

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

June 2012 #1746 Vol. 109 No. 5 \$2/ £2/ €2



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## Federal Judge Finds Jimmy John's Guilty Of Illegal Firings

**By the IWW Jimmy Johns Workers Union**

A federal judge has ordered Jimmy John's to reinstate six workers fired by franchise owners Mike and Rob Mulligan over a year ago for blowing the whistle on company policies that expose customers to sandwiches made by sick workers. Jimmy John's workers can be written up or fired if they take a day off without finding a substitute when they are sick. A union survey revealed that this policy, in conjunction with minimum wage workers' inability to afford to take a day off, result in an average of two workers making sandwiches while sick every day at the Minneapolis franchise of the chain. The judge's ruling requires that Jimmy John's reinstate the six workers with back pay within 14 days of the decision, but the employer could manipulate the appeal process to stall resolution of the case for several more years.

While the workers hail the judge's ruling as a victory for whistle-blower rights, they point out that justice delayed is justice

denied. "It has already been over a year since we were illegally fired for telling the truth. For all the hard work and dedication of the National Labor Relations Board's [NLRB] civil servants, employers like Jimmy John's prefer to break the law and drag cases through the courts for years rather than let workers exercise their right to win fair pay, sick days, and respect through union organization. The dysfunctional U.S. labor law system gives Mike and Rob Mulligan and their cronies in the 1 percent *carte blanche* to trample on workers' rights. Jimmy John's workers, and the rest of the 99 percent, will only be able to win a better life by taking our fight from the courtroom back to the shop floors and the streets," said Erik Forman, one of the fired workers.

The story of the unionization effort at Jimmy John's reads like a cautionary tale about the inefficacy

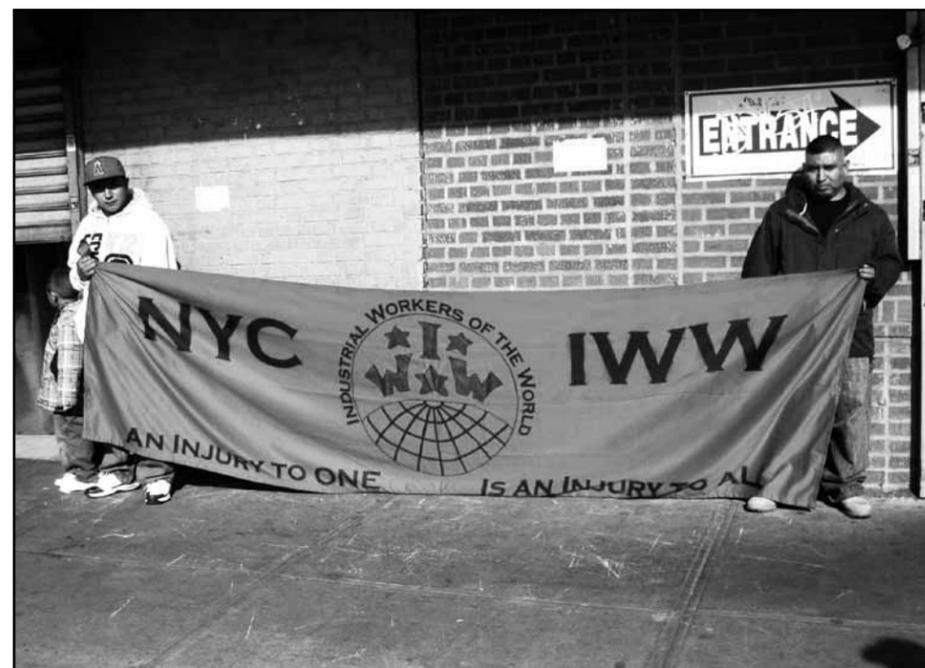
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Members of the IWW Jimmy Johns Workers Union at a picket.

Photo: JJWU

## Huge Victory For Immigrant Wobblies At Brooklyn Hummus Producer



Flaum workers at a demonstration in 2010.

Photo: Tom Keough

**By Dalilah Reuben-Shemia**

After enduring a withering worker-led campaign, Flaum Appetizing, the prominent producer and distributor of hummus and other kosher food products, accepted a global settlement which will return \$577,000 in unpaid wages and other compensation to workers. The settlement also subjects the Brooklyn-based factory to a binding code of conduct protecting workplace rights. This represents the biggest victory yet for Focus on the Food Chain, a joint effort of the IWW New York City General Membership Branch and Brandworkers, an organizing campaign dedicated to improving working conditions and ending sweatshop practices in New York City's food processing and distribution sector.

"More than anything, I want fellow workers in the food factories and warehouses to know that there is real power in coming together and struggling together," said Maria Corona, a Focus on the Food

Chain member and Flaum worker who had been illegally fired together with 16 of her coworkers after speaking out against their boss, demanding payment according to the law. "We won the respect we deserve and you can too."

Wage theft, discrimination, and health & safety hazards are common in the New York City food processing factories and distribution warehouses that employ 35,000 workers, most of whom are recent immigrants of color. "New York City's food processing and distribution sector increasingly relies on cutting corners and exploiting immigrant workers of color. With their exemplary victory, the Flaum workers have shown that abusive workplaces in this sector can be transformed through organizing, grassroots advocacy, and litigation," said Daniel Gross, Focus on the Food Chain organizer and longtime IWW member. Flaum maintained deplorable working conditions for over a decade.

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Industrial Worker  
PO Box 180195  
Chicago, IL 60618, USA

ISSN 0019-8870  
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## From The "Double Shift" To The Economic Free Zone: A Report From The Women With Initiative Meeting In Warsaw

**By Monika Vykoukal**

Women with Initiative was formed three years ago as a working group of the Workers Initiative union in Poland, which started in 2001 and has around 1,000 members. A weekend meeting, which took place in the Syrena squat in the center of Warsaw, had been in planning for two years and took place on the weekend of April 20-21. Approximately 30 women from the union came from all over Poland, and were joined by the women's officer of the Spanish Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), her daughter, and myself for the IWW. Some women from the squat also took part in our meeting and talked about Syrena's work against the privatization of public schools and canteens and expressed support for migrant workers.

The weekend dealt with the social construction of gender stereotypes and their particular effect on our lives in relation to paid and unpaid work, work discrimination and unpaid domestic work. We also discussed the "double shift" that still largely falls to women, and the global aspects of discrimination against women.

On Sunday, a lawyer specializing in anti-discrimination legislation gave a presentation and was available to answer specific questions. Many had asked for this session, while others felt that spending so much time on potential legal avenues was not productive for a union that is focused on direct action and worker solidarity. This was followed by presentations from the CGT and the IWW. The meeting closed

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## Letters Welcome!

Send your letters to: [iw@iww.org](mailto:iw@iww.org) with "Letter" in the subject.

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# Remember The Memorial Day Massacre



"The Chicago Memorial Day Incident."

Photo: [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

Fellow Workers,

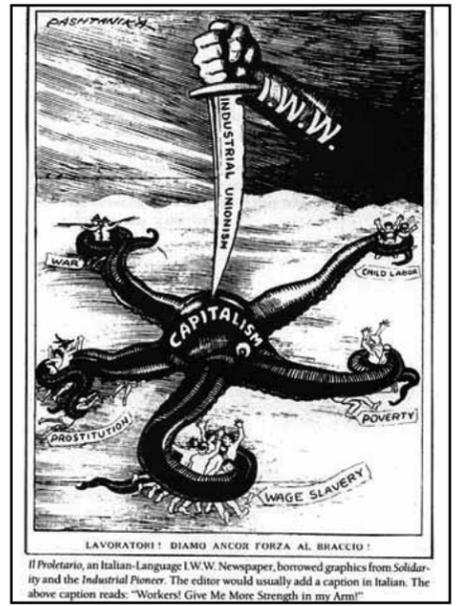
The 75th anniversary of the Memorial Day massacre of 1937 in Chicago was on May 30, 2012. This happened in connection with "The Little Steel Strike." American communist leader Gus Hall was one of the key organizers of the strike. About 10 workers were shot to death, and around 30 people were wounded. Dozens of workers were clubbed by police. Violence against labor has been great throughout American

history and throughout world history.

In 1942, in his essay "Looking Back on the Spanish War," George Orwell wrote:

"In the long struggle following the Russian Revolution it is the manual workers who have been defeated...Time after time, in country after country, the organized working class movements have been crushed by open, illegal violence."

In solidarity,  
**Raymond Solomon**



The Proletario, an Italian-Language IWW Newspaper, borrowed graphics from Solidarity and the Industrial Pioneer. The editor would usually add a caption in Italian. The above caption reads: "Workers! Give Me More Strength in My Arm!"  
Graphic: [depts.washington.edu](http://depts.washington.edu)

## Corrections

The IWW's Committee for Industrial Laughtification and the *Industrial Worker* mis-credited the graphic used in the comic, "Mr. Block: He Opines on May Day," which appeared on page 13 of the May *IW*. The comic was drawn by Clark Paramo, not V. Rese. The *IW* and the CIL send our deepest apologies for this error.

## Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

ORGANIZATION  
EDUCATION  
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Official newspaper of the  
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OF THE WORLD**

Post Office Box 180195  
Chicago, IL 60618 USA  
773.857.1090 • [ghq@iww.org](http://ghq@iww.org)  
[www.iww.org](http://www.iww.org)

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Sam Green

GENERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD:  
Monika Vykoukal, Don M.  
Ryan G., A. Vargas, Jason Krpan  
Mark Damron, Adam W.

EDITOR & GRAPHIC DESIGNER :  
Diane Krauthamer  
[iw@iww.org](mailto:iw@iww.org)

PROOFREADERS :  
MRG, Tom Levy, Nick Jusino,  
D. Keenan, Neil Parthun,  
Michael Capobianco,  
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PRINTER:  
Globe Direct/Boston Globe Media  
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**Next deadline is  
June 8, 2012**

U.S. IW mailing address:  
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ISSN 0019-8870  
Periodicals postage  
paid Chicago, IL.

POSTMASTER: Send address  
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180195, Chicago, IL 60618 USA

SUBSCRIPTIONS  
Individual Subscriptions: \$18  
International Subscriptions: \$30  
Library Subs: \$22/year  
Union dues includes subscription.

Published monthly with the excep-  
tion of February and August.

**Articles not so designated do  
not reflect the IWW's  
official position.**

Press Date: May 18, 2012



# IWW directory

### Australia

Regional Organising Committee: P.O. Box 1866, Albany, WA  
Albany: 0423473807, [entropy4@gmail.com](mailto:entropy4@gmail.com)  
Melbourne: P.O. Box 145, Moreland, VIC 3058. 0448 712 420  
Perth: Mike Ballard, [swillsqueal@yahoo.com.au](mailto:swillsqueal@yahoo.com.au)

### British Isles

British Isles Regional Organising Committee (BI-ROC): PO Box 7593 Glasgow, G42 2EX. Secretariat: [rocsec@iww.org.uk](mailto:rocsec@iww.org.uk), Organising Department Chair: [south@iww.org.uk](mailto:south@iww.org.uk), [www.iww.org.uk](http://www.iww.org.uk)  
IWW UK Web Site administrators and Tech Department Coordinators: [admin@iww.org.uk](mailto:admin@iww.org.uk), [www.tech.iww.org.uk](http://www.tech.iww.org.uk)  
NBS Job Branch National Blood Service: [iww.nbs@gmail.com](mailto:iww.nbs@gmail.com)  
Mission Print Job Branch: [tomjoad3@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tomjoad3@hotmail.co.uk)

Building Construction Workers IU 330: [constructionbranch@iww.org.uk](mailto:constructionbranch@iww.org.uk)  
Health Workers IU 610: [healthworkers@iww.org.uk](mailto:healthworkers@iww.org.uk), [www.iww-healthworkers.org.uk](http://www.iww-healthworkers.org.uk)  
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General, Legal, Public Interest & Financial Office Workers IU 650: [rocsec@iww.org.uk](mailto:rocsec@iww.org.uk)  
Bradford: [bradford@iww.org.uk](mailto:bradford@iww.org.uk)

Bristol GMB: Hydra Books, 34 Old Market, BS2 0EZ. [bristol@iww.org.uk](mailto:bristol@iww.org.uk), [www.bristol.iww.org.uk/](http://www.bristol.iww.org.uk/)  
Cambridge GMB: IWWCambridge, 12 Mill Road, Cambridge CB1 2AD [cambridge@iww.org.uk](mailto:cambridge@iww.org.uk)  
Dorset: Tel. 0044(0)7570891030. [thehipleft@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:thehipleft@yahoo.co.uk)  
Hull: [hull@iww.org.uk](mailto:hull@iww.org.uk)  
Leeds: [leedsiww@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:leedsiww@hotmail.co.uk), [leeds@iww.org.uk](mailto:leeds@iww.org.uk)

Leicester GMB: Unit 107, 40 Halford St., Leicester LE1 1TQ, England. Tel. 07981 433 637. [leics@iww.org.uk](mailto:leics@iww.org.uk) [www.leicestershire-iww.org.uk](http://www.leicestershire-iww.org.uk)  
London GMB: c/o Freedom Bookshop, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 7QX. +44 (0) 20 3393 1295, [londoniww@gmail.com](mailto:londoniww@gmail.com) [www.iww.org/en/branches/UK/London](http://www.iww.org/en/branches/UK/London)  
Nottingham: [notts@iww.org.uk](mailto:notts@iww.org.uk)  
Reading GMB: [reading@iww.org.uk](mailto:reading@iww.org.uk)  
Sheffield: [sheffield@iww.org.uk](mailto:sheffield@iww.org.uk)

Tyne and Wear GMB (Newcastle +): [tyneandwear@iww.org.uk](mailto:tyneandwear@iww.org.uk), [www.iww.org/en/branches/UK/Tyne](http://www.iww.org/en/branches/UK/Tyne)  
West Midlands GMB: The Warehouse, 54-57 Allison Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B5 5TH [westmids@iww.org.uk](mailto:westmids@iww.org.uk) [www.wmiww.org](http://www.wmiww.org)  
York GMB: [york@iww.org.uk](mailto:york@iww.org.uk) [www.wowork.org](http://www.wowork.org)

**Scotland**  
Clydeside GMB: [hereandnowscot@gmail.com](mailto:hereandnowscot@gmail.com)  
Dumfries and Galloway GMB: [dumfries@iww.org.uk](mailto:dumfries@iww.org.uk), [iwwdumfries.wordpress.com](http://iwwdumfries.wordpress.com)  
Edinburgh GMB: c/o 17 W. Montgomery Place, EH7 5HA. 0131-557-6242. [edinburgh@iww.org.uk](mailto:edinburgh@iww.org.uk)

**Canada**  
**Alberta**  
Edmonton GMB: P.O. Box 75175, T6E 6K1. [edmontongmb@iww.org](mailto:edmontongmb@iww.org), [edmonton.iww.ca](http://edmonton.iww.ca)

**British Columbia**  
Vancouver GMB: 204-2274 York Ave., V6K 1C6. 604-732-9613. [contact@vancouveriww.com](mailto:contact@vancouveriww.com). [www.vancouveriww.com](http://www.vancouveriww.com)  
Vancouver Island GMB: [iwwvi@telus.net](mailto:iwwvi@telus.net)

**Manitoba**  
Winnipeg GMB: IWW, c/o WORC, P.O. Box 1, R3C 2G1. [winnipeg@iww.org](mailto:winnipeg@iww.org), [Garth Hardy, del., garthhardy@gmail.com](mailto:Garth Hardy, del., garthhardy@gmail.com)

**Ontario**  
Ottawa-Outaouais GMB & GDC Local 6: 1106 Wellington St., P.O. Box 36042, Ottawa, ON K1Y 4V3  
Ottawa Panhandlers Union: Andrew Nellis, spokesperson, 613-748-0460. [ottawapanhandlersunion@sympatico.ca](mailto:ottawapanhandlersunion@sympatico.ca)  
Peterborough: c/o PCAP, 393 Water St. #17, K9H 3L7, 705-749-9694

Toronto GMB: c/o Libra Knowledge & Information Svcs Co-op, P.O. Box 353 Stn. A, M5W 1C2. 416-919-7392. [iwwtoronto@gmail.com](mailto:iwwtoronto@gmail.com)

**Québec**  
Montreal GMB: cp 60124, Montréal, QC, H2J 4E1. 514-268-3394. [iww\\_quebec@riseup.net](mailto:iww_quebec@riseup.net)

### Europe

**Finland**  
Helsinki: Reko Ravela, Otto Brandtintie 11 B 25, 00650. [iwwsuomi@helsinki.fi](mailto:iwwsuomi@helsinki.fi)

**German Language Area**  
IWW German Language Area Regional Organizing Committee (GLAMROC): IWW, Haberweg 19, 61352 Bad Homburg, Germany. [iww-germany@gmx.net](mailto:iww-germany@gmx.net). [www.wobblies.de](http://www.wobblies.de)  
Austria: [iwwaustria@gmail.com](mailto:iwwaustria@gmail.com), [www.iww-austria.wordpress.com](http://www.iww-austria.wordpress.com)  
Frankfurt am Main: [iww-frankfurt@gmx.net](mailto:iww-frankfurt@gmx.net)  
Cologne/Koeln GMB: c/o Allerweltschhaus, Koernerstr. 77-79, 50823 Koeln, Germany. [cologne1@wobblies.de](mailto:cologne1@wobblies.de). [www.iwwcologne.wordpress.com](http://www.iwwcologne.wordpress.com)  
Munich: [iww.muenchen@gmx.de](mailto:iww.muenchen@gmx.de)  
Switzerland: [IWW-Zurich@gmx.ch](mailto:IWW-Zurich@gmx.ch)

**Netherlands:** [iww.ned@gmail.com](mailto:iww.ned@gmail.com)

**Africa**  
**South Africa**  
Cape Town: 7a Rosebridge, Linray Road, Rosebank, Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa 7700. [iww-ct@live.co.za](mailto:iww-ct@live.co.za)

**Uganda**  
IWW Kabale Uganda: Justus Tukwasibwe Weijagye, P.O. Box 217, Kabale, Uganda, East Africa. [jkwijagye@atjyaho.com](mailto:jkwijagye@atjyaho.com)

**United States**  
**Arizona**  
Phoenix GMB: P.O. Box 7126, 85011-7126. 623-336-1062. [phoenix@iww.org](mailto:phoenix@iww.org)  
Flagstaff: 928-600-7556, [chuy@iww.org](mailto:chuy@iww.org)

**Arkansas**  
Fayetteville: P.O. Box 283, 72702. 479-200-1859. [nwar\\_iww@hotmail.com](mailto:nwar_iww@hotmail.com)

**DC**  
DC GMB (Washington): 741 Morton St NW, Washington DC, 20010. 571-276-1935

**California**  
Los Angeles GMB: (323) 374-3499. [iwwgmbla@gmail.com](mailto:iwwgmbla@gmail.com)  
North Coast GMB: P.O. Box 844, Eureka 95502-0844. 707-725-8090. [angstink@gmail.com](mailto:angstink@gmail.com)  
San Francisco Bay Area GMB: (Curbside and Buy-back IU 670 Recycling Shops; Stonemountain Fabrics Job Shop and IU 410 Garment and Textile Worker's Industrial Organizing Committee; Shattuck Cinemas; Embarcadero Cinemas) P.O. Box 11412, Berkeley, 94712. 510-845-0540. [bayarea@iww.org](mailto:bayarea@iww.org)  
IU 520 Marine Transport Workers: Steve Ongerth, del., [intextile@iww.org](mailto:intextile@iww.org)  
Evergreen Printing: 2412 Palmetto Street, Oakland 94602. 510-482-4547. [evergreen@igc.org](mailto:evergreen@igc.org)  
San Jose: [sjiww@yahoo.com](mailto:sjiww@yahoo.com)

**Colorado**  
Denver GMB: 2727 W. 27th Ave., 80211. Lowell May, del., 303-433-1852. [breadandroses@msn.com](mailto:breadandroses@msn.com)  
Four Corners (AZ, CO, NM, UT): 970-903-8721, [4corners@iww.org](mailto:4corners@iww.org)

**Florida**  
Gainesville GMB: c/o Civic Media Center, 433 S. Main St., 32601. Jason Fults, del., 352-318-0060, [gainesvilleiww@riseup.net](mailto:gainesvilleiww@riseup.net)  
Miami IWW: [miami@iww.org](mailto:miami@iww.org)  
Hobe Sound: P. Shultz, 8274 SE Pine Circle, 33455-6608. 772-545-9591, [okiedogg2002@yahoo.com](mailto:okiedogg2002@yahoo.com)  
Pensacola GMB: P.O. Box 2662, Pensacola 32513-2662. 840-437-1323, [iwwpensacola@yahoo.com](mailto:iwwpensacola@yahoo.com), [www.angelfire.com/fls/iww](http://www.angelfire.com/fls/iww)

**Georgia**  
Atlanta GMB: 542 Moreland Avenue, Southeast Atlanta, 30316. 404-693-4728

**Hawaii**  
Honolulu: Tony Donnes, del., [donnes@hawaii.edu](mailto:donnes@hawaii.edu)

**Idaho**  
Boise: Ritchie Eppink, del., P.O. Box 453, 83701. 208-371-9752, [eppink@gmail.com](mailto:eppink@gmail.com)

**Illinois**  
Chicago GMB: P.O. Box 57114, 60657. 312-638-9155. [chicago@iww.org](mailto:chicago@iww.org)  
Central Ill GMB: 903 S. Elm, Champaign, IL 61820. 217-356-8247. David Johnson, del., [unionyes@ameritech.net](mailto:unionyes@ameritech.net)  
Freight Truckers Hotline: [mtw530@iww.org](mailto:mtw530@iww.org)

**Iowa**  
Eastern Iowa GMB: 563-265-5330. [William.R.Juhl@gmail.com](mailto:William.R.Juhl@gmail.com)

**Kansas**  
Lawrence IWW: 785-843-3813. [bacjb@ku.edu](mailto:bacjb@ku.edu)  
Wichita: Naythan Smith, del., 316-633-0591. [nrsmith85@gmail.com](mailto:nrsmith85@gmail.com)

**Louisiana**  
Louisiana IWW: John Mark Crowder, del., 126 Kelly Lane, Homer 71040. 318-224-1472. [wogodm@iww.org](mailto:wogodm@iww.org)

**Maine**  
Maine IWW: 858-233-9536. [maineiww@gmx.com](mailto:maineiww@gmx.com)

**Maryland**  
Baltimore GMB: P.O. Box 33350, 21218. [baltimoreiww@gmail.com](mailto:baltimoreiww@gmail.com)

**Massachusetts**  
Boston Area GMB: PO Box 391724, Cambridge 02139. 617-863-7920. [boston.iww@gmail.com](mailto:boston.iww@gmail.com), <http://iwwboston.org>  
Cape Cod/SE Massachusetts: [thematch@riseup.net](mailto:thematch@riseup.net)  
Western Mass. Public Service IU 650 Branch: IWW, P.O. Box 1581, Northampton, 01061

**Michigan**  
Detroit GMB: 4210 Trumbull Blvd., 48208. [detroit@iww.org](mailto:detroit@iww.org)  
Grand Rapids GMB: P.O. Box 6629, 49516. 616-881-5263. [griww@iww.org](mailto:griww@iww.org)  
Grand Rapids Bartertown Diner and Roc's Cakes: 6 Jefferson St., 49503. [onya@bartertowngr.com](mailto:onya@bartertowngr.com), [www.bartertowngr.com](http://www.bartertowngr.com)  
Central Michigan: 5007 W. Columbia Rd., Mason 48854. 517-676-9446. [happyhippie66@hotmail.com](mailto:happyhippie66@hotmail.com)

**Minnesota**  
Duluth IWW: Brad Barrows, del., 1 N. 28th Ave E., 55812. [scratchbrad@riseup.net](mailto:scratchbrad@riseup.net)  
Red River IWW: [redriveriww@gmail.com](mailto:redriveriww@gmail.com)  
Twin Cities GMB: 3019 Minnehaha Ave. South, Suite 50, Minneapolis 55406. [twincities@iww.org](mailto:twincities@iww.org)

**Missouri**  
Greater Kansas City IWW: P.O. Box 414304, Kansas City 64141-4304. 816.875.6060. [greaterkciww@gmail.com](mailto:greaterkciww@gmail.com)  
St. Louis IWW: P.O. Box 63142, 63163. [stlwoobbly@gmail.com](mailto:stlwoobbly@gmail.com)

**Montana**  
Construction Workers IU 330: Dennis Georg, del., 406-490-3869, [tramp233@hotmail.com](mailto:tramp233@hotmail.com)  
Billings: Jim Del Duca, 106 Paisley Court, Apt. 1, Bozeman 59715. 406-860-0331. [delducja@gmail.com](mailto:delducja@gmail.com)

**Nebraska**  
Nebraska GMB: P.O. Box 81175, Lincoln 68501-1175. 402-370-6962. [nebraskagmb@iww.org](mailto:nebraskagmb@iww.org). [www.nebraskaiww.org](http://www.nebraskaiww.org)

**Nevada**  
Reno GMB: P.O. Box 12173, 89510. Paul Lenart, del., 775-513-7523, [hekmatista@yahoo.com](mailto:hekmatista@yahoo.com)

IU 520 Railroad Workers: Ron Kaminkow, del., P.O. Box 2131, Reno, 89505. 608-358-5771. [ronkaminkow@yahoo.com](mailto:ronkaminkow@yahoo.com)

**New Hampshire**  
New Hampshire IWW: Paul Broch, del., 112 Middle St. #5, Manchester 03101. 603-867-3680. [SevenSixTwoRevolution@yahoo.com](mailto:SevenSixTwoRevolution@yahoo.com)

**New Jersey**  
Central New Jersey GMB: P.O. Box 10021, New Brunswick 08906. 732-801-7001. [iwwcnj@gmail.com](mailto:iwwcnj@gmail.com). Bob Ratynski, del., 908-285-5426

**New Mexico**  
Albuquerque GMB: 202 Harvard Dr. SE, 87106. 505-227-0206, [abq@iww.org](mailto:abq@iww.org).

**New York**  
New York City GMB: 45-02 23rd Street, Suite #2, Long Island City, 11101. [iww-nyc@iww.org](mailto:iww-nyc@iww.org). [www.wobblycity.org](http://www.wobblycity.org)

Starbucks Campaign: 44-61 11th St. Fl. 3, Long Island City 11101. [starbucksunion@yahoo.com](mailto:starbucksunion@yahoo.com) [www.starbucksunion.org](http://www.starbucksunion.org)

Hudson Valley GMB: P.O. Box 48, Huguenot 12746, 845-342-3405. [hviww@aol.com](mailto:hviww@aol.com), <http://hviww.blogspot.com/>  
Syracuse IWW: [syracuse@iww.org](mailto:syracuse@iww.org)

**North Carolina**  
Asheville GMB: P.O. Box 1005, 28802. 828-407-1979. [iww.asheville@gmail.com](mailto:iww.asheville@gmail.com)  
Greensboro GMB: P.O. Box 5022, 27435. 1-855-IWW-4-650 (855-499-4476). [gsoiww@riseup.net](mailto:gsoiww@riseup.net)

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**Ohio**  
Mid-Ohio GMB: [midohioiww@gmail.com](mailto:midohioiww@gmail.com)  
Northeast Ohio GMB: P.O. Box 141072, Cleveland 44114. 216-502-5325  
Ohio Valley GMB: P.O. Box 6042, Cincinnati 45206, 513-961-3813, [ohiovalleyiww@gmail.com](mailto:ohiovalleyiww@gmail.com)  
Textile & Clothing Workers IU 410: P.O. Box 317741, Cincinnati 45231. [ktacmota@aol.com](mailto:ktacmota@aol.com)

**Oklahoma**  
Tulsa: P.O. Box 213, Medicine Park 73557, 580-529-3360

**Oregon**  
Lane GMB: Ed Gunderson, del., 541-743-5681. [x355153@iww.org](mailto:x355153@iww.org), [www.eugeneiww.org](http://www.eugeneiww.org)  
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Portland Red and Black Cafe: 400 SE 12th Ave, 97214. 503-231-3899. [general@redandblackcafe.com](mailto:general@redandblackcafe.com). [www.redandblackcafe.com](http://www.redandblackcafe.com)

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Pittsburgh GMB: P.O. Box 5912, 15210. [pittsburghiww@yahoo.com](mailto:pittsburghiww@yahoo.com)

**Rhode Island**  
Providence GMB: P.O. Box 5795, 02903. 508-367-6434. [providenceiww@gmail.com](mailto:providenceiww@gmail.com)

**Texas**  
Dallas & Fort Worth: 1618 6th Ave, Fort Worth, 76104  
Golden Triangle IWW (Beaumont - Port Arthur): [gt-iww@riseup.net](mailto:gt-iww@riseup.net)  
South Texas IWW: [rgviww@gmail.com](mailto:rgviww@gmail.com)

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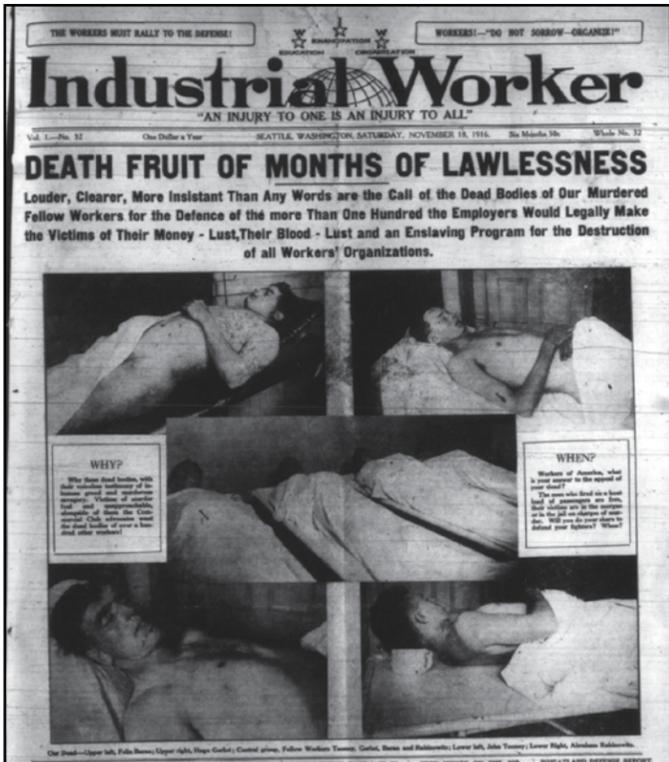
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**Washington**  
Bellingham: P.O. Box 1793, 98227. 360-920-6240. [BellinghamIWW@gmail.com](mailto:BellinghamIWW@gmail.com)  
Tacoma GMB: P.O. Box 7276, 98401. [TacIWW@iww.org](mailto:TacIWW@iww.org).

Readers' Soapbox

# People Died For A 40-Hour Work Week



Graphic: depts.washington.edu

When a group of Wobblies, traveling by boat, went to Everett, Wash., to aid in a free speech fight, they were met by the police and vigilantes. Five IWW members were killed in a shootout. Here, the *Industrial Worker* published pictures of their corpses, although the editors reminded their readership: "Don't mourn, organize!"

By James Robert Porter

People died for a 40-hour work week. This is a true thing. It happened. A 40-hour work week is the one thing you're virtually guaranteed to have when you get a job in the United States. You might not get insurance, you might not get regular breaks...but you know when you walk in the door, you're only going to be asked to work 40 hours a week, or else you're due overtime. This is basic. It's not even a talking point anymore.

A couple of centuries ago, people felt so strongly about this right that they gave their lives for it. They died so you could

enjoy it.

They were shot, hung, starved, let's face it, they were MURDERED, and this happened so that you could enjoy a right that we now take for granted.

In the early part of the 20th century, the majority of Americans were working a 12-14 hour workday, regularly. When the average American walked into a new workplace, he or she could reasonably assume that kind of a schedule. It was expected. What most of us now consider a punishing overtime schedule, the majority of the workforce in 1905 regarded as a normal work week.

They didn't appreciate it any more than we do now.

As far back as 1791, Americans were lobbying for a shorter work day. This wasn't a bunch of lazy New Deal liberals wanting to sit on their laurels. This was shortly after the founding of our country. This was the majority of carpenters in the nascent United States, sick of putting in long, grueling hours and knowing that there were better alternatives. In the next century, this demand had become commonplace. The average employer worked their business from sun-up to sun-down, every single day, a schedule most of us can't even comprehend. By the 1830s, people were rightfully angry about it.

People died for a 40-hour work week.

At the close of the 1800s, most Americans still didn't have what they wanted. Apparently, an eight-hour workday was simply too much to ask for from employers. So much so that a great many companies found the need to hire their own police force to enforce the longer work days. Today, when people talk of what unionizing was like a century ago, many of them think it was just a bunch of socialists and liberals trying to push around their bosses, but that's not the case. The reason unions took off was because if you complained about something like a 14-hour workday to your employer and you didn't have people backing you up, there was a real chance you were going to get beat. Employers paid people to do this for them. If you were lucky, you just got fired for shooting your mouth off, but most people were not lucky. At least if you had a union, you had a sort of safety in numbers, even if it usually meant a more distributed beat down, courtesy of the in-house police force.

People died for a 40-hour work week.

Pretty soon, people figured out they really only had one weapon they could use against their employers, and that was a general strike. Complaining just got you fired or beaten, going to the newspapers was about as effective as it is nowadays, since the people who printed the news, 9 times out of 10, were the same people that made you work 14 hours in the first place.

However, if you and all your union friends stopped working, you stopped production. If you stopped production, then the company lost money, and if that happened, you finally had their attention. In a sane world, this would lead to a civil airing of grievances and an honest attempt to address them.

This is not a sane world because people died for a 40-hour work week.

In 1886, a group of workers on strike at the McCormick plant in Chicago went on a march to Haymarket Square to protest the people trying to break the strike. This

was a completely nonviolent demonstration. In return, police opened fire on them, wounding many and ending the lives of four people.

Oh, I'm sorry, did you think those were the company police? No, this was the city police. Paid for by the tax money of those dead men. They shot them because they wanted an eight-hour work day.

Soon afterward, during another rally, someone threw a dynamite bomb as the police tried to disperse the crowd. It went off, killing some officers, and in the ensuing chaos a gunfight broke out. Labor leaders were rounded up and, even though everyone agreed none of the people arrested actually had anything to do with the bomb, they were given death sentences anyway. Four of them were hung. Afterward, due to pressure from the public, a judge repealed the death sentence for the remaining leader, saying that he and the four dead men were actually innocent and their execution was the result of "hysteria, packed juries and a biased judge."

People died for a 40-hour work week.

In 1916, in the town of Everett, Wash., a contingent of striking shingle workers, supported by members of the IWW, were confronted by the town police led by sheriff Donald McRae. McRae drew a gun on the nonviolent protesters and told them to turn around and leave. A shot rang out, starting a gunfight that, again, left a lot of dead people. Nobody knows who fired the first shot, but most historians agree that it's unlikely it was from the worker side, considering they suffered the bulk of the losses and the few officers that were wounded during the battle were injured by their own side.

PEOPLE. DIED. SO YOU COULD WORK A 40-HOUR WORK WEEK.

There's more. Much, much more. People were willing to die for this basic right we all enjoy now. Employers were so against it that they were willing to murder so we couldn't have it. Back in the early 1900s, an eight-hour work day was so threatening that it was worth killing someone over. The American people finally won it, paid for with blood and corpses, and now we don't even think about it.

People died for a 40-hour work week.

## IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

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

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

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

## Join the IWW Today

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

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

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

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

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

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

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

- I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.
- I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.
- I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



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# A Fair Day's Wage For A Fair Day's Work

By Matt Kelly and Nate Hawthorne

Last year in Lansing, Mich., the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) union leadership fought a pitched battle with the Lansing City Council to push capitalist real estate developers to use union labor. When discussing the fight, Joe Davis, the union representative, proclaimed, "It's important to have individuals work and get paid a fair wage. We have to make sure labor is valued." We hear statements like this from the leaders of the business unions all the time. For instance, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" has now been the motto of the mainstream labor movement since at least the beginning of the 20th century. On the face of it, this general demand for workers sounds like a good thing. We have to work for a living, and so long as that's the case, we should be paid a fair wage for our efforts. We don't want to be exploited. We want our fair share of the pie.

However, what is a fair day's wages, and what is a fair day's work? To answer this we have to think about the specifics of how our economy—a capitalist economy—operates. We can't simply ask what feels morally fair or what the law says is fair, whether that be the federal minimum wage or the often discussed and calculated "living wage." What is morally fair, and what is even fair by law, may be far from being socially fair. Social fairness or unfairness is determined by the material facts of production and exchange.

First we can ask, from the perspective of a boss—a capitalist—what are a fair day's wages? The answer from this perspective is pretty simple. The labor market defines the capitalist's role as a buyer of workers' ability to work, and the employee's role as the seller. The employee sells her time to the employer who in turn pays the employee in wages. The capitalist pays his version of a "fair wage"—the amount required for a worker with average needs to survive and keep coming back to work each day. Some bosses might pay a little more, some a little less, but on average this is the base rate of "fair" pay.

From this same perspective of a capitalist, then, what is a fair day's work? A fair day's work to the boss is the maximum amount of work an average worker can do without exhausting herself so much that she can't do that same amount of work the next day. You, the worker, gives as much, and the capitalist gives as little, as the nature of the bargain will allow. As is probably obvious, this is a very strange sort of "fairness," and probably not how any rational person would define the word. Let's look a little deeper into this issue.

People who praise the great "free market" would say that wages and working conditions are fixed by competition between the buyers, the capitalists. Supposedly, capitalists are all competing for workers, so that competition inevitably leads to fair wages and working conditions. After all, the seller—the worker—theoretically has several options of employers to choose from. If a buyer doesn't offer a price that a worker thinks is fair for her labor, then she can look for another job that pays better. By agreeing to the prevailing wage, so goes this line of argument, workers have essentially made the statement: "We think this is fair."

One problem with this "logic" is that workers and bosses do not start on equal terms when they are buying and selling. It's not like you're selling an iPod on Craigslist, in which you can wait until someone pays the price you want. For most of us, if we don't have a job, we can't pay our bills, feed ourselves and our families, or heat our homes. Having employment is a life or death issue. It may not be life or death in the short term, but eventually if you can't find a job or someone with a job who will help you out financially, you will not be able to buy the things you need to live, let alone the things you need in order to be happy and fulfilled.

It's a very different story for the own-

ers of the companies we work for. They have money in the bank, and if they don't get employees tomorrow or even this month, they might be severely inconvenienced. Although their companies might take a hit in profits, they won't risk anything like the consequences workers do. Their worst case scenario is far better than ours, so the free market lover's idea of an "even playing field" is, in reality, a sick joke.

This isn't the worst part of it. Bosses lay off workers when they develop new technology to replace employees and they lay people off when their profits plunge, as is the case in the current recession. As a result, workers lose their jobs way faster than they can be absorbed into other jobs. Today, there is a massive pool of unemployed workers and the capitalists, as a class, use unemployed working-class people against the rest of the class. If business is bad and there are few jobs for those of us who find ourselves out of work, some of us can collect a meager amount of unemployment money, while some turn to stealing and some lose their homes and are forced to beg for money on the street. If business is good and jobs appear, then unemployed people are immediately ready to take those jobs. Until every single one of those unemployed workers has found a job, capitalists will use desperate job seekers to keep wages down. The mere existence of this pool of unemployed workers strengthens the power of the bosses in their struggle with workers. Anyone who has ever heard a boss say, "If you don't like it here, there are 10 other people I could hire to do your job," will know how this plays out in terms of respect on the job. In the foot race against the capitalist class, the working class has to drag an anvil chained to its ankle—but that is "fair" according to a free market economist.

Now let's take a look at how bosses pay their workers. Where does a capitalist get the money to pay our very "fair" wages? He pays them from his capital, his stored up funds from all the business he's done, from all the goods or services his company has sold. Where did those goods and services come from in the first place? They came from the workers. The employees are the ones who worked to create those products or services that were then sold to consumers. The boss doesn't do any work—he might oversee some of the workings of the company, but for the most part he sits on his ass watching as the work takes place. So we can say clearly the workers created the value that built the fund that they get paid from—a worker's wage is paid from the product of her own work. Now, according to common fairness, you should get out what you put in, your wage should be equal to the value that you have created for the company through your work—but that would not be fair according to the values of a capitalist economy. On the contrary, the wealth you have created goes to the boss, and you get out of it no more than the bare necessities of life—a wage as low as the boss can get away with paying. So the end result of this supposedly "fair" race is that the product of the working class's labor gets accumulated in the hands of those that do not work, and in their hands it becomes the most powerful means to enslave the very people who produced it.

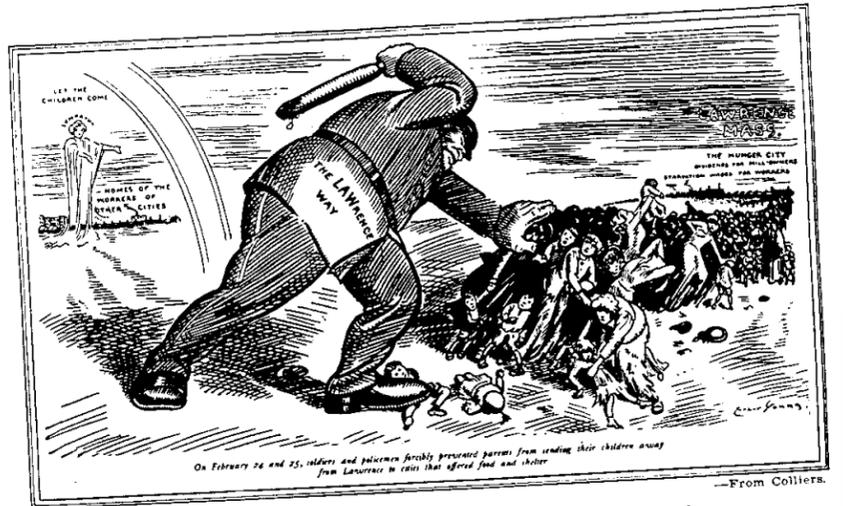
A fair day's wages for a fair day's work! There's a lot to be said about the fair day's work too, the fairness of which is about as fair as these "fair" wages. It is also worth examining the role that unions play in affecting the rate of wages, but rarely the fairness of the wage process. We'll be talking about these issues in future articles. From what has been stated so far though, it's pretty clear that the old slogan has outlived any usefulness, and no one should take it seriously. The "fairness" of the market is all on one side—the side of the capitalist class. So let's bury that old motto forever and replace it with a better one: "Abolish the wage system!"



# WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

## CHAPTER 54 "We Want Bread and Roses Too"

Concern for their children's safety, and the desire to see them securely fed, gave strikers the idea to send the kids into the care of supporters in New York and other cities. After a large number were greeted with fanfare by strike supporters in New York's Grand Central Station, the millowners resolved prevent other children from leaving Lawrence. The result was a vicious police attack on mothers and children at the Lawrence railroad station.



CARTOON BY ART YOUNG

The attention of the entire nation now focused on Lawrence. A Congressional inquiry, initiated by Wisconsin's socialist Congressman, Victor Berger, further exposed the poor health and miserable living and working conditions imposed on the Lawrence mill workers.

The pressure of public opinion -- and awkward questions being raised in Congress -- brought the bosses to the bargaining table eight weeks into the strike. The strike committee rejected three wage offers before accepting a sliding scale that would give the lowest-paid workers the biggest increase, 25 percent. The settlement, unanimously adopted by the 20,000 strikers at a meeting on Lawrence Common, also included time and a quarter for overtime and no discrimination against strikers.

Pioneering labor journalist Mary Heaton Vorse wrote of Lawrence: "It was a new kind of strike. There had never been any mass picketing in any New England town. Ten thousand workers picketed. It was the spirit of the workers that seemed dangerous. They were confident, gay, released and they sang. They were always marching and singing." The spirit of the Lawrence strike was best captured in the sign carried by women strikers: "We Want Bread and Roses Too."

(This is the third of a three-part series)

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

## Recomposition



An unofficial publication  
by and for wobblies.  
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## Wobbly &amp; North American News

## Machinists Strike At Caterpillar Plant In Joliet, Illinois

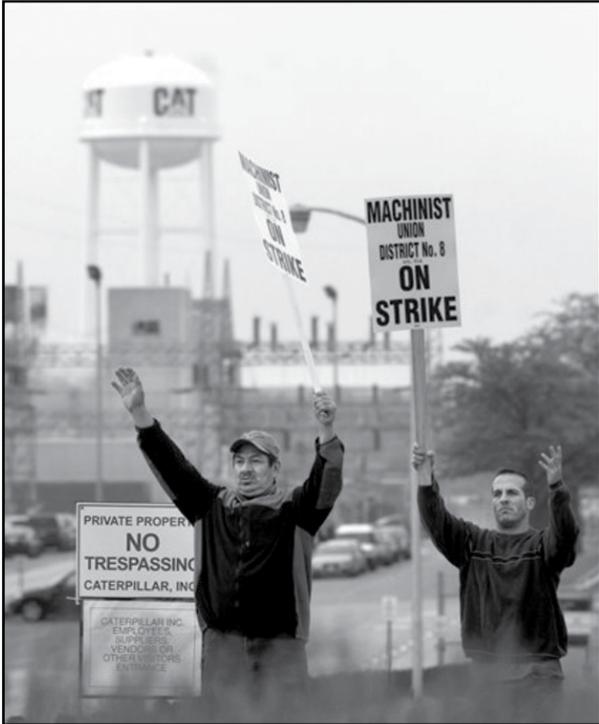


Photo: manufacturing.net

Workers strike outside Caterpillar's plant on May 1.

By David Patrick

With a vote nearing 94 percent in favor, machinists and workers of the Local 851 have decided to strike against what they call unfair compensation and what will lead to frozen wages and the gradual erosion of benefits, despite the company operating at a profitable level.

Nearly 800 workers of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 851 are picketing the Caterpillar (CAT) plant in Joliet, Ill. (at press time). This comes after not only the strike vote but the rejection of a new six-year contract that the union claims would lock wages and gradually eliminate the seniority and fringe benefits of workers at the facility.

Newer hires are at the bottom of the pay scale at around \$13.90 an hour, while more tenured workforce members earn nearly \$28 an hour. They claim the newer proposals would act like a vice squeezing workers, as stagnant wages and a near-doubling in the cost of health care premiums that workers would have to pay would leave them in a very tight position in concerns of other costs of living.

Caterpillar stands by its current offer as being competitive. "The company's last and best final offer was presented last Friday, and we believe it was a fair and reasonable and comprehensive proposal," said Rusty Dunn, a Caterpillar spokesman,

to the *Chicago Tribune*. Negotiations had continued on for more than a month without a breakthrough, and no further talks are scheduled at the moment.

While some of the senior members of the Caterpillar union workforce make well above the mean and median income levels of many in Illinois and the United States, the lowest of the CAT workforce make considerably less and have no benefits at all. Many other sectors in manufacturing have had their wages dip so low that companies are now beginning to "re-shore" jobs back to the United States from overseas.

In the last week of April, Caterpillar reported that its first-quarter net income rose 29 percent to \$1.59 billion, or \$2.37 per share, as revenue increased 23 percent to \$15.98 billion. Its stock price at press time is roughly \$93 a share.

According to the company's website, production will continue without aberration as managers, retirees and other personnel will step in and fill production requirements, and the plant has 1,200 other employees not affected by the negotiations.

Steve Jones, directing business representative for the union's District 8, said the final proposal included no pay increases for six years while doubling health care premiums, put no retiree health care plan into writing, froze and eliminated the pension program by shifting it to a 401(k) style plan, and placed further restrictions on the two-tiered wage program, according to the

*Chicago Sun-Times*.

Earlier this year, Caterpillar finished a union-busting operation in London, Ontario, closing the Electro-Motive Diesel plant that they had recently acquired. After reportedly refusing to accept a 50 percent reduction in pay, 465 permanent workers were terminated. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty went to London during the lockout and called on the company to "come to the table and demonstrate some flexibility." The *Toronto Star* noted a union cannot bargain with an employer that will not negotiate.

Caterpillar has often sought to avoid contact with unions as much as possible. As of 2009 a little more than half of the 94,000 workers employed by Caterpillar are employed outside of the United States, with the labor force in the United States being shifted to "right to work" states, mainly in the South.

Headquartered in Peoria, Ill., Caterpillar Inc. is the world's largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment. The company headed toward bankruptcy in the 1980s in fierce competition with Japanese rival Komatsu, initiating business reconfiguration in the 1990s. Illinois now has 20,000 fewer union jobs. In 1992, when the United Auto Workers (UAW) staged a five-month strike, CAT responded by threatening to replace the entire unionized workforce, and in 1994-1995 CAT withstood a 17-month strike by over 10,000 UAW members.

## We Are The Heirs To The Tulsa Outrage

By Zac Smith

On Nov. 9, 1917, the day after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, 16 IWW men sat in a jail cell in Tulsa, Okla. On paper, they were convicted of vagrancy. In reality, the charge was defiance of the capitalist class. Oklahoma was infamous as a hotbed of radicalism, home to at least three IWW locals and more members of the Socialist Party than any other state. The state's official symbols, a red flag with a white star, and the motto, "Labor conquers all things," made this working-class militancy official. Oklahoma was a place of institutionalized radicalism.

Three months earlier, hundreds of Oklahoman tenant farmers had armed themselves and marched to overthrow Woodrow Wilson and end U.S. participation in the Great War (World War I). The Green Corn Rebellion, as it would later become known, was quickly defeated, but it set authorities on edge against radicals across the state. As Judge T.D. Evans, presiding over the case of the Tulsan Wobblies, remarked, "These are no ordinary times."

The spread of unionism among oil workers and farmers also moved Oklahoma authorities to anxiety. As ever, the press performed loyally, condemning the IWW as terroristic while simultaneously calling on readers to lynch IWW organizers.

"It is no time to dally with the enemies of the country," read a November 1917 *Tulsa World* editorial. "The unrestricted production of petroleum is as necessary to the winning of the war as the unrestricted production of gunpowder. We are either going to whip Germany or Germany is going to whip us. The first step in the whipping of Germany is to strangle the IWWs. Kill them, just as you would kill any other kind of a snake. Don't scotch 'em; kill 'em. And kill 'em dead. It is no time to waste money on trials and continuances and things like that. All that is necessary is the evidence and a firing squad."

It was in this atmosphere of working-class militancy pitted against patriotic hysteria that 16 IWW men found themselves imprisoned in Tulsa. With them

was one Jack Sneed, a non-member who had been thrown in jail, apparently by accident, during a group arrest of Wobblies.

As midnight approached, the prisoners were removed from their cells and driven away from the jail in three police vehicles. The *New York Times* later claimed that the prisoners were intended to be "taken by a roundabout route to IWW headquarters," though the IWW Tulsa branch secretary, who was among the prisoners, later told the National Civil Liberties Bureau that he believed the subsequent incident was planned ahead of time by the police.

Shortly after departing, the convoy met a group of armed men dressed in black robes and masks. They identified themselves as the "Knights of Liberty," which the *Tulsa World* described as a minor offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan. The police delivered the prisoners and vehicles into the custody of the Knights, who tied the prisoners' hands and drove them to a secluded ravine west of the city. At the ravine, they were met by a crowd of additional armed Knights.

By the headlights of the police vehicles, the prisoners were stripped. One by one, they were tied to a tree and lashed with pieces of rope until blood ran down their backs. Then came the action for which the incident would become best known: the 16 IWWs—and the one unfortunate bystander—were tarred and feathered.

"After each one was whipped another man applied the tar with a large brush, from the head to the seat," wrote the Tulsa branch secretary. "Then a brute smeared feathers over and rubbed them in...After they had satisfied themselves that our bodies were well abused, our clothing was thrown into a pile, gasoline poured on it, and a match applied. By the light of our earthly possessions, we were ordered to leave Tulsa, and leave running and never come back."

In the 94 years following the Tulsa Outrage, the worst nightmares of the Tulsan IWWs became reality. Oklahoma has become the X in "We must struggle so that X never happens." For many, Oklahoma is synonymous with hopeless backwardness, its socialist history buried by an evangelical state government which, this April, proposed to alter

the state motto from "Labor Conquers All Things" to "Oklahoma—in God we trust!" The Knights of Liberty now run things in the capitol as well as on the streets.

But the red flame of Wobbly radicalism has also returned to the Sooner State. On Jan. 12, the Tulsa General Membership Branch (GMB) was constituted with 13 charter members from across Oklahoma.

We've spent the past four months concentrating on the minutiae of establishing ourselves—setting schedules, hammering out meeting protocol, printing assessment stickers, announcing our existence to the community at large and working to clear up misconceptions of who we are and what we're about.

We've also focused on providing training for our members, many of whom are, like myself, quite new to organizing. Since chartering, we have participated in Organizer Training 101s held by the Omaha and Kansas City GMBs, and have arranged to send a branch member to the Work People's College in Minnesota this June. We're currently in the process of coordinating our own Organizer Training 101 which was to be held in Tulsa in late May.

The Tulsa GMB has taken as its symbol the Purple Martin, a bird known for its alleged habit of spreading rapidly into new areas. We hope that, with the new resources available to us as a branch, we will be able to help spread the philosophy of working-class emancipation across Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has never been afflicted by political moderacy. It is a place where the injustices of capitalism are sharply felt. Oklahoma ranks 45th among the states in terms of standard of living and third in terms of incarceration rate, according to the American Human Development



Members of the new Tulsa GMB.

Photo: C. King

Project and the Department of Justice, respectively. The Oklahoman people are impatient for change, and many are ready to mobilize against the immigrants, the welfare recipients and the "socialists" whom they believe to be the primary exploiters within society.

To some onlookers, particularly those unaware of Oklahoman history, reactionary attitude in the state appears monolithic and impenetrable. However, anyone who visits Oklahoma's workplaces will inevitably hear self-described conservative workers express, sometimes in surprisingly specific terms, a desire for worker control of industry. Once, one of my coworkers at a supermarket, while complaining about our stingy wages, explained to me an idea basically identical to Marx's concept of surplus value, despite her being a self-identified "hardcore Republican." Some of the people who have been most successfully inoculated against the grotesque strawman of "socialism" are basically in favor of socialist development.

We believe, then, that another transitional phase may be approaching—that it is not written in the stars that Oklahoma must always be ruled by the spirit of fanaticism and ignorance that incited the Tulsa Outrage. The Tulsa GMB invites the rest of the One Big Union to support us in our efforts to organize a land that is always tempestuous and often hostile, but never without the promise of unexpected new developments.

## Special Phoenix Cab Drivers: “We’re 21st Century Slaves”

By Chris Jackson

Imagine yourself as an American slave in the year 1806. After a 17-hour work day, you feel exhausted and hopelessly depressed. Unfortunately, you’ll only get about five hours of sleep before enduring another grueling day of punishment and undignified servitude. This sounds like an accurate description of slavery, right? Now, here’s the shocking part: This scenario is very much alive in America today. Today, these workers are called not slaves, but cab drivers.

For the past few months, the members of our humble branch in Phoenix, Ariz. have been speaking with local cab drivers regarding their working conditions. Each one of them has shared a similarly gut-wrenching story. We have spoken with several drivers throughout the valley, but the most disturbing grievances have come from those who work at Sky Harbor Airport. Recently, I sat down with one of them to conduct an interview. I was originally going to keep his identity anonymous to protect his job but he personally gave me permission to use his real name. Hence, I will now introduce you to the world of Kris.

It was a chilly Wednesday night when I met up with him at the airport. I waited patiently in a room specifically designated for on-call cab drivers. The place resembled some kind of torture chamber straight out of a prison camp. The entire room is made of concrete. There are no pictures or decorations anywhere, and two tiny TVs hang in front of the south wall. Many of the drivers play ping-pong to pass the time. I sat down on one of the benches and looked around. It seemed rather peculiar that everyone around me had migrated from an impoverished or war-torn country.

As I sat there waiting, I sparked up a conversation with a gentleman from India. I told him that I was from a workers’ union and that I was there to help. Immediately, his eyes lit up with delight. He gave me his phone number and said he would love to participate. Suddenly, my interviewee showed up. It was crowded, so we decided to go outside. As we walked away, the Indian man thanked me and said, “God bless you.”

We sat down on a bench right outside while the cold wind blew in our faces. The black beanie on Kris’s head almost completely concealed his brown hair. He is a middle-aged man with a wife and three kids. I decided to begin the interview with some personal questions about his life. He spoke with a thick accent and many of his sentences were in broken English. Originally from communist Bulgaria, he came here 15 years ago to live out the American dream. For the past four years, he has been working as a cab driver for the Yellow Cab company. At first, the job sounded promising: You make good money, and you get to create your own schedule. However, Kris’s optimism soon turned into a nightmare.

You rent the car from the company, so you are considered an independent contractor. Ideally, you are your own boss and you make the rules; at least, it appears so. The problem is that the lease rates are way too high. Kris claims to pay \$854, which must be paid, in advance, for the entire week. If you don’t pay it by each Tuesday at noon, you are charged a \$25 late fee.

There are several hundred drivers working at the airport, and new drivers



Cab drivers in Phoenix often times have to work 17-hours shifts.

Photo: Lela Norem

continue to be hired, which makes business very competitive. On an average day, a driver only picks up about 10 customers. So, for the majority of the day, you are working to pay for your lease. In order to make any money for yourself, you have to work a minimum of 14 to 15 hours a day, and sometimes up to 17 hours. Taking a vacation or a day off is out of the question since you have to pay the lease in advance. Kris said, “You prepay for the whole week. So, if you decide to take a day off, then that comes from your pocket.” Like many other drivers, he only takes one day off a week, although some drivers work seven days per week.

According to Kris and several other drivers we spoke with, the airport contract dictates that about \$42 of each driver’s daily earnings goes directly to the airport. Their agreement also includes a point system for the drivers. Consequently, if drivers do something the airport and the cab companies don’t like, they will get points added to their record. If enough points are accumulated, they get summoned to a hearing where they will receive a punishment. Generally, the points are given for petty things. For example, Kris received 10 points for supposedly being “loud and boisterous” in response to an occasion during which he told a customer about his poor working conditions. After 20 points, Kris was suspended for five days.

Strangely enough, almost every driver we’ve talked to has been to one of these hearings. If this isn’t bizarre enough, the contract manager of the city, a man by the name of Louis Matamoros, is the judge during the hearings. He and other city workers are constantly watching the drivers with cameras and harassing them with threats of suspension. The person in charge of this operation is a man named Hossein Joe Dibazar, the owner of Yellow Cab. Whatever he says, goes. As a result of all this monitoring, the drivers are left feeling subdued and too frightened to speak their minds about any negative experiences on the job. Kris says, “You ask many drivers, and pretty much everybody is telling you the same. We’re slaves! [We’re] 21st century slaves!”

As a result of long hours, lack of sleep, constant harassment and unethical supervision, Kris has be-

come a nervous wreck. He is severely depressed and is now on antidepressants. He rarely has time to see his wife and three children. In his words, he “basically feels like an uncle to his kids” instead of a father. This condition is shared by many of the drivers we’ve spoken with.

This is essentially the same capitalist technique that gigantic corporations use all the time. Companies like General Motors (GM) send jobs overseas so they can pay foreigners a measly salary in order to boost their own profits. However, you can’t send the transportation business overseas. Instead, the owners hire refugees and raise the lease rates. Meanwhile, they pay off the airport to help keep the workers quiet and, ultimately, everyone makes some extra cash. You may ask yourself, “Why don’t these drivers just quit?” Some actually do, but many have no choice because the economy is bad and they don’t have the time to look for a new job. Some drivers are used to this type of mistreatment; many of them come from countries where these conditions are completely normal. This is all part of the exploitation: Find a group of people who are already vulnerable, and use them to your advantage.

About nine out of 10 of the drivers we have spoken to say they are interested in forming a union. Unfortunately, many of them are frightened of losing their jobs and seem reluctant at times. We held an “Introduction to the IWW” class a couple months ago and met our goal of getting a

few to attend. So, our task now is to motivate these drivers to take the lead in this campaign. Since the drivers are considered independent contractors, they are not covered under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Therefore, our only option is to use the IWW’s practice of solidarity unionism.

While I was finishing this article, Kris informed me that he had been suspended for three months. At first, I was concerned that union activity might have had something to do with it. However, this was not the case; once again Kris was accused of being “loud and boisterous.” I immediately made plans to meet up with him that weekend to get the full story.

It was a warm Saturday afternoon when another branch member and I met Kris and his family at a park. That was the day I realized that Kris is the kind of guy that believes in standing up for himself and refuses to put up with injustice. Consequently, this is what led to his suspension. Apparently, speaking ill of a corrupt industry one too many times labels you a “troublemaker.” Matamoros summoned him for another review, but this time, he was accompanied by “Joe” Dibazar and four other officials. As a result of this hearing, Kris was suspended for three months. A few days later, I met up with Kris again for a photo shoot. He brought a letter from Louis Matamoros, which stated that Kris is permanently suspended and is no longer allowed to work at the airport.



Photo: Lela Norem

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## May Day 2012 May Day In Lancaster, Pennsylvania

By Invidious Rose

On May 1, the Lancaster IWW, Occupy and the Lancaster Coalition for Peace and Justice joined together to celebrate May Day in downtown Lancaster, Pa. Lots of food, music and speakers were the order of the day. The public became more aware of IWW's presence and more informed about labor's crucial role in the fight for economic and social justice.



Photo: Lancaster IWW

Performers, including the Dreamtime Lions, Jordan Rast and Brian Coulter, entertained the crowd. Speakers discussed a variety of issues such as single-payer healthcare, labor history, protecting local rivers and workers' rights.

The Lancaster IWW had an outreach tent and passed out a lot of information to the public. The branch received a lot of signatures for the Starbucks petition, and we distributed many issues of the *Industrial Worker*. Many people signed our contact

list for our reading group and film series. We are developing a plan to distribute brown bag lunches with IWW literature inside. We also welcomed a new member.

Already we are talking about doing a May Day celebration again next year. Certainly, there are a few things we would do differently, such as preparing to deal with the media more proactively. However, overall it was a success. A day that began with a threat of rain ended in the red sunshine of solidarity.

## Toronto IWW Celebrates May Day



The Toronto IWW displays their banner on May

Photo: Toronto IWW

## Junior Wobblies Celebrate May Day



Photo: Kathryn R.

Portland IWW Junior Wobblies, sporting their union pride in the Portland IWW May Day bike float.

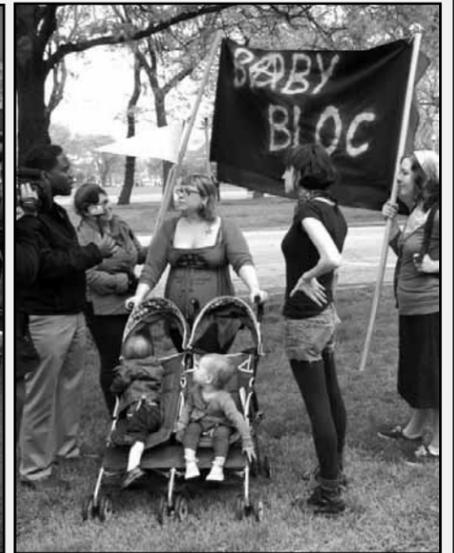


Photo: Heather Fallon

Chicago IWW Junior Wobblies strolled in the Baby Bloc. They were the hit of the day!

## Massive March On Broadway In NYC



Members of the NYC IWW and Occupy Your Workplace join thousands in a march down Broadway on May Day. Photo: Diane Krauthamer

## Garments Workers Observe May Day

From the NGWF Press Secretary

Thousands of garment workers had a huge rally at Paltan-Bijoyagar junction point in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on May Day, holding red flags, Bangladeshi flags, banners, festoons and placards to observe the day under the leadership of the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF).

More than 5,000 garment workers paraded city streets shouting slogans and raising their strong voices for a living wage and safe workplace in their factories after the rally. The majority of the workers were women who rallied to draw the attention of the garment factory owners and country's government to meet their demands.

The NGWF was one of the major organizers of the day's programs in Dhaka. The gathered majority of the Readymade Garment Industry (RMG) workers, who arrived in groups at the venue, listened to the speeches delivered by the NGWF central committee leaders chaired by its president Amirul Haque Amin.

On behalf of the RMG workers, the speakers said, "Though the RMG industry has passed 30 years in Bangladesh, the living wages and safe workplaces are not ensured in the RMG factories." RMG workers cannot run their families with the present scanty wage; as a result, the RMG workers are still living in the unhygienic slums and below poverty level."

The speakers, addressing both the government and factory owners, demanded 5,000 taka (approximately \$62.50) as the lowest monthly salary that the RMG workers should receive as a "living payment."

According to the speakers, the RMG workers are in an acute hardship due to the continuous price hike of essential commodities, including food.

Among other problems, the speakers said RMG workers are killed as a result of fire accidents, and their fundamental rights are violated in many ways.



Photo: NGWF

On the other hand, in the international markets, Bangladeshi garment products are not getting fair price and tax-exemption facilities. This industry encounters a huge crisis due to lack of gas, electricity, transportation and water supply. The speakers strongly urged the government to solve these problems.

The speakers also said that the private sector female workers, including those working in the RMG industries, have become victims of discrimination in relation to maternity leave. The present government announced six-month maternity leave for public sector female workers and employees, but maternity leave for the private sector female workers, including those in the RMG industries, remained at four months.

"We want [a] six-month maternity leave for all women workers and employees, including those in RMG sector," speakers demanded.

## IWW Workplace Rally In The Bay Area



Curbside and Buy Back workers.

Photo: Bruce Valde

By John Reimann

The boss was sweating bullets. The IWW was in the house, his workers were about to stop work for May Day, and he wasn't happy about it at all. There was nothing he could do about it since all his workers were IWW members and they support the union. This was at Buy Back recycling in Berkeley, Calif., which functions under an IWW contract as does Curbside Pickups, the workplace next door, whose workers were also about to stop work for May Day 2012.

IWW organizers and union members on the job had been organizing a stop-work rally for the previous two weeks and here it was.

Workers from both workplaces stopped work for about an hour to celebrate International Workers' Day in a workplace rally. Most of those who spoke were the Curbside and Buy Back workers themselves, and they spoke about the conditions of their jobs and the attacks on their health benefits and other such concerns. A worker at Curbside had recently had a very serious injury (which resulted in having to have a foot amputated). Several Curbside workers commented on this and the belief that

the long hours of overtime may well have been related to this, because when workers are tired accidents are more likely to happen. There were several speakers from outside the workplace including Boots Riley, the revolutionary Oak-

land rap artist, who spoke among other things about his experiences with workers in Italy. Other fellow workers spoke on a number of issues including the history of May Day, issues for grocery workers, and the privatization and union busting in the Oakland public school system. One noteworthy message of greeting was read from a representative of the Pakistan Labor Party. The message referred to some of the recent strikes in Pakistan and concluded by calling for the workers of the world to unite. The rally concluded with a speech from a fellow worker who called for revolution (and got a good hand of applause for that).

We all gathered around for a group photo taken by one of our members. The executive director of the Curbside operation just "happened" to be on hand and came running over, with a big grin spread all over his face. He offered to take the photo for us so that we could all be in the photo at once. We sent him packing.

It was the perfect end to a great event. We started the event by making one boss sweat. We ended it by telling another to get lost. What better way to celebrate International Workers' Day?

## Industrial Worker Book Review

**Beyond The Usual Scope Of Discussion On The Working Class**

Azzellini, Dario and Immanuel Ness, Editors. *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control From the Commune to the Present*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011. Paperback, 400 pages, \$19.00.

By Andy Piascik

Much recent discussion and scholarship has gone into dissecting the decline in the strength of the working class in the United States. For the most part, the emphasis has been on the steady weakening of trade unions and on excavating why union officials have been unwilling to attempt new forms of resistance. In such a context, discussions of workers' control of the means of production—how it might look, what about it has succeeded and failed in the past, its relationship to revolutionary change—may seem a stretch. However, maybe it doesn't. For perhaps what the U.S. working class needs as much as anything is to explore alternatives, not only to neoliberalism, but to traditional unionism, even that of the social movement type.

"Ours to Master and to Own: Workers Control from the Commune to the Present," edited by Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, goes a long way in assisting us in that exploration. Ness and Azzellini are well-positioned to put together such an important work; both have long radical histories as writers, teachers and activists. The result of their efforts is a rich collection of stories of workers seizing control of production in different epochs under a vast array of circumstances in numerous countries.

Councils, in a nutshell, are self-management organizations established by workers to administer production, usually in periods of great tumult. They may take shape in a single plant, in an entire industry or, in a revolutionary situation, in many plants and industries simultaneously. Through them, workers oversee all aspects of production including those which, under capitalism, are done by owners and bosses. The forms differ greatly but the common thread is that those who do the work should decide how it's done.

There are two important themes that emerge as one reads through the cases collected by Ness and Azzellini. One is that many workers across time and around the world have understood better than any revolutionary theoretician that the working class controlling its own work is the way it should be. Second, councils, apart from any trade union or vanguard party, develop spontaneously and organically as the system of private ownership slips into crisis. As detailed in the book, this development occurs so frequently in such instances as to be almost a natural phenomenon.

"Ours to Master and to Own" begins with four overview essays, then moves on to 18 case histories grouped into four fairly loose categories. Significantly, stories of the global South are well-represented, as Argentina, Venezuela, and other historically under-developed countries are home to some of the most important contemporary experiments in workers' control. With upheaval rocking much of the Middle East and Latin America, these case histories, together with those where councils were an integral part of anti-colonial insurgencies in Indonesia and Algeria, take on an additional timeliness.

"Ours to Master and to Own" also includes a number of familiar cases. Perhaps the three best known occurred in revolutionary (or at least what were perceived by some of the participants as revolutionary) situations: The Soviets in Russia leading up to and immediately after 1917, the councils in Germany during World War I up to the unsuccessful uprising of 1919, and the anarchist-led movement in Spain in the 1930s. Each of these chapters is highly instructive, with nuanced analyses of the wide array of challenges the different groups faced. For the most part, each of these council movements failed simply because the forces aligned against them were too strong. However, there are valuable lessons within each as well that the contributing authors do an excellent job of mining.

Equally important are more recent cases such as Argentina during the economic crisis of 2001, which is compellingly summarized by Marina Kabat. Out of a movement that began in response to neoliberalism, workers took over factories and helped topple President Fernando de la Rúa. As the takeovers evolved, workers grappled with how best to affect a degree of control within a capitalist society—something that is no easy feat, and many efforts have failed or have been co-opted. As with the uprisings in the early 20th century, however, there is much in the experience of value. As Kabat writes of the takeovers, "an objective study of their characteristics and shortcomings will help remove obstacles and develop their complete potential for the future," especially since "[t]he reprise of the economic crisis has opened new horizons for the taken factories."

Other chapters of note are two from Eastern Europe, one on Yugoslavia by Go-

ran Music and one on Poland by Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski. Both document ongoing struggles for autonomy in societies that purported to be workers' states. The class conflict that surfaced quite dramatically in Poland in 1980 with the formation of Solidarity, for example, was the culmination of decades' worth of work, rather than a brand new phenomenon.

In Yugoslavia, Music relates the continuous contention between workers and the state over the form of self-management that lasted until the collapse of 1989.

Then there's a fascinating case in India authored by Arup Kumar Sen, where workers in a variety of workplaces went head to head with a Communist state government within a capitalist society. Events unfolded much as those in other cases, and workers there faced many of the same obstacles. It would seem from so many examples that vanguardists are right in one thing they know, and that is the revolutionary potential of the working class. That they often fear it and have frequently been, from Lenin and Trotsky forward, as hostile to it as any capitalist is one of the most important lessons of this volume.

Trade unions, including ones of the left, have also frequently opposed working-class autonomy in the form of councils, especially at times of great upheaval. The period when fascism in Portugal was overthrown in 1974-75 is a prime example. As related by Peter Robinson, the alliance the Socialist unions forged with liberal military officials checked the possibility that the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors might expand their influence right at a point when something besides corporate liberalism was a possibility. Again, as we examine what was, we are left, too, to wonder what might have been.

Overall, though, the tone of "Ours to Master and to Own" is decidedly positive. In chapter after chapter, we can practically see workers contending with the most fundamental of revolutionary questions: What should the kind of society we want look like? How do we best get there? Again and again, as events unfold, great emphasis is placed on process. In fact, in case after case, a successful outcome, however else that be measured, is inseparable from process. Workers went forward as often as not without deeply elaborated theories but with a highly attuned sense that each was responsible to one another as well as

to the future.

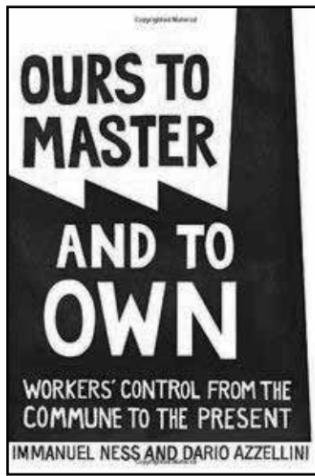
There is also much strategic discussion in "Ours to Master and to Own" that is of immense value. In a revolutionary situation, for example, do councils pre-figure an aborning working-class state? Or does their consolidation mark the beginning of the end of the state? If the former, what should the relationship of the councils be to the state? Although some of the contributors put forward more decisive answers than others, the overall tone of the book is that these are still open questions to be answered with greater experience.

Inclusion of at least a few chapters authored by workers might have added another dimension to "Ours to Master and to Own." Workers are quoted throughout and their insights are meaningful parts of a number of the analyses. Hearing summaries and perhaps some tentative conclusions from on-the-ground participants could have provided an even fuller understanding of the subject at hand.

The specific experiences of women in worker councils are also largely invisible in these accounts, perhaps because industrial work has overwhelmingly been the domain of men and the councils largely the domain of the industrial workforce. Still, it would have been beneficial to hear about the role of women in at least a few of the case studies.

Though it is difficult to imagine any popular movement, working-class centered or otherwise, in which women would not play a prominent role, much of the work women do remains below the surface. It is for this reason that councils of the present and the future, at least those that are the most inclusive, may be influenced by cooperative economics, with its emphasis on the citizenry at all levels—be it worker, domestic laborer or consumer. At the same time, analysis that assumes the special role of women may help to bring into being richer, more inclusive council formations.

The wonderful value of "Ours to Master and to Own" is that its contributors collectively wrestle with precisely these kinds of big questions. Who should decide and which factors must be weighed in the deciding? These are not questions with easy answers, after all. "Ours to Master and to Own" is a valuable work. By thinking beyond the usual scope of radical discussions of the working class, Ness, Azzellini, and all of the contributors have provided fresh insights to the gnawing question of how workers—the social force that makes up a majority of the 99 percent—might go forward. Rich in history and devoid of blueprints, it's well worth studying and discussing. It is all the better that a second volume is in the works.



Graphic: leftwingbooks.net

**Which Side Are You On?**

Early, Steve. *The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old?* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011. Paperback, 440 pages, \$17.00.

By Joseph Riedel

Ever since Florence Reese wrote the lyrics to "Which Side Are You On?" in 1931, that question has been posed between labor and the bosses. With his latest offering, "The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old?", Steve Early will have workers and activists asking themselves where they stand in the labor movement.

In "Civil Wars," Early, who is a well-known critic of the lack of internal democracy at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), meticulously dissects the various internal issues that have plagued the organization over the last several years. At the same time he also gives a historical background to provide adequate context for the reader to understand where the problems originated. Early discusses the failure of the Member Action Center

(MAC) Call Centers in a chapter that is humorously titled, "Dial 1-800-My-Union?" The MAC line was a running joke during my time as an SEIU Organizer with District 1199 in West Virginia, as it consisted of an answering machine and an email being sent to the organizer to fix whatever issue had been reported.

While "Civil Wars" gives a very detailed account of the hostile takeover of United Healthcare West that led to the formation of National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), Early also points out that while this trusteeship is by far the most publicized and biggest action by SEIU, it is certainly not the first. Early explains how former SEIU President Andy Stern crushed dissent in other locals by forcing their members into other locals who were either already under trusteeship, or under the leadership of Stern loyalists.

Early does not end his coverage of SEIU's woes with internal issues. In a section titled "How EFCA Died for ObamaCare," Early explains how SEIU burrowed into a position of influence inside the Obama administration and ef-

fectively elbowed out other unions. This is something that has put even more stress on the already fractured relationship SEIU has with the rest of big labor.

As a former SEIU staffer, I found myself cringing as I read "Civil Wars," much as many rock stars must have cringed watching Spinal Tap for the first time. I believe this book should be required reading, not only for members of SEIU, who will find "Civil Wars" to be a disturbing peek behind the purple curtain, but also for anyone who cares about the future of the labor movement.

I found "Civil Wars" to be a disturbing validation of what I experienced firsthand as an organizer with SEIU. The chickens have finally come home to roost after 20 years of shifting from a grassroots democratic union into a top-down bureaucratic corporation that places a higher value on political influence than it does on member representation.

"Civil Wars" offers a unique look inside the challenging proposition facing NUHW that is all too familiar for IWW members—surviving as an independent union. Among

the major labor organizations in the United States, only a few—namely the IWW and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)—have survived over the long-run. NUHW's recent partnership with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) demonstrates just how difficult it can be.

While Early focuses on SEIU, the issues that are raised in "Civil Wars" are faced by members in many other unions. When unions begin to look more like the corporations they are supposed to be fighting than the militant, democratic voice for workers that they are meant to be, it is only natural that the battle lines will begin to form, as "Civil Wars" clearly shows.

The real question Early seems to be asking is, very simply, "Which side are you on?"



Graphic: goodreads.com

## Front Page News

# Federal Judge Finds Jimmy John's Guilty Of Illegal Firings

Continued from 1

of labor law in the United States. A majority of Jimmy John's workers demanded union recognition in September 2010, primarily seeking a pay increase above minimum wage. In response, the company spent over \$85,000 on a vicious anti-union campaign with the help of outside union-busting consultants. In spite of rampant illegal intimidation, the workers came within a hair's breadth of victory in an 85-87 vote. The NLRB later threw this out due to over 30 employer violations of federal labor law in the election period.

Ostensibly protected by an NLRB settlement agreement that required the employer to abide by the law, workers at Jimmy John's then began campaigning for the right to call in sick and receive paid sick days in January 2011. Despite the clear risk to public health of workers making sandwiches while ill, franchise owners Mike and Rob Mulligan stonewalled employee requests for sick day policy reform for more than two months, prompting union supporters to take their message to the public by posting 3,000 copies of a poster explaining that workers are forced to make sandwiches while sick. Mike and Rob Mulligan lashed out in retaliation, firing six workers and disciplining others.



Graphic: JJWU

On the witness stand, Mike Mulligan admitted under oath that he had fired the six workers because he perceived them as the "leaders and developers" of a unionization effort. Mulligan's credibility was further eroded when he testified to intentionally lying to the press about the franchise's food safety record.

While Jimmy John's has been able to exploit the weakness of U.S. labor law to stomp on employees' right to organize, workers vow to press forward with their campaign for fair pay, guaranteed hours, sick days, and respect and dignity in fast food.

## From The "Double Shift" To The Economic Free Zone: A Report From The Women With Initiative Meeting In Warsaw

Continued from 1

with a feedback and forward planning session.

We started the meeting by sharing our experiences of work and our union activities. Many worked in *creches* (kindergartens for tiny babies) in Poznań. All workers except the janitor are women and they are currently fighting for a wage increase. In recent years the number of children per worker has increased, but the workers have not had a pay raise since 2009 and are demanding a 30 percent increase. They also work longer hours for less money since last year's "reforms." For example, one of these women, after 12 years in the workplace, made €380 per month, while another, with less time on the job, earned €350.

These women workers are demanding that all workers have benefits, as the current benefits are not equally distributed. The women also discovered that they had not been paid for all their hours for some years and are taking their boss to court. The first case was scheduled for May 10. They have also successfully fought for lower fees for kindergarten. The two aforementioned women have been union members for six months, with Workers Initiative now the recognized union in their workplace.

Two other women at the meeting worked in a Chinese-owned electronics factory in one of Poland's "economic free zones" (which were created in 1994). The factory employs 150 workers on contract and another 150 are temporary workers hired during busy times through an agency. They do not work under the same conditions, although they do the same work. There is a huge turnover of workers at the factory. So far, about 70 workers have joined the union. They told us about long, grueling, shifts—sometimes up to 16 hours or more in a factory that runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week—and about the abusive behavior of management there. They also told us about the long commute to work, and how they have to find time to care for their kids and for their work for the union. They are often made to work overtime with no prior warning, which makes it even harder to plan for childcare. They can only meet on Sundays because they work all week.

Some of the women also work in a floor

board factory, and they explained how their bosses had been deliberately falsifying the punch-card system that calculates their work hours. They also described how the work inspector came to measure dust pollution when the factory was not in operation.

Another participant had worked at the Greenkett factory in the town of Stęszew. She was fired when she got ill and has since been dependent on her husband's income. She is still active in the union.

Some of us, much like myself, who were mostly college graduates, worked in office jobs or as freelancers. A member from Kraków told us about falling into debt since she got sick because she had no health insurance. She worked in an office and had been so happy to get a better contract that, she said, she let her boss exploit her.

An anthropology graduate had problems finding work since finishing her education and has never worked legally, which is common. She gives private English lessons. She hopes to train as a teacher, but as her work is on the black market, it does not give her any recognized experience. She also cannot claim benefits as she has never worked legally. Being registered as unemployed provides her with basic health insurance. She also gave an example of having translated parts of a book and never receiving pay, but being unable to take legal action, as her work was illegal. She makes around €300 per month. Those stories also echoed some of my own experiences of multiple freelance jobs with minimum wage levels, and their lack of security and benefits.

The workshops and talks, going back to the ideas and activities of the labor and feminist movements in 1970s Italy, resonated with our experiences and lead to lively discussions. In 1970s Italy, much as in Poland today, there were high levels of unemployment and low wages, and the rising prices of goods and services disproportionately affected women in relation to house work and childcare. The labor movement in Italy moved their struggles beyond the workplace. This is also the case in Poland now. In the area with tenant rent strikes, for example, a lot of the most active participants are women. Also, as work is intensified and real wages are decreasing, the cost of labor becomes lower for com-

# Huge Victory For Immigrant Wobblies At Brooklyn Hummus Producer

Continued from 1

Workers were subjected to massive wage theft including the refusal to pay overtime and minimum wage, for grueling work weeks as long as 80 hours. They also faced massive discrimination and abuse including anti-immigrant insults from senior management.

To win justice, Focus on the Food Chain, in partnership with Orthodox social justice organization Uri L'Tzedek, persuaded over 120 grocery store locations in New York City to stop selling Flaum products until workers' rights were respected. Additionally, workers persuaded Tnuva, the world's largest kosher cheese brand, to discontinue its relationship with Flaum after organizing rabbinical delegations and an international day of action supported by IWW members, Occupy Wall Street and allies from around the world. Tnuva, owned by private equity giant Apax Partners, was distributed to New York supermarkets by Flaum and constituted a significant portion of Flaum's profits.

Consequently, the company entered 2012 hobbled by the labor dispute. In January, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington, D.C. ruled against Flaum's attempt to make discriminatory immigration status allegations against the

workers who are from Latin America. The decision set an important precedent for immigrant workers nationwide by erecting procedural safeguards in cases involving the landmark anti-immigrant Supreme Court case, Hoffman Plastic. Though Flaum lost the NLRB trial over the firings, it had resisted compliance with cynical and unfounded allegations about immigration status. The global settlement resolves both the NLRB retaliation litigation and a large federal lawsuit over unpaid minimum wage and overtime.

This tremendous victory is another example of the power workers have when they unite and fight collectively for their rights and justice on the job. Although all of us depend on the hard work of workers in the food industry in order to survive, they are highly exploited and don't get the respect they deserve from the companies for whom they create huge amounts of wealth.

In this sense, Focus on the Food Chain seeks to organize and unite workers of this important sector, creating cross-shop solidarity in order to form a powerful leverage against corporate despotism. The victory against Flaum Appetizing is thus one more step towards the transformation of New York City's food system.



Photo: Magda, Workers Initiative

Women with Initiative, the CGT and the IWW.

panies, and the costs of work are being passed onto the workers more and more. We can see this in childcare work, where the number of children per worker to look after has been increased, and work is more "flexible," or irregular. The number of people employed short-term and by subcontractors is increasing. For workers this means increased stress, health risks and lower life expectancy. A member who worked in a university library also shared her personal fears about the imminent "reform" that is set to raise the retirement age to 67.

The austerity measures are hitting women particularly hard, with cuts to social services, schools and health services, and with services being taken over by private companies, thus increasing costs for workers relying on those services. This also comes with an ideological push to frame care in the home as better than state-provided childcare.

On the other hand, there is a liberalization of working laws, with increasingly casual contracts, to which many work laws don't apply. One woman described how she worked at a school full time but had a part-time contract because, in exchange, the school allowed her children to attend there. The situation is particularly poignant in the so-called "special economic areas" in Poland, where there is commonly a lack of jobs and childcare. Work agencies force people to do temporary work. Some women have taken action and squatted empty buildings. They had to work to keep their welfare, but had to neglect their childcare duties to do so, and were effectively forced to endanger their children by leaving even their small kids alone.

Isabella, the women's secretary of CGT since 2009, gave an overview of the situation in Spain and the work of the CGT. CGT is trying to take legal action to fight for parity at work and also engages in activities to raise awareness around equality in and outside of work. One big issue in

Spain is the privatization during the last decade of public-sector services, such as kindergartens. Isabella herself was laid off when the benefits office where she worked was privatized. This wave of privatization, similar to developments taking place across all of Europe, is compounded by the increasing costs of childcare and the lack of available spots in public kindergartens.

For many, this weekend offered a rare escape from home and a chance to meet other women union members. Some participants expressed that it was shameful that other members had not been able to attend because their husbands "would not let them." They said they hoped to have more actions, a demonstration or solidarity picket, and an internal meeting, but next up is the women's block on the planned demonstration about the public cost of Euro 2012 this June in Poznań. This demonstration will highlight the cuts to public funding of services against the large sums of public funding given to the Euro 2012 soccer tournament.

We all felt that to talk about our own circumstances and realize how much we shared had been the most important thing about the meeting. Those personal exchanges included what became the most poignant moment of the weekend for me, when Jola and Kasia—the two members from the electronics factory who attended—concluded their description of their work situation in the factory: "I want to attack our boss, because he destroyed our life and took everything from us."

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## Workplace Organizing

# The “Alice In Wonderland” Economy & The Labor Movement We Need

By Chris Ford,  
IWW London Regional Secretary

London is a tale of two cities: Rich and poor. One of the wealthiest cities in the world, it is also one of the most unequal.

Banks in the city have made billions. The four biggest announced a combined profit of £24.2 billion. The top 10 percent of Londoners are 273 times richer than the bottom 10 percent. The very richest 1,000 people in Britain, most of whom live in or around London, have assets estimated to be worth £335 billion. *The Sunday Times* reports that their wealth rose by £77 billion during the financial meltdown and continues to rise despite the recession. Despite the massive incomes of the city, London has some of the poorest boroughs in the country. One in five Londoners earn less than the London living wage of £8.30 per hour. One million people, including the 40 percent of the Black minority and ethnic Londoners, live in low-income households. In the London borough of Tower Hamlets, which will host the Olympics, 52 percent of children live in poverty. For women, London is officially the worst place in the country to live: Poverty, unemployment, pay inequality, child-care costs and sexual assault are all higher in London than anywhere else.

Housing costs are making it harder for working-class people. Over 220,000 households find themselves in overcrowded accommodations—60,000 more than a decade ago. The government’s cap on housing benefit is making many areas unaffordable to the less well-off, and will see “social cleansing,” with councils like Newham already trying to move 500 families to Stoke-on-Trent. It is in those boroughs with cheaper housing that public services are at a lower level: 8 of the 10 Primary Care Trusts with the fewest General Practitioners (GPs) per person are in London. Shamefully, babies born in the London boroughs of Southwark, Croydon, Haringey and Harrow are twice as likely to die before their first birthdays, compared to those born in the boroughs of Kingston and Richmond.

This inequality is a scandal screaming for justice. We find few viable solutions to this social inequality amongst the establishment politicians of the Greater London Assembly. In the latest election the Labour, Green and Liberal Democrat mayoral candidates all signed a pledge for the “My Fair London” campaign. Revealingly this pledge to do next-to-nothing gained the signature of only four of the 25 members of the London Assembly. Tory Boris Johnson has declared “we must continue to work together to tackle poverty”—though in his time as mayor the situation has become worse amidst the austerity he advocates.

That the politicians propose inadequate remedies for social evils should come as no surprise. The scandal that £250,000 can buy you dinner with David Cameron revealed what many already know—that your influence increases with your level of wealth. The British establishment is rotten to the core; it will not act against the interests of those who are gorging themselves with wealth when it consists of the same privileged section of society.

Many no doubt voted Labour as a lesser evil to the Tories, though few have any faith they are better. Labour-run councils have implemented cuts in jobs, pay and conditions, slashed services, and increased council tax, rent and service charges, thus passing the burden of government cuts onto communities.

### Alice In Wonderland Economy

The gap between the rich and poor is not an act of nature; our DNA does not include a rich or poor gene. Social inequality is caused by man-made social, political and economic structures. The existing capitalist system does not and cannot work in the interests of the majority; it is

socially divisive, creating a class division which cuts across our society. Despite successive Prime Ministers declaring Britain as a “classless society,” a “Social Attitudes Survey” showed 57 percent of the population still consider themselves working class. The reality of life is that unless you win the lottery, you must sell your ability to work in return for a wage. The majority of us are paid a wage to produce goods and services which are then sold for a profit. In other words, employers can make more money selling what we produce than we cost in wages. In this sense employers exploit workers.

Under the present social system the needs of people will not be met if they do not have enough money, because the purpose of the economy is what is calculated to make a profit. All else comes second. The Tories and Liberal-Democrats may say we “are all in it together,” but the facts show otherwise. The profits, pay and bonuses of bankers have been growing, but their prosperity has not resulted in any benefit for the rest of society. Inequality and class division is the natural side effect of an economy based on making profits.

Maximizing profits is at the center of the government’s austerity strategy; restoring growth and well-being is not. By driving down wages and slashing public services, the government hopes to encourage business to invest and kick-start the economy. This has not worked. Companies are not investing, instead they are trying to keep profits growing by job cuts, low pay and making people work harder for longer. The economy is stagnant, but the government continues on the same road, attacking employment rights, increasing taxes on pensioners, cutting wages and welfare. Meanwhile, cuts in corporate taxes, totalling £4 billion, are ensuring big business receives a greater share of the wealth.

This is crazy economics straight from “Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There,” where the White Queen offered Alice to work for two pence a week, promising “jam tomorrow and jam yesterday—but never jam today.” The government hopes profits will recover faster than wages and that one day in the future the economy will revive. In the meantime, austerity continues with reckless disregard for the well-being of the mass of the population, which has to suffer reduced living standards, the decline of family life, increased poverty and anti-social behavior. It is worth remembering that only 12 percent of the government’s planned cuts to welfare spending and public services have been implemented. Things can get much worse.

### Judases Heading the Labor Movement

Faced with such social evils, why has the election been a boring personality competition between populist politicians? The reason is that the politicians actually have few fundamental differences. They all agree on sustaining the present system, even if they disagree on how to repair it. Yet any sane assessment would conclude that the system is beyond repair and needs to be replaced by one fit for human beings. Millions want a better society, and since the start of the Great Recession, there have been growing struggles by workers and radical youth—yet paradoxically, radical change seems a distant prospect. A great deal of responsibility for this is due to the very labor movement that was created because of the inability of the existing system to meet the aspirations of working people.

The majority of the leaders of the labor movement—the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC)—have long since abandoned seeing themselves as part of an effort to reconstruct society. This is not only a view of the union bureaucracy, but the majority of workers. Many want to resist austerity and are sick of the recession but do not

see a way out beyond what employers and politicians are offering. This is not surprising, because not many labor movement leaders can see further either.

There are many reasons for this situation today. The goals, methods and achievements of the labor movement before the 1980s and the wide support for radical ideas such as workers’ control are unknown to most workers today. It seems like a different world. The historic defeats suffered by the movement under the Thatcher government, and the imposition of stifling anti-union laws, have left a negative legacy. For decades the establishment has used every opportunity to persuade people that there is no alternative; politicians are happy to blame the banks but never the system. The failure of socialism in the 20th century helped undermine confidence in any possible alternative. Soviet-style state capitalism was a rotten system whose “communist” ruling elite easily swapped their clothes for private capitalism. Labour Party style social democracy embraced the same neoliberal model of capitalism that the Tories did. Such distortions and failures have helped discredit not only the name of socialism, but also the whole idea of radical change itself.

The TUC and union bureaucrats accept what exists and are reconciled to their place within capitalism, seeing their role as bargaining (or pleading) with employers to improve conditions. Unions like UNISON and Unite the Union bankroll the Labour Party, asking for little and getting next to nothing in return. Abandoning any pretence of having a goal for an alternative future has not made such unions more effective in the present.

### Putting Miliband before the Members

During the partial recovery of the economy under the last Labour government, most unions failed to rebuild and renovate to meet the challenges of our age of global capitalism. Busy managing discontent and advocating partnership with bosses, the bureaucracy—composed of unelected officials, full-time officers and senior convenors—consolidated its position. While the bureaucracy grew, membership declined—only 21 percent of wage-workers in London are in unions. This has helped increase social inequality as employers’ authority has gone unchallenged.

The current government and employers’ hard-line approach has disoriented the TUC and union bureaucrats. The TUC and some union leaders have responded by trying to talk the government out of it. Then under pressure, they called some mass protests and agreed to a coordinated national strike, only to see the TUC and UNISON leaders give up and divide the fight in defence of pensions. Now union opposition is fragmented and without a clear strategy. For the Labour Party leaders, strikes and protests are an embarrassment, and union bureaucrats are happy to keep opposition within limits that will not harm Labour’s image. It is not a coincidence that unions not attached to the Labour Party, like the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), fight more effectively than those who put Ed Miliband, Leader of the Labour Party, before their members.

Overall the labor movement has failed



Photo: Valeryus Theofanidis, London Cleaners and Allied Grades Branch

to respond to the employers and their politicians with an equally resolute defense of workers’ interests. The Labour Party and TUC leaders are the Judas Iscariots of the working class.

### Don’t Moan, Organize!

The weak state of the labor movement can lead us to overestimate the strength of the establishment and underestimate the potential of the working class. The employing class may appear to have the upper hand but it is in a mess. Honest forecasts for the economy are bleak, mirrored by constant political crisis and scandals. If we are to defend jobs, pensions, public services and make new gains, we should remember that the social improvements made under past governments were not due to the benevolence of politicians, but by struggles of ordinary people. As the Tory Lord Hailsham warned Parliament in 1943: “If you do not give the people social reform they are going to give you social revolution.”

There is a need to recognize that we cannot carry on in the same old way. The separations of radical unions like RMT and the Fire Brigades Union from the Labour Party are signs of a process of change in the movement that needs to go much further. The current labor movement that took shape at the start of the 20th century is not eternal; a different form of movement existed before it and the movement can be reconstituted again for the 21st century. A new labor movement must understand that:

- The labor movement, as presently constituted, cannot be relied upon to serve workers’ interests. Unions can become effective and militant only if they are transformed by the members who can instill in them a new radical purpose.

- It is not guaranteed that all existing unions can be transformed. It is foolish to wait to be rescued by union reform movements. In the majority of workplaces, there is no union or sign of one coming. The space exists to build new independent unions, organized industrially and not crippled by bureaucracy, corruption and collaboration with the bosses.

- We are not prisoners. It is entirely possible to fight employers independently of the old union officialdom. Restoring that spirit and confidence to act freely rather than wait for permission is what is needed. More than anywhere it is from independent organizing and struggles that a new movement will emerge. There is nothing bureaucrats and bosses hate more than workers they cannot control.

- We can also take hope from the fact the working class, especially in London, has changed. A whole generation has grown up who did not experience the defeats under Thatcher and they are strengthened by a new generation of migrant workers. These workers are not frozen stiff by the politics of fear bred into the movement by those who led us to defeat in the past.

Inspired by these new possibilities, the IWW is forging ahead on the principle to “organize the unorganized, the abandoned and betrayed,” and we are proving our critics wrong.

# World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

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).

## Focus On Japan & Other ISC News



Anti-nuclear protest in Nagoya, Japan in March 2012. Photo: yiddelenews.com

By the ISC

### Anti-nuke protests swept Japan on anniversary of the great quake

While a debate rages in parliament on restarting nuclear plants, and with the shutdown of the two remaining plants in operation which were scheduled for the end of April, dozens of demonstrations swept Japan on March 11, the anniversary of the Great Eastern Japan earthquake, including mass demonstrations in Fukushima and Tokyo.

### Doro-Mito launches strikes against radiation exposure during work

On March 23, railway workers of Doro-Mito launched strikes against Japan Railway (JR) East Corporation for operating trains and inspection facilities near the 20 kilometer Fukushima evacuation zone and for the outsourcing of inspection and repair facilities. Trains equipped with integrating dosimeters recorded exposure levels of up to 15µSv for only a single shift. Motivated only by profit, during collective bargaining it was revealed JR East had taken no provisions to ensure the safety of workers or passengers other than for the installation of dosimeters.

### Historic Berlitz Ruling

In 2008, Berlitz language teachers launched the largest industrial action in the history of Japan's language industry, missing over 3,000 lessons. Berlitz devised a plan to bust the union, claiming that giving strike notice at the last minute prevented the company from bringing in scabs, and the company sued five teachers and two union officials for damages. After three years of testimony, the verdict was given on Feb. 27 in under a minute:

"There is no reason to deny the legitimacy of the strike in its entirety and the details of its parts—the objective, the procedures, and the form of the strike. Therefore, there can be no compensation claim against the defendant, either the union or the individuals. And therefore it

is the judgment of this court that all claims are rejected."

This historic ruling protects the legal right of unions in Japan to strike without giving a defined period of notice (which would allow companies to prepare scab labor and break the strike).

### War on the poor

On March 29, demonstrations were held in Yokohama, near the Kotobuki district, where police and thugs have been hired to intimidate welfare recipients from collecting their benefits. This is part of an overall gentrification campaign which includes evictions and foreclosures. Another protest was scheduled for April 25.

### Solidarity with Laura Gómez

The International Solidarity Commission of the Industrial Workers of the World condemns the actions taken by the Mossos d'Esquadra, the Catalonia police. Laura Gómez, the General Secretary of Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT)-Barcelona, was arrested by the Mossos d'Esquadra on trumped-up charges that have no basis in fact. It is obvious that this is nothing more than an act of repression and intimidation in response to the growing workers' mobilizations in Spain. We demand the immediate release of Laura Gómez and the withdrawal of all charges.

We are in solidarity with, and commend, the CGT-Barcelona, Laura Gómez, and the rest of Spain's working class for their ongoing struggle against police repression and labor injustice.

### Be a Part of the ISC

The ISC has put out calls for two positions within the union: ISC Liaisons, who will help coordinate communications between IWW membership bodies and the ISC; and Regional Specialists, who can facilitate ISC work in different parts of the world. Union members are encouraged to sign up and help build international solidarity.

Email us at [iww.isc@gmail.com](mailto:iww.isc@gmail.com).

## Palestinian Prisoners Join Mass Hunger Strike

From [libcom.org](http://libcom.org)

The hunger strike that began with 1,000 participants in mid-April has grown to 2,000 (at press time), according to the Palestinian prisoner support network Addameer.

The first prisoners to go on hunger strike, Thaer Halalheh and Bilal Diab, entered their 70th day without food in mid-May, and Israeli Physicians for Human Rights reports that they are "very close to death." Both Thaer Halalheh and Bilal Diab are detained in what is known as "administrative detention," meaning that they have not been charged with any crime and have received no trial. Hassan Safadi's health is reported to be rapidly deteriorating. Physicians for Human Rights-Israel reports that on May 3, Safadi was "held down by prison guards and forcefully given treatment by a prison doctor via an injection in his arm." Physicians for Human Rights-Israel has pointed out that this forced injection is, "in strict violation of the principles of medical ethics and the guidelines of the World Medical Association and the Israeli Medical Association... Hassan also recounted having refused water for a several days until he was moved to Ramleh Prison medical clinic. Upon his arrival, he was beaten by prison guards, and the prison doctor refused to record the injuries sustained from the attack."

The hunger strikers are demanding an end to the practice of administrative detention, which refers to the Israeli policy of indefinitely imprisoning Palestinians without charge or trial. In addition, the hunger strikers are demanding an end to solitary confinement, the denial of family visits, and are requesting access to university education.

This mass hunger strike furthers the wave of resistance that began last December when Khader Adnan began his hunger strike on Dec. 17, 2011, to protest his ar-



Graphic: "latuff," [libcom.org](http://libcom.org)

rest and imprisonment in administrative detention. The Israeli authorities were forced to agree to release Adnan after mass solidarity protests began spreading across the world. Soon afterwards, on Feb. 16, 2012, Hana Shalabi began her hunger strike against her imprisonment in administrative detention and after 43 days Israel was forced to release her into the occupied territories.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Human Rights and Princeton University professor Richard Falk aptly points out that this hunger strike has received almost no attention in the corporate media. Instead, Falk writes, they seem to be obsessed with the plight of Chen Guangcheng, the blind Chinese human rights activist who recently escaped house detention in China. Falk blasts liberal columnists such as Thomas Friedman who have been for years using their privileged positions to preach non-violent resistance to the Palestinians and yet are now completely silent in the face of mass Palestinian non-violent resistance. In fact, as Falk points out, the *New York Times* did not even devote "one inch" of space to the hunger strikes until the 65th day of Thaer Halalheh and Bilal Diab's hunger strike.

The United States currently gives complete and unconditional military, economic, and diplomatic support to the Israeli government.

## Mass Land Occupations In Honduras

From [libcom.org](http://libcom.org)

Thousands of rural workers in Honduras have occupied land as part of a dispute with large landowners and the government.

The coordinated invasions took place in several locations across the country, activists and officials say.

Farmers groups say the areas taken over are public lands where poor farmers have the right to grow food under Honduran law.

The government said the seizures were illegal and targeted private holdings.

The director of the National Agrarian Institute, Cesar Ham, said the coordinated occupations were politically motivated and aimed at destabilizing the government of President Porfirio Lobo.

Violent disputes over farmland are



Photo: [libcom.org](http://libcom.org)

common in Honduras, with dozens of rural workers killed in recent years.

Organizations representing rural workers say successive governments have failed to fulfill promises to distribute farmland using agrarian reform legislation.

They also accuse the authorities of acting in the interests of large landowners.

With files from the BBC.

## Bangladeshi Labor Organizer Murdered

From the [Maquila Solidarity Network](http://Maquila Solidarity Network)

Aminul Islam, a trade union organizer for the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF) and a member of the Bangladeshi Center for Workers' Solidarity (BCWS), was found dead on April 5, 2012. Police pictures of his body suggest that Islam was tortured before being killed.

Islam became active in the Bangladeshi labor movement when he was elected Convenor of the Workers' Representative and Welfare Committee at Shasha Denim Ltd., a factory located in the Dhaka export processing zone. When he was fired due to his union activity, he became a full-time organizer with BCWS and BGIWF. Due to his organizing activities, Islam was threatened by gangsters working for garment factory owners.

Islam and two other leaders of the BCWS were previously detained and



beaten by police in June 2010. The BCWS provides support to workers in Bangladesh's apparel industry, but it has been stripped of its legal status, and its leaders have been subjected to numerous trumped-up charges for supposedly causing workers' unrest during the 2010 garment workers' campaign for a decent minimum wage. During Islam's previous arrest, police threatened to kill both he and his wife.

We at the Maquila Solidarity Network extend our heartfelt condolences to Islam's family and his colleagues at both BGIWF and BCWS. In the coming months, we will be working closely with Bangladeshi and international labor rights organizations to gain justice for this horrific act, as well as to ensure that labor rights advocates in Bangladesh are able to carry out their essential work without fearing for their lives.

## Support international solidarity!

Assessments for \$3 and \$6 are available from your delegate or IWW headquarters: PO Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

