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 workforce 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.”

Ex-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 a 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).

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

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 expensive 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.

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 Barack 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 $200,000 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
The ‘public mind’ is against remembering

Dear Fellow Worker in Bellingham,

A good place to start in your questionings 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 Uprising 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 viewing working for wages as something to be fought against while a whole. 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 at his incredible inequality in the US. The owning class, one per cent of us, and the owning one per cent of those, 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 as counterfeiting and remembering.

In regard to your fear of being turned into a “communist” by the pages of the Industrial Workers of the World that remember 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 Seventies, horrible crimes were committed, for profit, nothing else, under the pretext of a war against communism. A Fellow Worker up here in Vermont, 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, think free,” and this is what we should do.

The wage system divides people, racism allows us to call others, nationalism also, and all of this has made the planet a pass 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 sphere. Since high school, I’ve worked at a wildlife clinic and several public library branches. I currently work as a member of a collective bakery.

Continued on 4
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 with the drivers and meet with them to hear 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 the media that it was willing to negotiate with the drivers and meet with them to hear several proposed meeting times.

About 150 log truck drivers struck or stayed home.

“It was good for a first time out. It had been a long time,” said, saying contacts within the factory had told him that of 100 containers scheduled to go out, only six came off the truck. Asked what their strike was 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 IWW joint committee, members of United Truckers voted to affiliate with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The strike also brought out community support.

The drivers were joined by concerned community members with local church ministers attending, including one union member who was 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 community of unionists and environmentalists in Seattle delivered the truckers’ demands to the company and were eyed by eight police officers and two private security guards, said Drew, one of the Seattle organizers. The solidarity picket went about without incident.

The United Truckers Cooperative also received expressions of solidarity from North Carolina Public-Sector Union UE 150, United Steel Workers Local 1352, 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 have logs and finished wood products, have labored under a subcontracting system that has reduced them to little more than sharecroppers. Although many are classified as “independent contractors” almost all work for subcontractors of the giant Weyerhaeuser.

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

“I don’t want wood 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 you can do. Don’t 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 their international officers and approved eight constitutional amendments. Nearly half of the 472 ballots cast elected the international officers and IWW members voted in this year’s annual referendum.

**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 reign among millions. Yet the employing class, who make up all 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, and abolish the wage system.

The IWW is a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have a local or not. By organizing industrially we are doing away with the old narrow trade unionism, with its belief that the working class have interests only in their particular trade or craft, and its inability to overcome the inequalities of the wage system and live in harmony with the earth. The IWW is a union of all workers on the job, into one union, one fight.

The IWW is the union of all workers on the job, into one union, one fight.

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**Join the IWW today**

**Industrial Worker**

**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 surveilance and harassment of workers at the store.

The union members’ “went public” with their opposition to Starbucks on November 12 and demanded a security guard be hired to guard staff and customers. In response, Starbucks management began to closely monitor employees in search of pretext to discipline and fire them.

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

**Ottawa drops charges against panhandler organizer**

Nells told the Industrial Worker that the Ottawa-Timberjack strike with a panhandlers’ lock and then distribute free copies to Ottawa’s homeless at a bus stop.

Prosecutors have since dropped all of the charges.

Nells said he was “disappointed” that the city had dropped the charges against him. He is now planning to sue the City of Ottawa for “excessive harassment” and false arrest.

Nells spent five days at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre on Innes Road in Ottawa for its poor conditions. Nells organized the prisoners to protest their “inhumane” conditions, resulting in citywide and national media attention. From the outside pressure resulted in immediate improvements for prisoners.

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

The high rate of participation this year last year’s referendum. The intense debate over several proposals and constitutional amendments.

The IWW and the 2009 General Assembly into a Convention, with delegates voting at the direction of their branch delegates, passed and will be presented in Chicago. The dues proposal also passed and the new rates took effect on July 1.

The charges reform and mediation reform proposals also secured the majority vote required. The rank-and-files, political alliance, and several minor constitutional amendments passed easily.

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The Central Secretary-Treasurer of the General Defense 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 529003, 528 Dalhousie St., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8N, Canada.

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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 improved 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 will only see it.” 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 run 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 may want to know that it’s a legitimate effort and not the malcontents of the month. However, once they are asked, they will want to join in action.

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 organizing.

This process builds the IWW and builds a conscious and militant working class.

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 work places and a pervasive “every worker for himself” 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 ends meet. It was a weekend job meant to earn me money and help me make ends meet. My next job was more rewarding and 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 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 year 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 envied 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
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 been characterized by an uncharacteristically large and determined body of workers. This is a naturally occurring wave of discontent created by a combination of factors. The recent hiring of Canada Post strikers by the US-based United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters has created a potential precedent that could affect other public sector workers. It also raises questions about the future of public sector unions and their ability to protect workers from being recruited by private sector employers. The UPCE, a union of casual workers employed by Canada Post, has been罢工 for several months, seeking to improve working conditions and wages for its members. The union has been joined by the Workers Union of Canada (WUC), which represents the Canada Post mail carrier workers. The strike has been supported by a wave of public support, including a major demonstration in downtown Toronto on November 17, 2008. The strike lasted until November 24, when the two sides reached an agreement that included wage increases and improved working conditions. The agreement was ratified by a large majority of UPCE members. The UPCE is a small union, representing around 2,500 workers across Canada. The strike was a significant challenge for the union, as it had to navigate the legal and political landscape to ensure that its members could continue to work and its members could continue to deliver mail. The strike also highlighted the challenges faced by small public sector unions in Canada, as they struggle to compete with larger, more established unions in the private sector.
I don't see this history changing.

so deep, you may as well call it an ocean.

Democrats and the game of “wait and

Many labor leaders promote the bill in

greater enforcement of labor laws would

employer Handy Fat Trading, which has

watered down) the increased penalties

opportunity to talk with more workers

US politics. Should it happen, members

of the IWW would be wise to seize this

rebuild the US labor movement with

America, the Sierra Club and the Natural

executives who ruined them in the first

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wait and...and we need it now.”

excitement that the possibility of the EFCA

promotes short cuts to

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have to recognize the union.

The workers signed cards, the employer

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pride of thousands of new members that

as the Congress of Industrial

language that ranges from a ‘great step

and environmental outfits.

more explicit in a keynote address

look like, and plot an action plan.

Not surprisingly –and to the organiz

- Framing of EFCA promotes short cuts to

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by passing the National Labor

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lionaire bosses incapable of maintaining

in large part to the breakaway CIO that was allowed

sion that runs private jets for mil

in industries with

that well-paid work in industries with

green purposes will not come by magic–

technologies, mass transit and extensive

work. There has been, she reported, a

April 2008, educated the audience about

photojournalistic and activist.

It would restore workers' freedom to

It would restore workers' freedom to

the labor movement, such as

Good Jobs for All.

But, GM’s corporate leaders are

by offering workers the legal right

movement and create a new world,

in doing so.

We are facing a profound change

and transportation systems.

It would restore workers' freedom to

long stagnant wages that many work-

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

business discussion that dominates US

While the bill would undeniably make

This is not only a moral, but also an

AFL-CIO.org: compiled by IW.

Changetowinaction.org: “So how do we level the playing field and

the day was spent in workshops, where

and field opinions and recommend-

flowed thick and fast. The

AFL-CIO: “Employee Free Choice Act, supported by a broad and
diverse coalition in Congress, would level the playing field for workers and

help rebuild America's middle class. It would restore workers' freedom to

choose a union.” (2008) Compiled by IW.

Vibrant workshop discussion

A major strength of the event was

that workers weren’t merely spoken to,

would take every opportunity you

This speaker also echoed those who have

backed public money for companies like

GM, for example, should be trans-

formed into the “green tech leader of the

But general strike tactics in 1912/13

were left unsaid from the podium. Some

be thoroughly woven through radical

discussion of how ecological values can

be a launch-pad from which the labour

movement might fight for decent-paying

For more information on this speaker, see:

wars and families. To many of them, the

green part prevalent in the plenary was

Not surprisingly – and to the organizers

Given the issue with the wording of the

This background

more see Frances Fox Piven and Richard

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Rebuild the US labor movement with

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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.

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 wide 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 the GSEU is flawed for 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. Rosado was part of many of the conference participants' support. Poulos' presentation was somewhat awkward for co-panelist labor historian Melyn 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 follow 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 SUNY Binghamton and Aramark on Binghamton campus. In effect, USAS appeared to be no different in attitude toward Justice. It is the opinion of this grumpy IWW/USAaller that the unions should be perfectly capable of asking for student 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.

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

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 portion 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 sold off by the SUNY administration.

Every day that we let this go unanswered, we lose more control over this situation. It is time for us to stand up and fight. 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 the negotiations with a contract in our favor.

We in the Binghamton IWW are dedicated to building a better union. We do not want to be a state-run arbitration panel to negotiate our contracts. We do not want to be relevant to the state, and nothing creates pressure better than shutting down a campus.

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.

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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Workers need moral certitude to revolt

By Matt Jones

This book is a discussion of the Seattle and San Francisco General Strikes of 1912 and 1913, respectively. The book is a useful tool for those involved in building One Union. The book focuses on identifying the political culture of the working class in these cities, and how the belief system that workers have about 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 do they create the strong will 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 shared 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. New immigrants and freed slaves came homegrown but how they have changed as new immigrants, freed slaves, and women took them on as their own. It is an important question and can we 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 production and service, and establishing an organization based on their beliefs 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 Industrial Union Record, the first labor daily in US history, which described not only their efforts but also the legitimacy of what they were doing. In San Francisco, in response to increased employer repression of the dockworkers, strikers, unions in San Francisco went in sympathy with 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 have the right to control the economy will fuel our new society within the shell of the old.

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.

The 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.
Chicago factory occupation demands

New Industrial Worker editors take over in 2009

By Diane Krauthamer and Phil Wharton

Editorial Committee member Karl Kropicki is stepping down, and it is with much sadness that we report that he has been diagnosed with cancer and will no longer be able to participate in the newspaper. The committee wishes him a prompt recovery. The peace and love and solidarity of the working class will surely help him. We hope he will be able to contribute to the newspaper from a distance, but we will miss his wise and good advice. The committee is grateful to him for his many years of service to the newspaper.

As a team, we will work together to take over responsibility as Industrial Worker editors beginning with the March 2009 issue. The Industrial Worker must continue to be commended for the hard work and dedication that has been shown in putting together this issue. Thank you to everyone who contributed to a meaningful commitment to diversifying the content of the newspaper by providing a significant number of members generally, 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 to have gained the energy and desire to continue encouraging our Union’s typically under-represented voices so they are heard loud and clear.

As a team, we look forward to working together to ensure our Union’s newspaper reflects the union’s growing international strength by continuing to build and expand on our newspaper’s progress and find ways to better market it and expand circulation. We must continue to make the good word and make the Industrial Worker a sustainable newspaper, too. This is a hard time for newspapers and 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@iow.org.

Phil Wharton

Chicago factory occupation 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 guar- antee the continued viability of our bank, they were not using a small fraction of its bailout funds to ensure Republic compensated its workers? As the vice president of Local 1120, Melvin Madlin explained: “We have a saying, you got bailed out, we got sold out.”

The press conference and mobiliza- tion 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 sever- ance. 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 have no choice. The company say, you fired. The company not give me the money for back vacation at. You know what, I, not lose alone I stay here and I say, you don’t pay me, I don’t move. This is mine.”

All the workers who spoke to the Republic occupation expressed the same sentiment – we had no choice and nothing to lose.

As work 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.”

By Monday, December 8, the politi- cal significance of the Republic strike was magnified by the April 15 vigil being held simultaneous- ly, with hundreds of supporters show- ing up to demonstrate their solidarity.

Press coverage reached a level rarely witnessed during a “labor dispute.” TV crew trucks remained parked in front of the factory during each 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 repre- sent them have been taking it on the chin for a long time. In the middle of the biggest labor battles ending in defeat, concep- tions 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 that created the crisis, to little effect.

The Republic workers’ action was the first sign of a working class answer to an economic crisis. What the workers’ organization to respond was the IWW, with Wobbles on the scene as early as Friday evening. Wobbles had a substantial presence at the Satur- day prayer vigil and the Chicago IWW was represented at a few events.

The cross-union solidarity was symbolic victory for militant, democratic unionism. These unions paying homage to UE was a new departure. UE has frequently raided Team- ster-organized plants where the union approach. UE has frequently raided Team- ster-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 politi- cians had taken note of the mass appeal of the occupation. Fifteen Chicago alder- men declared their support for a pro- posed 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 an- nounced that he would direct the state to the name. At the among the Republic, the workers and UE organiz- ers had dismissed the idea that the plant could be saved, but on Monday, US Western Regional President Carl Rosen’s announced that he was working with various sources 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 negoti- ate from the beginning. The scale of pub- lic and political support for the workers made it apparent that their fight for legally mandated severance and vaca- tion pay inevitable. But nearly everyone agreed to co-operate, the bank never- theless 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, here is some opportunity to do something or basically sit back and hope something will happen out of a law suit. And our recommenda- tion was to fight and action, they 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 an- nounced —full vacation pay and sever- ance compensation for the 200 work- ers— Madlin and fellow Republic worker Ron Bender were even more blunt when they responded in near union to the question whether they could have ac- complished what they did if they hadn’t decided to employ direct action. “No! Not that way. I think they would have never asked about that. No, we would have been out the door.”

The massive rally held outside Bank of America’s main Chicago offices just hours before the workers announced that they would not accept a deal emphasized the importance of the workers’ bold move. Members of the UAW who spoke reminded those assembled that the UE had a long history of fighting back in US history and seemed to indicate that their union needed to return to its roots.

Will it spread?

The 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 Meinders, International Representa- tive 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 people simply to win this fight […] because if it could mean for workers in this country, “UE organizer Leticia Marquez echoed. “If this can happen here, we do see more workers in some way or another unfortunately having to violate the law to get a profit, we want to get a remedy months or years from now. They wanted to take action today, get results today.”

The challenges to employing this strategy can’t be underestimated. Larry Spiwak, Regional Director of AFSCME Council 31 in 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 people are going to have to do this kind of thing, or should we do this I wouldn’t predict one way or another because in some ways on one hand these situations are new […] 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 Womanot told the police on Wednesday, December 9, where the plant is located, intervened early on to prevent an overcrowding by the police. The company itself, appre- cially never asked for the workers to be removed according to public statements by UE. The police presence and ar- rive and public scrutiny was most likely a factor in their decision. Future plant occupations may not be as lucky.

The workers at Republic may have provided the spark, but it may be some time before it finds tinder.
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 stance on a political issue, even a small stand, we often put on a lens that makes our choice seem like the right one. With three million donors, many who are progressive and therefore more likely aligned with the agenda of the Democratic Party, Obama knows that he must keep his base together. Through association with that of ordinary people, through emotional bonding, and because of our tendency to want to believe in what we’ve supported, in the least, Obama is well on his way to organizing progresses and perhaps even radicals into Democratic Party.

It would be great if this were the other way around, if we, progressives and radicals, were the mainstay in the Demo- crats, but there is no evidence to suggest that 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 unorga- nized.

Here’s the rub: we are getting started. This is especially true in Baltimore with groups like the United Workers, AFSCME Political Action Committee, the Organizing Team for Obama (JWU Industrial Union 660), Students for Worker Justice, the Campaign for a

Obama is the saviour of Capitalism

There are many claims, by those on the far 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 falling; in fact, it is working brilliantly!

If one looks throughout our his- tory, you will see that even 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, a man who 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 the name of “socialism” with the work- ing class, when AFL-CIO interests are in

Lost ourselves in the Obama branding experience and we risk losing our voice when it comes time to demand better from him.

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 fund and you increased the power of the Democratic Party. When we canvass for Demo- crats, we have less reason to worry about 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 him, so I give 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 build a movement.

We will not be seeing his proposed tax hike on the richest five percent, be- ing 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 why then did so many people on the far left come out to sup- port 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 move- ments, and represent a shift in the capi- talist system towards a building ground for “utopian” democracy. This could be no further from the truth.

Obama, is in fact, the saving grace of capitalism that corporate america has cultivated, at the expense of our economic “crisis” coming down from the top, corporate america came out in droves to have their voices heard, to demand 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), rather a slew of corporate googies (Clin- ton for Wal-mart, Gates for multiple Saudi Oil interests) , some of whom have shown that they would rather see the United States.

Yours In The Struggle, Michael Franklin St. Charles, Missouri United States

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 stories, heard similar stories of people being beaten down and being taken advantage of, of having the power and the tactics for how to build for the powerless.

So the question of Obama stop community organizing? Does he believe that in the past eight years, power has dramatically shifted into the hands of corporate interests, that's the so-called power of the powerless. Or is it that Obama never was a community organizer, but rather an organ- izer like the one I was working for long before I met him in 1996, that largely supported the in- vasion of Iraq in 2003, and that recently bailed out Wall Street bankers. Obama, and the party he now leads, supports the expansion of government surveil- lance, is focused on the war in Afghanistan, and has no plan or even a promise to de-privatize health care by creating a univer- sal single payer system.

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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 Silverman of the Portland-Seattle Labour Council (an independent Oregonian Local of the Industrial Workers of the World), and Nino Sandouville who heads the CIDT, a major construction union in France. They will serve three-year terms. Tending to the ISC called on the Cambodian labor rights movement to suspend worker Chea Buntheoeun. HPI is a Cambodian factory suspending worker residency and has an extensive knowledge of the same time, the company created a notice of suspension and warning. At 7.30 a.m. the workers went to work and were refused entry by armed guards. The company called the police to evacuate the strikers and replace them with strikebreakers. They added that they have already been intimidated into resigning from their jobs or renouncing their membership in the union.

Canadian Solidarity Suspends Worker

The ISC sent a letter to Puma, Adidas, Heng Long Group (HLP) and the government of Cambodia expressing solidarity with workers of HLP Casualty Foundation said that the party had made public its intention to further publicize the government’s “recommendations” do not really hurt the bosses. It is all about the least about our rights or even about does capitalism have with inequality and what are their profits. And it goes on. The tax payers’ money goes to the banks, leaving 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 fighting unions for a general strike that is 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 fighting unions for a general strike that is short term, purely symbolic actions are useless.

The sad truth is that our sacrifices 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 a two days of free time every week, filling us with an idea. 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! Thank you very much. Humankind, the ISC, email solidarity@iww.org.

By ONY International Secretary

During the past 12 months the world has been rocked by a financial cri-

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 caused the planet’s ecological balance to fall, and capitalism starts wars to cover up its little accidents.

To consider 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. It is they who, with salaries and stock op-

What we need is class conscious, fighting unions for a general strike.

The government’s allies hold the balance of power in the National Assembly, so a straightforward approach to the government will not work. We need to initiate a general strike, which would paralyze the economy and force the government to negotiate. The government risks losing vital support from the workers.

We have already given plenty. So just how tight are the bosses’ belts? They have been doing quite well lately, receiving a €22 billion aid package. We are too lenient. They are begging in the street. We need to keep an eye on where the crisis is heading and on its impact in the real world.

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 working day.

The government’s allies hold the balance of power in the National Assembly, so such a measure is unlikely to pass. 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.

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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.

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 Silverman of the Portland-Seattle Labour Council (an independent Oregonian Local of the Industrial Workers of the World), and Nino Sandouville who heads the CIDT, a major construction union in France. They will serve three-year terms. Tending to the ISC called on the Cambodian labor rights movement to suspend worker Chea Buntheoeun. HPI is a Cambodian factory suspending worker residency and has an extensive knowledge of the same time, the company created a notice of suspension and warning. At 7.30 a.m. the workers went to work and were refused entry by armed guards. The company called the police to evacuate the strikers and replace them with strikebreakers. They added that they have already been intimidated into resigning from their jobs or renouncing their membership in the union.

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