber, author of *Programs of an Anarchist Anthropology and Direct Action: An Ethnography*  
 180 pages, \$18.95



**Labor Law for the Rank and Filer: Building Solidarity While Staying Clear of the Law**

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

Labor Law for the Rank and Filer is a guerrilla legal handbook for workers in a post-neoliberal economy. Reading cutting-edge legal strategies for winning justice at work with a theory of dramatic social change from below, Anastasios Lynd and Daniel Green deliver a practical guide for making work better while re-integrating the labor movement.

Labor Law for the Rank and Filer demonstrates how a powerful model of organizing called "Solidarity Unionism" can help workers avoid the pitfalls of the legal system and utilize direct action to win. This new revised and expanded edition includes new cases governing fundamental labor rights as well as an added section on Practicing Solidarity Unionism. This new section includes chapters discussing the hard-fighting tactic of working to rule; organizing under the principle that no one is illegal; and building grassroots solidarity across borders to challenge neoliberalism, among several other new topics. Illustrative stories of workers' struggles make the legal principles concrete.  
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## Opinion

# Let's Not Get Organized By Barack Obama

By Tom Kertes, *Baltimore Independent*

Barack Obama and I share one thing in common: I am a community organizer and so was Obama. I imagine we've witnessed many of the same injustices, heard similar stories of people being beaten down and being taken advantage of, and have studied the same strategies and tactics for how to build power for the powerless.

So why did Obama stop community organizing? Does he believe that in the past eight years, power has dramatically shifted to the once powerless in order to bring about the radical changes required to put the stories he'd heard of poverty and hunger to rest? Did he think it was finally time for the community to take over, ready to exercise its power gained through decades of effective organizing, leadership development, and development of community-based institutions focused on human rights, social justice, and economic fairness?

Or is it that Obama never was a community organizer, but rather an organizer of the Democratic Party, building a base for himself within his party by going out to the community in order to build a winning narrative that starts with "when I was with the common folk" and ends with "and now that I am President"?

All I can do is watch what Obama does. First, I can see that he is a Democrat. He is now the leader of the same coalition that "ended welfare as we know it" in 1996, that largely supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and that recently bailed out Wall Street bankers. Obama, and the party he now leads, supports the expansion of government surveillance and of American forces in Central Asia, and has no plan or even a promise to de-privatize health care by creating a universal single payer system.

Like any organization, political parties exist to organize people, power, and resources to carry out an agenda. Obama may be the best thing to happen to the Democratic Party in at least 70 years, because he presents a new face for the coalition, and his face gets people to abundantly give their time, money, and attention to the party's agenda.

Obama is brilliant at politics. As a community organizer myself, it is a wonder to see such a skillfully executed political organization. But I also watch and wonder if his skills might result in the end of real community organizing. Will people committed to actually ending the stories of powerless people get co-opted into Obama's Democratic coalition?

One thing that Obama does well is associate his partisan organizing with community organizing, closely knitting the narratives of great social movements like civil rights, the Underground Railroad and labor movements to the narrative of the Democratic Party. That is smart, since the story of Harriet Tubman is far more compelling than that of a bunch of fat cats smoking cigars in the back rooms of the halls of power.

He also tells his story through the stories of ordinary people, borrowing from something that real community organizers call testimonials, that is, giving voice to the voiceless. But instead of really giving voice to the voiceless, when partisan organizations ruled by the rich and privileged do these kinds of testimonials, they are actually stealing people's voices.

Additionally, Barack Obama knows how to use emotional branding, which includes the use of compelling logos, fonts, colors, and iconic images to create the illusion of shared values. Coca Cola and Apple do this as well, associating feelings to products so that we confuse soda pop and music devices with the values of love, joy, togetherness, and being special or unique.

Obama also understands the power of cognitive dissonance. He and his image makers know that once someone buys into something, by voting or giving money, then that person will "want" to believe in it even more. People don't want to believe that they have made a mistake or did something that they would actually not do on second thought. When we take a stand on an idea or issue, even a small stand, we often put on a lens that makes that choice seem like the right one.

With three million donors, many who are progressive and therefore not likely aligned with the agenda of the Democratic Party, Obama knows that he must keep his base together. Through association with social movements, by weaving his narrative with that of ordinary people, through emotional branding, and because of our tendency to want to believe in what we've supported in the past, Obama is well on his way to organizing progressives and perhaps even radicals into the Democratic Party.

It would be great if this were the other way around, if we, progressives and radicals, had organized the Democrats, but there is no evidence to suggest that this has happened. Progressives and radicals lack the power for such a shift. In fact, we are barely getting started in most places and are still largely unorganized.

Here's the rub: we are getting started. This is especially true in Baltimore with groups like the United Workers, Algebra Project, SMEAC, Red Emma's (IWW Industrial Union 660), Students for Worker Justice, the Campaign for a



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## Obama is the saviour of Capitalism

There are many claims, by those on the left, that this system is failing. Most point to the economic "crisis" as hard evidence of this. Even some radicals on the far left are following suit with rhetoric of a crumbling empire.

What must be understood, though, is that this system is not failing; in fact, it is working brilliantly!

If one looks throughout our history, you will see that this system, as we know it, has been based on the concept of capital greed and control since its inception. Madison, in the constitutional debates, laid out clearly that this shall be a government meant to protect "the opulent minority from the majority"

Yet, in this last political puppet show, we saw those on the left, I am speaking of former radicals, coming out in droves to support Obama. This marked a victory for mass organizing to support capitalism. Way to go.

We have to start taking the hard stance that those before made, that all must go. We cannot allow ourselves to be dragged into mass movements, in the name of "solidarity" with the working class, when AFL-CIO interests are in electing a candidate for the highest level of control in a capitalist system. Bottom line: a vote for them, is a vote for a new boss.

Obama, in all of his "bottom up" rhetoric and repeated mentioning of the

Better Baltimore, and many other grassroots organizations fighting for human rights values. We are just now starting to have effective organizations working across the city and in solidarity with each other, carrying out the first steps that one day could bring about the political and economic conditions required for ending poverty and oppression. Unlike the Democratic Party, these grassroots groups are committed to building, from

the ground up, a new political order that would provide socialized, universal health care, end militarism, provide good schools for all, and

ultimately end poverty.

If we are to build a movement to end poverty and oppression, each dollar of our money, each minute of our time, each story we share, and each action we attend matters. Spend a dollar on Obama's campaign and you have just increased the power of the Democratic Party. When we canvass for Democrats, we have less time to canvass for causes like health care, living wages, and schools for all. Lose ourselves in the Obama branding experience and we risk losing our voice when it comes time to demand better from him.

Personally, I have given money to Barack Obama, and my friends and political allies have canvassed for his campaign. I gave money to increase the power of the Democrats relative to that of the Republicans in this one election. But I did not give the balance of my money or time to his agenda and I will not keep giving because, in the long-term, we need to do more than choose

elusive "middle class" of America, did not once talk about ending the vicious war machine that kills our comrades the world over. He offered to happily maintain and even increase support for the murderous regime of Israel, and made promises to increase military campaigns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. With the latest attack in Mumbai being immediately attributed, without proof, to Pakistan, we are sure to see this campaign promise brought into reality.

We will not be seeing his proposed tax hike on the richest five per cent, being that he has delayed this promise to 2011. When speaking of building a more affluent "middle class", what is really implied is a more consumptive class of traitors to the poor class.

With his lack of support for the poor class, our class, why then did so many people on the far left come out to support this change?

Of course, I am not addressing the anarchist communities that came out in opposition, as small as our numbers were, in Denver. I am speaking now to those who claim this mass movement to be reminiscent of past Marxist movements, and represent a shift in the capitalist system towards a building ground for "revolutionary" ideas. This could be no further from the truth.

Obama, is in fact, the saving grace of capitalism that corporate America has long awaited. After the reports of "economic crisis" coming down from the top, corporate America came out in historic numbers to place their bets on the Democratic candidate of change.

Even before he enters into office, he has shown us his loyalty to the market by nominating not one person who opposed the Iraq invasion (some 150 House and Senate members to choose from there),

between the lesser of two wrongs. My time is better spent on organizing for social and economic justice.

I followed the election closely and I felt a great deal of relief and pride when Barack Obama was elected president. I was moved watching civil rights organizers, who had fought hard for civil rights in the years leading up to the Sixties with tears in their eyes, witnessing an election that would have been entirely impossible without their community organizing and the shift of power that their actions had created.

I was relieved that war mongering neo-conservatives had lost this time. I felt the pride of the millions of African Americans who knew that everything said by white supremacists is wrong. It is wrong to say that white Americans, Latinos and African Americans are as deeply divided by race as supremacists would have it or to say that an African American could not run for president and win. I was even a little more proud to be an American, because at least now I am a citizen of a country whose head of state will be the son of a Muslim man from Kenya and a Christian mother who had lived all over the world.

Now that the election is over, it's time for us to go back to making history ourselves. The stakes are high. Had community organizers in the Sixties allowed themselves to be co-opted by John Kennedy, Obama might not have been allowed even to vote, let alone to lead the Democratic Party as President of the United States.

Let's not get organized by Obama because if we don't organize ourselves now, then poverty will not be ended, human rights will not be secured, and oppression will not be beaten back.

*Tom Kertes is a United Workers leadership organizer, but speaks for himself in this column.*

rather a slew of corporate goons (Clinton for Wal-Mart, Gates for multiple Saudi Oil interests), some of whom have shown outright racism on our borders (Napolitano called out the national guard to be used. Sound familiar labor historians?) and have attacked workers (Jones for Chevron) and non-working poor (all of the above) repeatedly.

This can represent no real change, only a superficial change that paints a new face, a gentler, more politically correct face, on the system of slavery and murder that they, the corporations, uphold.

The higher ups are expecting the largest audience in history at the January 20, 2009 inauguration, and it is said to expect little or no opposition. Any people that they do expect will be "easily contained" and drowned out by the vast amount of supporters for Obama. We need to tip this scale and mobilize to de-construct the situation and take the streets again.

Do not let yourselves be dragged into this support for control, defy them. Now, more than ever, we must come together as a force against capital, and take back our lives "By Any Means Necessary."

This, of course, will be seen as idealistic jargon, but keep in mind, all change has been made by idealists. In fact, we are the only ones who understand the concept.

Could January 20 be a day to birth the next General Strike? That would be a bottom-up that Obama, and all his corporate fantasies, would never have dreamed, or hoped for.

Yours In The Struggle,

Michael Franklin  
St. Charles, Missouri  
United States



The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email [solidarity@iww.org](mailto:solidarity@iww.org).

By Mike Pesa

### New Slate of ISC Officers Elected

Three new officers have been elected to the International Solidarity Commission (ISC) for 2009. They are Justin Vitiello of the Philadelphia GMB, Michael Ashbrook of Luxembourg (German Language Area Regional Organizing Committee), and Adam Lincoln of the London GMB (British Isles Regional Organizing Committee), who ran as a write-in candidate. The geographic diversity of this new officer slate ensures that the ISC will remain a truly international committee, reflecting the growing international character of the IWW. These new officers will be responsible for carrying out the work of the ISC, including building solidarity relationships with like-minded unions and workers organizations around the world, sending delegations to other countries, writing statements, letters and articles on behalf of workers across the globe, fundraising, and more.

The outgoing officers, Saku Pinta, Daniella Jofre and Mike Pesa (none of whom sought re-election this year) are working with the new officers to help ensure a smooth transition. The new officers are scheduled to begin their terms on January 1, 2009.

### Become an ISC liaison for your branch

Calling all members of IWW General Membership Branches! The International Solidarity Commission needs a member from every local branch to serve as a liaison between the branch and the ISC. Liaisons are the glue that holds together the ISC's connection to the rank-and-file. They communicate information back and forth and ensure that their branch has a voice in the IWW's international solidarity projects. At September's General Assembly of the IWW in London, England, delegates unanimously voted to support the election of ISC liaisons beginning immediately. Most branches have yet to do this. If you belong to a branch, please propose to elect one of your members as an ISC liaison at your next general meeting and notify us of the result. Our strength comes from unity and there can be no unity without communication.

### Pending execution of Kamangar

The ISC sent a letter to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, calling on the government to intervene to save the life of Farzad Kamangar.

Kamangar, a labor organizer, teacher and activist was sentenced on February 25, 2008, to death by hanging by a clerical tribunal on charges related to his alleged involvement with the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). His trial was widely condemned as unfair, with no substantial evidence of his "crimes" presented. Since his conviction, he has been held in the notorious Evin Prison, awaiting execution while an international support movement has agitated to have his sentence overturned. Little information comes in and out of Evin Prison, but it is believed that Kamangar has been beaten and otherwise mistreated by prison staff in recent weeks.

Just before November 26, there were widespread rumors that Farzad Kamangar was about to be executed. In response, the ISC, other unions and human rights organizations around the world de-

manded that the government of Iran act to stop his execution. Although there has been no official response from the government, it is now known that Kamangar is still alive, perhaps due to this international pressure. However, Kamangar remains in mortal danger until his sentence is commuted or overturned. The ISC will continue to monitor his case and provide whatever support it can.

### Hurricane relief for Haitian workers

The ISC is providing financial assistance to the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) to provide relief for CTH members who are victims of the devastating hurricanes that ravaged Haiti this past summer. The majority of this money has been raised from donations by rank-and-file members and the purchase of ISC assessment stamps as well as the ISC's new video documentary, *Haiti's Tourniquet*. The documentary chronicles the ISC's delegation to Haiti that took place in April and May 2008 and features direct footage and interviews with Haitian workers and labor organizers. Hurricane relief money is also being sent to Batay Ouvriye, another Haitian labor organization that the ISC has been working with.

To donate to the ISC's Haiti Solidarity Fund, order a copy of *Haiti's Tourniquet* on DVD or purchase ISC assessment stamps. All proceeds go directly to the grassroots projects of the CTH in Haiti.

### Cambodian factory suspends worker

The ISC sent a letter to Puma, Adidas, Harta Packing Industries (HPI) and the government of Cambodia expressing solidarity with Cambodian factory worker Chea Buntheoeun. HPI is a Cambodia-based supplier that exports apparel products to Puma, Adidas and other multi-national brands. Chea, a member of the Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTU-WKC), was recently suspended from his job at HPI in retaliation for his efforts to organize a union at his workplace. Around 100 union supporters at the factory have already been intimidated into resigning from their jobs or renouncing their membership in the union.

Despite this setback, Chea has refused to back down from his legally protected right to organize. After unsuccessfully attempting to buy him off, management resorted to issuing him a notice of suspension and warning. At the same time, the company created a management-controlled "sports club" to divert workers from union organizing. The ISC demanded that HPI cease its illegal union-busting campaign and restore Chea Buntheoeun to his regular work status. The ISC also called on Puma and Adidas to support this demand. Finally, the ISC called on the Cambodian labor ministry to take legal action against the blatant workers rights violations being committed by HPI.

ISC delegate Erik Davis of the Twin Cities IWW branch will return to Cambodia from December 26 to January 12, 2009. Davis, who is fluent in Khmer and has an extensive knowledge of the Cambodian labor movement, will meet again with the FTUWKC to strengthen the ISC's solidarity relationship with this union. Davis also plans to discuss possible strategies for closer cooperation.

## Our sacrifices are their profits

By CNT International Secretariat

During the past few months the world has been rocked by a financial crisis that has attracted a lot of comment.

While we get a kick out of the speculators' and stockholders' agony, we need to keep an eye on where the crisis is heading and on its impact in the real world.

What crisis? More importantly, whose crisis? The workers at Renault Sandouville are affected, sure; the American workers who have lost their capitalized pensions, of course; the 40,000 extra unemployed, yes; in fact, all workers because they will now be subjected to the blackmail of a so-called "recession". But what does the crisis mean to "our" political and economic leaders?

No one has seen Laurence Parisot, head of the French business confederation, in a headline nor seen media magnate Arnaud Lagardère at the Welfare Office. Industrialist and corporate raider Vincent Bolloré has not been hanging out at the Salvation Army either. So far, French President Nicolas Sarkozy has not sold his Rayban sunglasses and Carla Bruni still has her Dior dresses. The bosses continue to eat well and none of them are begging in the street.

Of course, their crocodile tears are flowing freely; it is going to be tough, the economy is in bad shape, we must all tighten our belts. We have been hearing that kind of talk for a long time. The government is out of money. Total panic! Fire the civil servants! Quick, privatize everything! Public pension funds are running low, so work 41 years and pay part of your medical bills yourself! Unemployment: it's your own fault, just flexibly take the first available job and say, "Thank you very much." Companies are not competitive enough? Work longer and better.

We have already given plenty. So just how tight are the bosses' belts? They have been doing quite well lately, receiving special dispensations from €30 billion (US\$40 billion) a year, golden handshakes and stock option plans. The 2,242 taxpayers who make more than €41,982 get 82.9 per cent of the tax refunds; or €84,700 (US\$113,000) per millionaire. Small and medium enterprises in trouble get a €22 billion aid package. We are too embarrassed to mention in detail the salary hikes of the bosses of the top 40 enterprises because they are obscene.

The sad truth is that our sacrifices are their profits. And it goes on. The taxpayers' money goes to the banks, leaving public budgets bankrupt. Growth has disappeared and taken our jobs along with it. Now that there are just too many unemployed, we need to cut benefits. This is going to hurt.

Parisot herself admits that the government's "recommendations" do not really hurt the bosses. It is all about "moralizing capitalism" as Sarkozy likes to say. What other ethics can capitalism have except to let a few people get rich at everyone else's expense? What problem does capitalism have with inequality and the concentration of wealth?

Capitalism is what makes us sacrifice while the bosses and governments fill their pockets. Capitalism lets homeless people die in the street while others own several houses and apartments, sometimes paid for with tax money.

Capitalism created the crisis that we are paying for today. Capitalism is what is putting health, education and welfare into the clutches of profit-oriented corporations who do not care in the least about our rights or even about our very lives. Capitalism plunders the

natural resources of the Third World and exploits its people as cheap immigrant labour that is dumped when no longer needed. The pursuit of short-term profits has been destroying this planet. Capitalism starts wars to cover up its little accidents.

No wonder the bosses praise capitalism as the only viable social system. It is they who keep on telling us to work more and better for less pay while their salaries and stock option plans go through the roof. They make the economic choices, so they alone are responsible when a company goes bust, sending the workers to France's employment service, the ANPE, with a paltry severance package.

This list could continue to infinity. It is time to stop waiting for our rulers to "moralize" or "regulate" capitalism. We need to launch a full frontal attack on the system.

We have decided to trample capitalism wherever we find it growing. The place to start is where we work, because capitalism lives off our exploitation. Fight for higher wages and lower profits, better conditions and shorter hours, an end to harassment and the chase after competitiveness. Fight for a redistribution of wealth without waiting for some law that will never get passed anyway or for a government to come and save us.

We need to transpose those on-the-job struggles into generalized social confrontations about pensions, health, education, welfare, public transportation and communication so one and all can live their lives with dignity.

This will not be won with so-called "days of action" that do nothing, half-day or one day strikes that bring only a loss of pay but do not keep our rights from disappearing one by one. The highly developed class conscience of our opponents and their combativeness means that short term, purely symbolic actions are useless.

What we need is class conscious, fighting unions for a general strike that is extendable. All the victims of capitalism need to stand together regardless of origin, language, color, and legal status so that they can win what is rightfully theirs and what they need.

In the face of repression, sanctions and threats we remain defiant. Hope for a more libertarian and egalitarian society keeps us going.

Our struggle is the only thing that can hurt the bosses badly enough to make them give us our due. Our method is revolutionary, libertarian unionism that dares to attack the bosses and the state while building up the new society within the shell of the old.

## Venezuela govt promises 6-hour day

The Venezuelan labor minister has promised to introduce a bill into the National Assembly that would establish a six-hour work day.

The government's allies hold the balance of power in the National Assembly, so such a measure would likely pass.

This idea was bundled together with the constitutional reform that was rejected in December 2007 by voters. The private sector opposed both measures during that campaign.

President Hugo Chavez has also announced that he intends to introduce a proposal to change the constitution to allow him to run for another six-year term. He was re-elected to a second term in 2007.