The Practice of International Labor Solidarity and the Geography of the Global Economy
Author(s): Andrew Herod
Source: *Economic Geography*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Oct., 1995), pp. 341-363
Published by: Clark University
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/144422
Accessed: 03/08/2011 15:55

The Practice of International Labor Solidarity and the Geography of the Global Economy*

Andrew Herod

Department of Geography, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602

Abstract: Economic geographers have neglected the international activities of workers and working class organizations. Worker invisibility has been particularly evident in explanations of the geography of foreign direct investment. Yet for over a century workers have built international labor organizations which have shaped economic and political geographies. This paper examines an international campaign waged on behalf of some 1,700 members of United Steelworkers of America Local 5668 who were locked out of an aluminum smelter in Ravenswood, West Virginia on expiration of their contract in November 1990. The lockout was part of a company plan to break the local union and operate the smelter with a non-union work force. The paper analyzes how Local 5668 and its supporters built a global solidarity network which successfully forced a multibillion-dollar transnational metals trading corporation to reinstate the locked out union workers and sign a new contract. As the paper shows, workers clearly make economic geographies through their actions. Economic geographers should pay greater empirical and theoretical attention to this fact.

Key words: labor unions, foreign direct investment, United Steelworkers of America, international solidarity, global economy, corporate campaign, international trade secretariats, Marc Rich.

The idea of international solidarity, as good as it sounds, means nothing unless you can develop specific actions.

—Phillip Jennings, general secretary of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees

If we're going to be able to effectively challenge companies like Shell or Exxon or DuPont and other corporations which operate without regard to national boundaries, we have to redefine solidarity in global terms.

—Richard Trumka, international president of the United Mine Workers of America[1]

The imperatives of the global economy pose new challenges for workers and their organizations. In response to corporate strategies which seek to play workers in different parts of the globe against each other in a seemingly endless downward concessionary spiral, many workers have increasingly come to view "international labor solidar-

* I would like to thank the following individuals for providing me with information concerning the Ravenswood dispute: Dan Stidham, president of USWA Local 5668, Ravenswood, W.Va.; Joseph Uehlein, director of Special Projects, Industrial Union Department at the AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C.; Joe Chapman, staff representative, USWA District 23, Charleston, W.Va.; and Jane Mellow and Jennifer Frum from the Washington, D.C. office of U.S. Representative Robert E. Wise Jr. (D., WV), in whose district Ravenswood is located. Thanks to Kevin Cox, John Britton, Jessie Poon, three anonymous reviewers, and Richard Peet for comments on earlier drafts. Also, thanks to Paul Garver of the IUF (Geneva) for comments on the final version of the paper. Parts of this paper were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers held in Atlanta, Ga., 6–10 April 1993 and at the International Geographical Union Regional Conference held in Prague, Czech Republic, 22–26 August 1994.

[1] Jennings is quoted in "Ravenswood shows global potential" (1992, 2); Trumka is quoted in "NewsWatch" (1991, 4).

ity" as the sine qua non for trade unions to retain economic and political power in the face of globally organized capital. At their 1986 convention, for instance, members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) called for worldwide bargaining in the metals-fabricating industry. Several miners' unions—whose members in the United States, Canada, Britain, South Africa, Germany, and Australia account for some 72 percent of the coal sold on the international market—are currently exploring how they might coordinate international strikes against transnational coal producers (NewsWatch 1991). Electrical workers in the United States and Japan similarly are discussing the possibility of joint industrial action directed against their common employers (NewsWatch 1992).

Given the efforts made by some workers to develop ties across national frontiers, it seems remiss that economic geographers have paid scant attention to trade union activities in the international arena. Although they have analyzed in great depth the processes which have encouraged the internationalization of capital—be it in production (Taylor and Thrift 1982, 1985; Schoenberger 1985, 1990; Dicken 1986; Sayer 1986; Scott 1988; Mair, Florida, and Kenney 1988; Donaghu and Barff 1990), finance (Langdale 1985; Fryer 1987; Roberts 1995; Thrift 1987; Thrift and Leyshon 1991; Warf 1989), services (Daniels 1985; Marshall 1988; Daniels, Thrift, and Leyshon 1989), or retailing (Wrigley 1987, 1989; Hallsworth 1990, 1991)—few have examined the international activities of trade unions and other working class organizations. Instead, economic geographers typically have thought of organized labor in local, regional, or national terms, with a focus on workplace and community struggles (e.g., see Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Hudson and Sadler 1983, 1986; Clark 1989; Massey and Painter 1989; Jonas 1992; Martin, Sunley, and Wills 1993).

Some might argue that neglect of the transnational component to labor's activities is valid because there have been relatively few instances of international labor cooperation. Yet the empirical evidence does not support such a claim (for examples of recent international labor campaigns, see Moody 1988; Moberg 1989; Hecker and Hallock 1991; Bendiner 1987; for examples of earlier international cooperation between workers, see Schwantes 1979; van Holthoon and van der Linden 1988). The U.S. labor movement, for example, has a long history of operating in the international arena with respect both to pursuing its own agenda and in relation to U.S. foreign policy (Hardy 1936; Windmuller 1954; Heaps 1955; Morris 1967; Radosh 1969; Cox 1971; Larson 1975; Scott 1978; Spalding 1988; Barry and Preusch 1990; and Simms 1992). Rather, such neglect comes from economic geographers' historical focus on the activities of capital and the assumption implicit in much economic theory that working class people's activities are inconsequential for explaining the geography of global capitalism (in this regard see Herod 1995 for a critique of capital-centered notions of "globalization").

This paper seeks to address this empirical and theoretical lacuna by examining a global campaign waged by the USWA to defeat a corporate union-busting plan. Between November 1990 and June 1992, some 1,700 members of USWA Local 5668 were locked out of the Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation's metal-smelting facility in Ravenswood, West Virginia, in a contract dispute over work safety and pension issues. The plant itself is a subsidiary of a multibillion-dollar transnational metals trading corporation with headquarters in Switzerland, a fact that played a crucial role in shaping the union's response to the lockout. In particular, the Steelworkers' political strategy hinged on developing a well-articulated *global* network of support in opposition to the company's actions. This involved working closely with a number of international labor organizations, including several international trade secretariats (which represent workers in particular industries around the world) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The first part of the paper provides a critique of the literature on the geography of foreign direct investment (FDI) for its failure to conceive of labor as an active maker of global economic spaces. The second analyzes how local union members, the USWA International union, and the Industrial Union Department (IUD) at the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) built an international campaign that ultimately forced the aluminum company to reinstate the locked out Local 5668 union workers.[2] The concluding section draws on the case study to argue that analyses of the geography of the global economy need to pay greater attention to the international activities of workers and their institutions. A critical economic geography must focus not only on capital but also on how workers are remaking the economic landscapes of global capitalism.

Workerless Theories of the Geography of FDI

A sizable literature has emerged in geography and related fields which seeks to link the contemporary geography of economic restructuring, the growth of foreign direct investment (FDI), and the emergence of a new international division of labor. Typically, this literature suggests that the geography of international investment is to be explained primarily by examining the actions of transnational corporations and governments (e.g., concerning trade policy) (Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye 1980; see also Hymer 1960, 1971; Taylor and Thrift 1982, 1985; Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Dicken 1986; Jenkins 1987). There has been little analysis, however, of how workers shape the geography of international investment. Whereas corporations are theorized as powerful social agents whose actions have important consequences for the geography of the global economy, workers are invariably portrayed simply as the recipients of the economic and geographic transformations wrought by global capital. Such a marginalization of labor's role in the making of global economic spaces has a long heritage in economic theories about international investment patterns.

The Current Theory

Prior to the 1950s, no theory of FDI as such existed. Rather, analyses of the geography of international investment and production were derived largely from a fairly well developed body of theory on trade and a less well developed theory of capital movements (Dunning 1988). This work was primarily concerned with understanding patterns of trade and *indirect* (portfolio) investment wherein capital flows across international borders through the act of buying and selling stocks and bonds or as embodied in the value of traded commodities.[3] Drawing on the

[2] The IUD emerged out of the political struggles between George Meany, head of the American Federation of Labor, and Walter Reuther, head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, at the time of the 1955 merger between these two labor federations. As a condition of merger, Reuther insisted upon the establishment of a separate and financially autonomous organization (the IUD). This, he hoped, would not only prevent the AFL from getting its hands on the sizable treasury that he had built up but would also allow him to use the IUD to promote his goal of industry-wide bargaining coordinated through the national center, a goal that Meany opposed in the belief that the prerogative for bargaining should be left to individual AFL-CIO affiliates. While conceding the IUD's autonomy, Meany insisted that it be called a "Department" and be housed in the AFL-CIO building in Washington, D.C. to give the illusion of AFL-CIO control. Thus, although they often work fairly closely with one another, the IUD is financially autonomous from the AFL-CIO (Uehlein 1992).

[3] In contrast to portfolio investment, where institutions or individuals may acquire shares in overseas companies but do not participate in the management of such operations, foreign direct investment involves both ownership (part or full) and management of a foreign

writings of classical economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo and neoclassical economists such as Heckscher (1919), Ohlin (1933), and Samuelson (1948), international trade analyses essentially sought to explain commodity flows in terms of national endowments—or, to use Ricardo's term, countries' "comparative advantage"—in particular factors of production, especially capital and labor. For its part, capital theory suggested that the geography of foreign investment was largely shaped by differentials in interest rates.

The fact that labor productivity lies at the core of arguments about comparative advantage at first glance appears to locate workers centrally in such explanations. This is illusory, however. Paradoxically, although the notion of comparative advantage may hinge on labor productivity, workers themselves are not conceived as active social agents. There is no sense that they can engage in self-originated praxis to make global economic spaces in ways reflective of their own political and economic goals. Rather, workers are incorporated only in terms of how a nation's access to technology (i.e., capital) affects their productivity. Ultimately, capital availability, not workers, is theorized as the driving force orchestrating the production of global economic space. Workers' roles in making economic geographies are effectively marginalized. In the same vein, traditional capital theory's focus on interest rate differentials leaves little theoretical room to incorporate workers as engaged social agents in analyses of investment patterns.

Although prior to World War II the theory of comparative advantage may have been adequate (if problematic) for analyzing trade and capital flows between what were essentially still national economies, by the late 1950s this was no longer the case. Dramatic transformations in the postwar global economy, together with the growing availability of improved data, began to have significant implications for research into the geography of international investment. Many of those interested in trade patterns sought to introduce greater realism into their explanations, either by extending the basic Heckscher-Ohlin-Samuelson model to include elements such as a country's natural resource base and variations in the quality of factor inputs (the *neofactor* theorists) or by examining how the exclusive possession of certain resources gives strategic economic advantages in trade (the *neotechnology* theorists) (Hood and Young 1979).[4] Despite such conceptual refinements, however, the basic problems concerning the failure of these models to incorporate workers as active economic and political agents remained. The dramatic growth in FDI led many other researchers, however, to focus unprecedented attention on the power of transnational corporations to restructure the regional manufacturing geographies of the advanced capitalist countries, to shift production to underdeveloped countries and, in the process, to initiate a new international division of labor (Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye 1980). Yet, despite the insights into the functioning of the postwar global economy gained by focusing on transnational corporations, this new analytical avenue has also proven problematic with regard to conceptualizing workers as active geographic agents.

Several early analyses attempted to explain the investment patterns of transnational corporations by using international capital theory. These proved relatively fruitless, however, because FDI involves the transfer of resources other than just capital and many such resources are transferred internally within the transnational firm rather than externally between two independent entities in the way that neoclassical theory assumes (Dunning 1988). Instead, three new lines

---

subsidiary. FDI may also involve a joint-venture agreement with a firm that has a share in other overseas operations.

[4] Grimwade (1989) provides an overview of contemporary theories of international trade.

of inquiry were pursued. The first sought to apply industrial organization theory to the FDI practices of transnational corporations. This approach was largely derived from Hymer's (1976) argument that firms engage in direct production abroad as a means to maintain control over their foreign investments in ways not allowed by portfolio investment. It focused primarily on the characteristics of the corporations themselves rather than on the interest rate differentials which traditional capital theory said were the crucial determinants of the geography of overseas investment.[5] The second approach took industrial location theory, which traditionally had focused on the regional and national scale of economic activity, and applied it to the global scale. Two sets of related literature formed the basis of this effort. Work derived from Weber (1929) argued that transnational corporations would locate their overseas production units at least-cost locations, whereas explanations based on Losch's (1954) analyses suggested that transnational corporations' overseas investments were largely determined by the location of their markets and the extent to which these were served by competitors. These two literatures combined to yield an approach that maintained that corporations engaging in fairly labor-intensive manufacturing would tend to locate their overseas production units in low-wage regions of the world to save on production costs, whereas corporations whose products were fairly capital intensive would orient their FDI toward more-developed economies. The third line of inquiry tried to explain the geography of international trade and investment through recourse to changes in manufacturing and marketing characteristics associated with different stages in the product cycle (Vernon 1966, 1971, 1979; also Wells 1972; but see Schoenberger 1989 for a critique).

Such a focus on the actions of transnational corporations to explain the emergent geography of FDI was not confined to mainstream economic theory. During the 1970s and 1980s Marxist writers also became increasingly interested in the geography of FDI and sought to link the internationalization of production to the activities of transnational corporations (e.g., Hymer 1971; Radice 1975; Aglietta 1979; Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye 1980; Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Peet 1982, 1987; Bornschier and Chase-Dunn 1985). Essentially, the argument was that the pressure of increased international competition and falling profit rates was forcing corporations to look to underdeveloped countries as locations for overseas direct investment as part of a labor-cost-minimizing and/or labor-control-maximizing strategy. Although this cost-minimizing/control-maximizing representation has been criticized for failing to account for FDI into regions with high labor costs and relatively strong labor movements (Schoenberger 1988), neo-Marxist work has continued to examine primarily the activities of transnational corporations to explain the geography of FDI. More recently, this work has sought to theorize the apparent transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist mode of regulation and accumulation, suggesting that in some sectors and regions firms are beginning to reverse their earlier strategy of internalizing some economic relationships and are now re-externalizing them as a means to achieve organizational flexibility in an era of increased global competition. In turn, this shift toward a more flexible system of production is initiating a restructuring of the social and spatial division of labor at

[5] Hymer's work made a crucial distinction between portfolio and direct investment, which by-and-large had not previously existed in the literature (Hennart 1982). In essence, he and others took existing organization theory and extended it internationally to show that, by exploiting economies of scale and organizational, accounting, marketing, managerial, and other skills, transnational corporations could enjoy considerable advantages over indigenous firms in the foreign regions where they operated and could even use their oligopolistic status to actually diminish competition from such firms.

all geographic scales (Piore and Sabel 1984; Lipietz 1986; Storper and Christopherson 1987; Scott 1988; Harvey 1988; Schoenberger 1988; Storper and Scott 1989; McDowell 1991).

Genesis of a Critique: Where Are the Workers?

The theoretical approaches adopted by economists and economic geographers since the 1960s provide many useful insights for understanding the geography of international investment and patterns of contemporary global economic restructuring. However, the literature is problematic for the way it fails to incorporate workers as active participants in the making of the geography of the global economy. At least three specific problems may be identified.

First, the overwhelming emphasis in the literature has been on capital as the producer of industrial landscapes in the global economy. It is to the actions of transnational corporations that we must turn, this literature suggests, if we are to explain the geography of international investment and economic restructuring. Workers, on the other hand, have been rendered invisible and relegated to the status of little more than an afterthought in conceptualizing the making of economic landscapes. There is little sense in this literature that workers are themselves capable of proactively shaping global economic landscapes through their direct intervention in the geography of capitalism. They are portrayed as the bearers of global economic restructuring, not as active participants in the process. Workers are incorporated in explanations of investment patterns not in terms of how they actively shape the making of the global economic landscape through their political and social practices but, instead, in the taxonomic terms of how their productivity, militancy, rates of unionization, and so forth inform *corporate* decision-making processes. In effect, their capacity as creative, sentient social actors capable of producing global economic spaces is denied. Although work on the geography of FDI allows that certain characteristics of the labor force in different parts of the world may play important roles in influencing corporate investment decisions, the point is that it is *capital*, and not labor, that is theorized as the *active* agent structuring the economic landscape in the first instance through the choices of location capitalists make.

Not all such work has been so dismissive of labor. Storper and Walker (1983), for instance, have argued that labor should be accorded a much greater role in explanations of industrial location. Yet even these authors are not really concerned with examining how the spatial strategies and practices of workers shape the production of economic spaces but, instead, argue merely that the characteristics of particular groups of workers are much more important in a *firm*'s decision-making process than earlier locational analysis models suggested. Equally, Peet's (1983) analysis of the geography of class struggle in the United States essentially shows how corporations have either left or avoided regions of militant labor when choosing investment locations, rather than how workers themselves *directly* make economic geographies.

Second, and related to the first problem, much of the literature on contemporary global economic restructuring tends to assume a priori that capital can act globally but that workers and their organizations are condemned to operate at subglobal scales (national, regional, local). Corporations are seen as capable of pursuing their interests with little concern for national boundaries, whereas workers are assumed to be hopelessly divided by their varying national interests, the constraints of nationally imposed labor laws, differences in language and culture, geographic distances between workers located in various parts of the globe, and so forth. Although it is believed that workers can often exert quite considerable local or even national power, there is little faith that they can do so globally—witness, for instance, the admonition now so popular among many on the left to "think globally" yet to "act locally."[6] Reserving the global scale of action for capital in such a way, however, is problematic. Empirically, it ignores the long history of trade unions' international activities (Busch 1983; Bendiner 1987; van Holthoon and van der Linden 1988). Theoretically, it denies workers their agency by assuming that they are incapable of creating structures which will allow them to operate globally. In the process it naturalizes rather than explains the creation of the global scale of economic activity because it fails to recognize that geographic scales, like geographic spaces, are actively created social structures (cf. Smith 1984; Smith and Dennis 1987; Herod 1991, 1992). Corporations have not simply colonized some preexisting global scale. Rather, they have actively created the global scale of economic relations through their actions. Yet they have not been the sole agents bringing about the globalization of economic relations. Workers have also played significant roles in this process, as illustrated, for example, by the AFL's international activities and its encouragement of U.S. capital's expansion into Latin America during the twentieth century (see Herod 1995 for more on this) and the integration of various national economies brought about by the international flows of migrant workers. To assume that only capital can act globally is not only to neglect labor's agency but, ultimately, it is to conceive of the world undialectically, for it leaves capital as the sole actor on the global stage.

Politically, reserving the global scale for capital is problematic because it bolsters corporate arguments that relatively immobile nationally or locally organized workers can always be played against each other by an increasingly hypermobile *globally* organized capital. The conclusion one might draw from this assessment is that workers' best hope for the future, then, is to engage in concessionary bargaining to encourage corporations to choose their communities over others as recipients of investment. In essence, such an argument equates immobility with powerlessness. As the historical record clearly shows, however, relatively immobile workers have often been able to make common cause with similarly immobile workers located perhaps several thousand miles away. Indeed, this ability lies at the very heart of the practice of labor solidarity, a practice fundamentally concerned with overcoming geographic barriers to unified action by workers.[7] Certainly, seeking to expand links between workers internationally raises different sets of issues and concerns than do national or regional labor campaigns. Yet there is no reason to believe that the proliferation of fax machines, electronic mail, and other high-tech telecommunications devices which corporations use to coordinate their operations internationally cannot also make it easier for workers to communicate more effectively across national frontiers. Indeed, one trade secretariat—the International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers' Unions (ICEF)—has already established an electronic mail computer system to track and disseminate information concerning corporations' current operations and proposed investments, information which has been used successfully in several contract negotiations and disputes. Other labor organizations are doing likewise (Labor in cyberspace 1994).

[6] Thanks to Neil Smith for bringing this example to my attention.

[7] In the United States this geographic nature of solidarity was explicitly recognized by corporate interests and their political allies when they successfully pushed for the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, which, among other things, prohibited secondary boycotts—that is to say, industrial action by one group of workers designed to aid other workers engaged in a dispute with an employer elsewhere (cf. Herod 1991).

Third, much has been made recently in geography and other disciplines about the power of language to structure our understandings of the world. The choice of language in much of the literature on economic restructuring and FDI has significant implications for understanding and theorizing patterns of international investment. The myriad studies which theorize workers as just another "factor" in the calculus of location, no different from power supplies or natural resources, effectively make workers invisible in explanations of the operation of the global economy and deny them their sentience and capacity for praxis. Equally, those which refer to workers' various attributes and skills in terms of "human capital" reinforce labor's theoretical invisibility, for they treat workers not as proactive agents capable of making landscapes in their own right but, rather, as simply an aspect of capital. Such language effectively collapses workers' geographic agency into that of capital. As a result, there is little conceptual impetus for seriously considering how workers themselves make economic spaces. In such a reductionist world, everything becomes an aspect of capital and so only capital's activities need be theorized. Workers' agency, on the other hand, is ignored.

The use of such terminology in economic theory takes on grave political and theoretical implications. It is only a small step from ignoring workers' agency to implying that their actions are inconsequential in the making of global economic landscapes and that, therefore, there is little point in them struggling to confront the power of globally organized capital. However, as the following case study illustrates, despite their invisibility in the literature workers are indeed capable of confronting and beating globally organized capital "on the ground." This suggests a need to more fully incorporate workers as active geographic agents in accounts of the operation of the global economy and the geography of capitalism.

Workers as Global Actors: The Steelworkers' Corporate Campaign

For some 30 years the Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation plant near Ravenswood, West Virginia operated with only one work-related fatality. In 1988 Kaiser Aluminum was acquired by Maxxam Inc. in a heavily leveraged takeover (Mutual convenience 1990). A year later, in an effort to reduce its debt, Maxxam sold the Ravenswood plant to a consortium known as the Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation (RAC), a company formed for the purpose of acquiring the facility by Charles Bradley of Stanwich Partners Inc., a group of international investors. Almost immediately RAC management instigated new work rules and a speedup of production, dissolved joint management-union safety programs, and combined several employment categories to eliminate nearly a hundred jobs (Stidham 1992). During the following 18 months five workers were killed and several others injured in accidents at the plant. According to the AFL-CIO, this represented the worst accident record of any U.S. metals-processing facility (Ravenswood steelworkers get international support 1991). The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) calculated that lost work-day injuries at Ravenswood ran six times higher than the national average for manufacturing facilities and over three times the rate for aluminum smelters (Ravenswood fined $600,000 on safety 1991). Although RAC maintained the deaths were not the result of company negligence, the plant's USWA Local 5668 determined to make workplace safety a major issue in negotiations for the new contract, scheduled to take effect in November 1990. Local members also resolved to defend the union's pension formula, which the company intimated it wished to change.

For RAC, a fight over these contract issues promised to be long. Local 5668 has a history of militancy, having voted against ratification of every concessionary contract negotiated throughout the 11-plant Kaiser chain during the 1980s.

Indeed, it was only the acceptance of the companywide agreement by a majority of Kaiser's USWA members that had ultimately forced Ravenswood workers to concede give-backs. However, the recent purchase of the plant by RAC augured a new era of labor relations. The 1990 contract would be the Local's first independently negotiated agreement. With the Local no longer obliged to follow the prescriptions of a national Kaiser contract, the plant's owners could no longer count on the willingness of the USWA's wider membership to concede give-backs to temper Local 5668's militancy.[8] For several weeks before the old contract expired on 31 October, the company spent some $1.5 million fortifying the plant, hiring "security" guards, and advertising for "replacement workers." When the contract deadline passed without resolution, company guards escorted the union workers out of one end of the plant while bringing their non-union replacements in at the other. Whereas the company maintained the Local had failed to negotiate in good faith and that this was a strike, USWA officials said the company had locked them out to break the union.

During its first two months the dispute was essentially a local affair, as union officials and RAC management excoriated each other in the local media. However, both the International union and the AFL-CIO soon began to get more deeply involved in the Ravenswood dispute. For the AFL-CIO the dispute had quickly come to epitomize the weakness of unions in the face of U.S. labor law. During the union-busting drives of the 1980s companies frequently made use of a 1938 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allows an employer to hire permanent replacement workers during a dispute over "economic" issues (*National Labor Relations Board v. Mackay Radio and Telegraph Co.*, 304 U.S. 333). RAC's use of replacement workers came at the very time the AFL-CIO was gearing up for a major campaign to seek federal legislation outlawing such activities.[9] The AFL-CIO therefore determined to make the Ravenswood unionists a cause célèbre, a tactic that would require throwing its full weight behind the Local. For its part, the USWA's International office in Pittsburgh felt the plant management had become entrenched in its bargaining position and believed the union needed to expand the geographic scale of the dispute if there was to be any hope of settling the new contract favorably. The involvement of the International office appeared the best way to do this (Chapman 1992).

In December 1990, as International representatives were outlining plans for stepping up their campaign, a copy of an internal RAC audit conducted by the Price Waterhouse accounting firm arrived anonymously at Local 5668's union hall. This was a crucial event, for the document identified a number of RAC's creditors who had helped finance the plant's 1989 purchase. Sensing the significance of this information, Local officials passed the document on to the International union, which in turn informed AFL-CIO headquarters. At this point the AFL-CIO assigned one of its research staff to look more closely into the RAC purchase, while IUD Director of

[8] Unions often seek to develop national agreements as a means of equalizing conditions between plants and so of reducing the potential for concessionary whipsawing. Consequently, during the past two decades many companies have vigorously attempted to break up such master contracts (Herod 1991). This policy may have unintended consequences, however, for the destruction of master contracts also has the potential to free more-militant local unions from the constraints of concessionary national agreements and may allow them independently to pursue more confrontational labor relations with particular employers.

[9] Legislation in the form of a Workplace Fairness bill was introduced to the U.S. Congress in 1991 and 1993 to prevent the use of replacement workers during a strike. On both occasions the bill fell victim to Republican-led filibusters in the Senate.

Special Projects Joe Uehlein (who had been called in by USWA International Vice President George Becker) accessed the ICEF trade secretariat's computerized corporate data base for information about the companies listed in the audit (Uehlein 1992).[10] As the USWA, the IUD, and the AFL-CIO began in the first months of 1991 to investigate RAC and the circumstances surrounding the plant's purchase, they unraveled a complex web of corporate connections which seemed to tie the 1,700 Ravenswood workers directly into the operations of a multibillion-dollar transnational corporation with truly global reach. Their research revealed that some six months after his February 1989 purchase of the plant Bradley had divided ownership of RAC with several other investors. Retaining 20 percent for himself, he sold 27 percent of the company to local investor R. Emmett Boyle (who had subsequently been made CEO), 5 percent to local plant managers, and the remaining 48 percent to Rinoman Investments B.V., a Dutch company wholly owned and controlled by international investor Willy Strothotte. Delving more deeply into Rinoman, the union researchers mapped a trail of corporate ownership that appeared to lead from Ravenswood, West Virginia to the financial hub of Zug, Switzerland and, specifically, to global commodities trader Marc Rich. Whereas the Steelworkers believed ownership in RAC to be personal for Boyle and Bradley, they became convinced that Strothotte's participation in the deal through his Rinoman Investments was merely a front for Rich and his group of companies (USWA 1991).

Marc Rich and the International Connection

Through his various investments Marc Rich controls a global financial organization with operations in more than 40 countries. His companies are estimated to trade in excess of $30 billion worth of commodities annually. In 1983 Rich, his U.S. operating arm "Marc Rich and Co. International A.G.," and a business partner were indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice on 65 counts of tax fraud and racketeering, charges stemming from their alleged rigging of an illegal oil-pricing scheme, failure to pay at least $96 million in taxes, mail and wire fraud, and breaking the U.S. embargo on trading in Iranian oil (for more on Rich's business dealings, see Copetas 1985; Mutual convenience 1990; Making Marc Rich squirm 1991; Smoking out Marc Rich 1992). In an attempt to make his legal problems go away, Rich sold 51 percent of the company to an unindicted partner. Retaining 49 percent ownership, he then renamed the company Clarendon Ltd. and installed his old friend Strothotte as company president (Who aided fugitive's mint biz? 1991). Rich himself fled to Switzerland to avoid a possible 325-year jail sentence on criminal charges stemming from the indictments. These organizational changes were more cosmetic than substantial, however, for Clarendon continued to employ the same traders and financial experts as had Marc Rich International, retained almost entirely the same board of directors, and even used the same telephone numbers and addresses. The only major change was that Rich and his indicted partner were no longer listed as company directors (Copetas 1985). Although a federal judge called this shuffling of corporate ownership simply a "ploy" to legally distance Rich from his U.S. operations, it was enough to allow Clarendon to continue operating in the United States and to expand aggressively into the aluminum-smelting industry worldwide, to the extent that by the early 1990s the company controlled more than one-third of the global independent primary aluminum and bauxite market (Smoking out Marc Rich 1992).

The fact that Strothotte was the president of Clarendon was certainly an indica-

[10] The IUD and the ICEF have very close links. In 1987 the IUD was designated as the ICEF's North American operational center (Uehlein 1989). Uehlein's research provided several hundred pages of computer printout concerning these companies.

tion to the USWA that events in Ravenswood might be connected to Marc Rich. However, several other leads and corporate links provided clues to suggest the identity of the powers ultimately behind events at RAC. The Steelworkers' research showed that the plant's leveraged buyout was partly financed by a $260 million loan from Ridgeway Commercial (a Swiss affiliate of Clarendon) and by $140 million worth of revolving credit provided by Amsterdam's Nederlandsche Middenstandsbank (NMB), a bank that regularly does business with the Rich group of companies (Why the world is closing in on the U.S. economy 1991). Furthermore, Clarendon's president Strothotte is a co-owner of Oralco Management Services, the company responsible for managing the Ravenswood plant and several other operations allegedly indirectly controlled by Rich (Mutual convenience 1990). Clarendon also supplied RAC with most of the bauxite used in the smelting operation and purchased large quantities of the finished aluminum. Finally, the law firm that handled Bradley's purchase of the plant considers itself Marc Rich's general counsel (Horne 1991). Although the USWA was willing to concede that the maze of corporate ownership, holding companies, dummy corporations, and secret partnerships made it difficult to prove conclusively that Rich was a part-owner of the plant, they argued that there was certainly more than sufficient circumstantial evidence to indicate he had been involved in the RAC buyout. Having become convinced that RAC was indeed part of the financial octopus that is Marc Rich's global commodities trading empire, the Steelworkers shifted the focus of their campaign from Boyle and the local plant management to Rich. The key to settling the dispute, they believed, now lay in identifying Rich's vulnerabilities and seeking to exploit them internationally.

Elements of the Campaign

The Steelworkers devised a five-pronged domestic and international campaign to pressure Rich and his confederates (Chapman 1992). First, the International union pursued the labor law aspect of the dispute with the National Labor Relations Board, because a favorable ruling that the dispute was a lockout rather than a strike would greatly strengthen the legal basis of the union's campaign. Second, it investigated the health, safety, and environmental aspects of the dispute with OSHA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. At the behest of the IUD and the union, OSHA officials conducted several inspections of the plant during 1991, ultimately imposing $604,500 in penalties for 231 safety violations (USWA n.d.). The USWA and the IUD used this litigation to pressure several of RAC's creditors to reassess their support for the company (Uehlein 1992). Third, Local 5668 members and supporters engaged in morale-boosting activities to maintain the locked out workers' resolve in the face of what would ultimately be a lengthy dispute. They also conducted informational picketing at the company's corporate offices in Connecticut, at the New York Stock Exchange, and at several university campuses and state capitols.

Fourth, under the auspices of the AFL-CIO's Stategic Approaches Committee, the International union initiated a boycott campaign to pressure over 300 end-users to stop buying RAC metal or face the consequences of a national consumer boycott (Chapman 1992). The USWA also persuaded a U.S. House subcommittee to investigate why the Mint had recently bought some $25 million worth of metal for coinage from Clarendon (U.S. Mint makes Marc Rich richer 1992). Fifth, the Steelworkers developed the international component of the dispute by stressing the links between Rich and RAC. As Jarley and Maranto (1990) note, trade unions considering corporate campaigns to settle a labor dispute may adopt a number of different strategies. One such strategy involves escalating a campaign by alleging the company is a corporate outlaw, thereby potentially damaging its public image and encouraging government examination of its affairs. This became a crucial component of the union's international campaign against Rich. The Steelworkers surmised Rich was eager to ward off such unwanted government intrusion for two reasons (Uehlein 1992). On a personal level, interest in his business activities might jeopardize any possibility of negotiating a settlement with the Department of Justice that would allow him to return to the United States and yet avoid imprisonment on the outstanding criminal charges he faced. Of greater significance, however, was the belief that by drawing attention to Rich's nefarious past and his links to the RAC dispute the USWA could disrupt his international operations and so financially hurt him that he would use his influence with Strothotte and others to settle the dispute.

Having conducted their analysis of Rich's known holdings, by mid-1991 the IUD and the Steelworkers were ready to put the international element of the campaign into operation. In June 1991 a delegation of IUD and USWA representatives traveled to Switzerland. Through the medium of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) and the ICEF trade secretariats, the U.S. delegation persuaded the Swiss metalworkers' union to organize several press conferences to lobby the Swiss parliament concerning its latent support for Rich and other such corporate operators. Uehlein's links to the ICEF also enabled him to contact the Dutch bankworkers' union and arrange, through them, a meeting with officials of the Nederlandsche Middenstandsbank (NMB), which had helped finance the original RAC purchase. This was a particularly important meeting because some weeks previously Boyle had announced his intention to buy out his partners using loans from the NMB. At their meeting with the bank's directors the U.S. unionists presented information showing that RAC's liability for fines and back pay, should the courts rule the dispute an illegal lockout, would leave the company in poor financial condition and suggested that loaning money to Boyle might be a risky proposition for the bank. Indeed, Boyle's buyout of his partners was never completed as a result, the USWA claimed, of the pressure the union had brought to bear, which "so embroiled [the NMB] in the dispute that they cut [him] off" (Uehlein 1992).

During the latter part of 1991 the U.S. union representatives returned to Europe periodically to develop further contacts with trade unionists and other sympathizers. In October, while leafletting at the London Metals Exchange, they learned that Rich was attempting to purchase a Czechoslovakian aluminum company and even had a signed letter of intent to do so. Working through the IMF, the USWA made contact with the Czechoslovakian metalworkers' union to devise a strategy that would disrupt Rich's plans. The pressure subsequently mounted by the USWA through diplomatic channels in Washington, D.C. and by the Czechoslovakian unionists was sufficient to persuade President Vaclav Havel to personally intervene to prevent the purchase (Elements of victory 1992; How the USW hit Marc Rich where it hurts 1992; Moberg 1992). Despite successfully foiling Rich's plans to expand his metal-smelting operations into Czechoslovakia, however, the difficulty of organizing mass demonstrations and other activities an ocean away, combined with the enormity of the corporation with which they were dealing, convinced the USWA and the IUD that they needed to maintain a permanent presence in Europe (Uehlein 1992). The establishment in December 1991 of a European office to coordinate anti-RAC and anti-Rich activities on a day-to-day basis enabled the Steelworkers to pursue the international aspect of their campaign more vigorously than had previously been possible.

For Rich, the apparent demise of Soviet Communism held the possibility of new investment opportunities in Eastern Europe. Through their research the USWA and the IUD were able to identify several pending deals involving the Rich group of companies. Working through various trade secretariats, the Steelworkers' European coordinator made contact with a number of national labor federations and individual trade unions in the region. This geographic expansion of the USWA's corporate campaign allowed the union and its supporters to disrupt Rich's plans to pursue several business openings, as well as generally to harass his operations throughout the continent. The International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations secretariat (IUF), for instance, organized a rally of some 20,000 trade unionists to protest Rich's proposed acquisition of the Athenee Palace Hotel in Bucharest, Romania, a rally which, the USWA claimed, was instrumental in forcing Rich to give up his designs on the hotel (Elements of victory 1992). Events in support of the locked out Ravenswood workers were also staged in several other Eastern European countries, including Bulgaria and Russia.

Eastern Europe was the primary focus of this aspect of the campaign because it was there that Rich most aggressively sought to expand his operations. However, the USWA did not confine its activities solely to the former Soviet bloc. The Steelworkers were also active in Latin America and the Caribbean, locations where Rich has numerous investments and controls large reserves of bauxite, oil, and other commodities. The IUD contacted Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, who earlier in his life had worked with the USWA as a union organizer in the country's bauxite mines (for more on the USWA's role in organizing Jamaica's bauxite industry, see Harrod 1972). Manley had himself made Rich's control of Jamaica's natural resources an issue in his 1989 electoral campaign (see Smoking out Marc Rich 1992). At the USWA's urging Manley lobbied representatives of the Venezuelan government, where Rich had a deal pending. Simultaneously, working through the IMF, the ICEF, and several other trade secretariats, the USWA contacted trade unionists in Venezuela, who brought political pressure to bear on their government. The USWA also presented its case to the March 1992 convention of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and briefed representatives of the Confederation's Inter-American Regional Organization, who resolved to disrupt Rich's operations throughout Latin America.[11] Although Rich had been one of three final bidders on an aluminum deal, the protests organized on behalf of the Ravenswood workers and the light shed on Rich's business practices were sufficient to have him publicly dismissed from the bidding process by President Carlos Andres Perez (Uehlein 1992).

The End in Sight

By the spring of 1992 the Steelworkers had organized sustained anti-Rich activities in 28 countries on five continents (Uehlein 1992). Meanwhile, the domestic end-user campaign had persuaded many RAC customers to cease purchasing aluminum from the company. This forced RAC to reduce production from some 24,500 tonnes per month before the lockout to 15,600 tonnes and helped shrink its revenues from $701 million in 1989 to $491 million in 1991, leading the company to default on $71 million in loans (RAC 1992; Ravenswood buyers quit scab product 1992; How the USW hit Marc Rich where it hurts 1992). Although Rich continued to deny involvement with RAC, by April 1992 the global campaign and the effects of the RAC boycott seemed, finally, to yield results for the locked out unionists. Facing the possibility the dispute might drag on indefinitely in the face of the USWA's corporate campaign and concerned about the financial losses this implied for RAC, Strothotte finally moved to end the lockout. Seizing control of the Board of Directors, he fired

[11] In contrast to the various trade secretariats made up of unions operating in the same industries, the ICFTU's membership is constituted by the national trade union centers of member countries' labor movements (see Sturmthal 1950; Windmuller 1954; and Busch 1983 for more details).

Boyle and ordered RAC management to resume contract negotiations with the USWA. During the next few weeks the details of a new contract were worked out, perhaps the most important provisions of which included the return to work of Local 5668 members with full seniority, the dismissal of the replacement workers, a strong union successorship clause, and wage and pension increases (USWA 1992). For its part, the Local agreed to allow the company to combine some work classifications, with the result that approximately 200 jobs were scheduled to be lost, mostly through attrition (Stidham 1992). The union membership overwhelmingly approved the new three-year contract, and on 29 June 1992, almost 20 months after they were locked out, Local 5668 members returned to work (see Table 1 for a timeline of the most significant events during the dispute).

International Trade Union Activities and the Geography of the Global Economy

Lessons from Ravenswood

Much has been made in recent literature (e.g., Shostak 1991) about the need for unions to constantly adapt their modes of operating to meet new political and economic challenges. Arguably, one of the greatest contemporary challenges that workers and their institutions now face is the internationalization of production and the globalization of the world economy. Although they encountered numerous difficulties, Local 5668 members and their supporters were able to confront this challenge by constructing an effective global solidarity campaign to ensure that the Ravenswood plant remained unionized. Their success provides some useful lessons for workers contemplating similar campaigns against transnational corporations.

Clearly, several aspects of the case study are specific to Ravenswood. For one, Marc Rich made an easy target for the locked out workers to vilify, which arguably strengthened their resolve to continue their corporate campaign against RAC. Many Local 5668 members conceived of the lockout as a personal battle of wills between Rich and themselves. In cases where workers are unable to personalize a dispute in this manner, organizing for action may prove considerably more difficult, especially when a company is successful in portraying its actions in taken-for-granted terms (e.g., "market forces") which are often accepted more readily as legitimate by those affected than are the actions of particular, clearly identifiable corporate officials who can be labeled as malevolent. The Ravenswood workers were also fortunate to receive considerable financial support from their International union (to the tune of some $11.5 million) and elsewhere, support not always available to workers in similar situations. Furthermore, workers were able to draw on a powerful sense of place and community based upon work and personal relationships built up over many years to sustain themselves throughout the length of the lockout in ways which less stable work forces are perhaps not so easily able to do.[12] So deep was this sense of identity that during the year and a half long dispute only 17, mostly younger, union members crossed the picket line to return to work. Finally, they were extremely fortunate to receive anonymously a copy of the Price Waterhouse report detailing much of RAC's corporate structure, which made the process of tracing the geography of ownership much easier.

Several broader insights may also be drawn from the Ravenswood campaign. One of the most significant concerns the politics of coalition building. Community coalition building is often seen as being of paramount importance in organizing against a plant shutdown or efforts to bust a union. Indeed, Haas and the Plant Closures Project (1985, 35) have suggested that a broad community-labor coalition is "the single most important weapon against shut-

[12] The "average" worker was 52 years old and had worked for 24 years at the plant.

Table 1

Key Events in the Ravenswood Dispute

25 September 1990	Negotiations for new contract begin. RAC and USWA exchange contract proposals.
31 October 1990	RAC demands acceptance of the company's final offer; USWA counters and proposes extending current contract. RAC rejects extension, locks Local 5668 members out, and brings in replacement workers.
21 December 1990	West Virginia State Board of Review rules dispute a lockout and awards workers unemployment compensation.
11 March 1991	USWA initiates domestic consumer boycott campaign under auspices of AFL-CIO's Strategic Approaches Committee.
28 April 1991	7,000 supporters of Local 5668 gather in Ravenswood for Workers Memorial Day observance for 5 workers killed on the job at RAC.
23 June 1991	Local 5668 Negotiating Committee and IUD/AFL-CIO representatives make first trip to Europe to gather international support.
28 August 1991	Strohs Brewing Company notifies USWA it will stop using RAC aluminum.
23 September 1991	USWA and NLRB lawyers present evidence to Administrative Law Judge that RAC illegally replaced Local 5668 members.
December 1991	Establishment of European office to coordinate anti-Rich activities.
4 December 1991	U.S. House Government Operations Subcommittee opens hearings on Mint contracts awarded to Clarendon.
21 January 1992	Anheuser-Busch notifies USWA it will stop using RAC aluminum.
28 January 1992	USWA members return to Europe. Demonstration subsequently organized outside Rich's corporate headquarters in Zug, Switzerland.
4 February 1992	Miller Brewing Company notifies USWA it will stop using RAC aluminum.
14 February 1992	International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations trade secretariat organizes anti-Rich demonstration in Bucharest.
16–19 March 1992	USWA briefs representatives of the Inter-American Regional Organization (ORIT) of the ICFTU on Rich's Caribbean and South American operations.
11 April 1992	Strothotte gains control of RAC Board of Directors; subsequently fires Boyle.
29 April 1992	Negotiations begin for new union contract.
27 May 1992	Tentative agreement reached.
29 June 1992	Local 5668 workers return to work.

Source: USWA (1992).

downs." However, in such cases a spatially parochial notion of "community" is frequently adopted, one that defines community in terms of the boundaries of the particular locality itself. In effect, such a narrowly conceived vision of working class community can isolate those opposing a shutdown because it confines action to only one geographic scale (i.e., the scale of the locality). In the Ravenswood lockout, however, workers successfully extended their understanding of community to operate on a number of different scales. By expanding the scale of conflict geographically they were able to draw upon social resources which would not otherwise have been available to them and which provided a greatly enlarged resource base for mobilizing against RAC (cf. McCarthy and Mayer (1977), who have argued that access to resources is a crucial determinant of social movements' abilities to organize). Equally, activities at different scales reinforced each other. Whereas the Local union members' resolve to remain on the picket line proved crucial for securing the time necessary to implement the global campaign, the influx of money, information, and emotional support from outside Ravenswood provided essential resources to sustain the locked out workers throughout the lengthy dispute. In addition, expanding the conflict beyond the confines of Ravenswood allowed the Steelworkers to draw into the dispute and pressure high-level corporate officials (Rich, Strothotte) who "didn't want to get their hands dirty with this stuff" (Uehlein 1992).

A key part of efforts to expand the campaign geographically was the ability of the Steelworkers and the IUD to determine how RAC was organized and how the Ravenswood plant fitted into a larger corporate structure. Although they were indeed fortunate to gain access to the Price Waterhouse audit, the Steelworkers also gleaned much information from the ICEF's corporate data base. Such research proved crucial to settling the dispute. As Joe Uehlein (1992) commented, "It's very difficult to trace ultimately ownership and you have to be willing to go overseas to do research and network and get unions to help you. It's hard and it takes operating beyond the ordinary means but it's clear that information feeds action. Without the information you don't know where to best hit or what kind of actions to organize. So you have to have the information. It's first the investigation, then the strategy, then the tactics." Workers fighting corporate union-busting plans or shutdowns clearly need to generate and communicate up-to-date information, particularly in an era of widespread acquisitions and mergers. Given the nature of the global economy, the data bases maintained by a number of international trade secretariats (ITSs) will undoubtedly play increasingly important roles in future solidarity campaigns.

Having conducted their research, the Steelworkers also had to get their story out. Once again, they adopted a number of unconventional methods to do so. Certainly, mainstream media have traditionally provided outlets for unions and workers to inform a wider audience about particular labor disputes. There are problems associated with this approach, however, for it can result in unions becoming hostage to corporate-controlled media, in which hostile editors, writers, reporters, and owners might distort, or even subvert, their message (Puette 1992). Thus, although they made extensive use of mainstream media, together with several labor newspapers, the Steelworkers also used electronic mail systems to inform workers and supporters around the globe directly about the campaign and to solicit information about Rich. Although this is a relatively new tactic for trade unions, several have recognized the value of such technology and are in the process of setting up systems as a means of directly and quickly informing workers around the world about disputes, contract bargaining, and so forth (Labor in cyberspace 1994).

Finally, Joe Uehlein of the IUD worried that the boycott may actually have been *too* successful, because it left RAC "a heavily damaged company and now we have to get customers back and perhaps we'd be better off had we not destroyed their customer base." Upon reflection, he suggested that a more effective strategy would have been to "escalate much more quickly on the international front . . . and downplay the boycott somewhat." For Uehlein it was the "Marc Rich piece which gave us our avenue for settlement . . . This thing was won on the coordinated campaign and that's the key. It's beyond the picket line solely. It's the action which you engage in to pressure [the high corporate officials] that's key" (Uehlein 1992). Such reflections suggest that to be successful workers need to be willing not only to coordinate activities internationally but to do so sooner rather than later.

Trade Unions and the Making of the Global Economy

The campaign's success raises the issue of how trade unions and other working class organizations are shaping the geography of the global economy. Historically, the task of confronting the activities of transnational corporations has primarily been taken up internationally by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and its associated international trade secretariats.[13] Since the early 1970s

[13] A number of other bodies serve to protect workers' interests internationally (e.g., the United Nations' International Labour Organisation). However, the ICFTU and the trade secretariats are the two most important sets of global organizations made up solely of trade unions—the ILO, for instance, also contains

the ICFTU has generally concerned itself with the legislative struggle for greater public controls to regulate corporate activities, while the trade secretariats have primarily taken on the task of furthering workers' interests inside the transnationals.

International labor organizations clearly face many problems in trying to coordinate global campaigns against transnational corporations. For example, while for North American and Western European workers the growth of global assembly lines has usually meant job loss, for those workers in less-developed countries (LDCs) and/or newly industrializing countries (NICs) it has often meant increased investment by transnational corporations. Additionally, in many LDCs and NICs the issue of ensuring the right to organize in the face of authoritarian regimes is frequently foremost in workers' minds, in contrast to those in many of the advanced capitalist countries who are often more concerned with wage rates and job security. Equally, having to confront a diverse set of labor laws in the countries of their various affiliates poses problems with regard to implementing uniform international labor policies. Furthermore, not all workers employed by such transnational corporations are necessarily members of unions represented by trade secretariats or, for that matter, members of any union at all. Nevertheless, for the past three decades the trade secretariats have pursued a number of policies designed to bolster workers' political and economic leverage in their direct dealings with globally organized capital.

Four elements have dominated the concerns of the IMF and the ICEF, which have been the most active secretariats. First, they have attempted to coordinate some collective bargaining activities across national boundaries. Although the bureaucratic impulse among various secretariats means they are sometimes slow to act, they have nevertheless successfully conducted a number of international activities to pressure recalcitrant corporations when an impasse has been reached by an ITS affiliate in its collective bargaining, including organizing boycotts, cessation of overtime work in sympathy, providing financial support, and implementing negative publicity campaigns against the company (Cox 1971; Bendiner 1987; Moody 1988). The IMF has pioneered the concept of world industry councils as permanent structures to help coordinate international bargaining by providing information and resources to aid in strikes and other activities for promoting international solidarity. Initially four such councils were established in 1966 to coordinate negotiations in the auto industry with Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, and Volkswagen, but have subsequently been extended to other auto producers and to other industries, including mechanical engineering, electronics, and metalworking. Second, while recognizing that, realistically, economic conditions in various parts of the globe preclude establishing uniform wage rates (particularly given fluctuating exchange rates), the secretariats have argued that this should not prevent implementation of uniform conditions of work with regard to health and safety, productivity, right to union representation and collective bargaining, and so forth. Third, as a means to present a more unified front at the bargaining table secretariats have encouraged mergers between related unions in the same industry, although this has been a slow process because of jurisdictional and ideological rivalries (Curtin 1973). Fourth, as the basis for these activities the secretariats have focused on the collection of data documenting transnational corporations' bargaining habits, ownership of subsidiaries, contract details in different countries, and location of operations. The

---

representatives of government and business. The trade secretariats are independent of, but closely linked to, the ICFTU. The Soviet-backed World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) also has a number of industrial organizations similar to the ITSs. However, with the breakup of the Soviet Union the WFTU has lost much of its international influence (see Bendiner 1987; Busch 1983; and Herod 1995 for more on the WFTU).

industry councils have generally been responsible for gathering this information, while the secretariats have served as the coordinating bodies for its dissemination to the appropriate affiliates.

As more corporations become transnational, the ITSs will undoubtedly become increasingly important vehicles for fostering and coordinating international campaigns. Economic geographers should not continue to ignore such significant geoeconomic and geopolitical actors.

Conclusion: Implications for the Practice of Economic Geography

Such global labor practices generate crucial theoretical issues for economic geography. Although economic geographers have tended to ignore workers' international activities, focusing instead on the dynamics of capital, the Ravenswood case shows that workers can indeed play powerful roles in the international arena. Through its corporate campaign the USWA and its supporters successfully restricted Rich's efforts to expand his operations in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Although Rich had intended to capitalize on the apparent end of the cold war by increasing his investments in Eastern Europe in particular, through their practice of solidarity the USWA and local unionists in the region were able to prevent him from acquiring several ventures. By disrupting his expansion plans and compelling him to alter a number of strategic business decisions, the USWA clearly played a significant role in defining the geography of Rich's international investments.

The activities of the ITSs and the Steelworkers' ability to shape international investment patterns suggest that economic geographers need to reconsider the role played by workers and their organizations in the making of the geography of the global economy. While myriad studies exist which illustrate how capital is refashioning the geography of the global economy through its international practices, there is a dearth of empirical analysis concerning similar practices by workers and labor organizations. Whereas economic geographers have tended to focus on the behavior of transnational corporations to explain the geography of international investment, the empirical evidence suggests the need for a much greater integration into this body of theory of the international activities of workers and their organizations. Both politically and theoretically it is highly problematic to exclude such important actors from the purview of our field of study.

However, simply doing more empirical work in this area, while a necessary project, is not by itself sufficient to address labor's problematic status in contemporary economic geography. Rather, there is also a need to reconceptualize the way workers are theorized as economic agents. Current work in locational analysis and FDI adopts a static rather than active conception of workers. Workers are incorporated in explanations only in terms of how their characteristics shape investment decisions made by corporate managers. Conceptualizing workers in this way effectively portrays them as incapable of intervening directly in the production of the geography of capitalism. It sees the economic landscape as something that develops around workers, rather than as a social product whose characteristics workers are very much responsible for shaping. Workers effectively remain unconnected to the production of economic spaces. In essence, such a conceptualization leaves us with a nondialectical vision of how economic space is produced.

Much contemporary social theory in geography has suggested that the production of space, to use Lefebvre's (1991) phrase, is crucial to capital's survival. Harvey (1985), in particular, has argued that capital relies on a particular "spatial fix" to reproduce itself. While such works have provided valuable insights into the unquestionably geographic nature of capital and capitalism, the activities described in this case study suggest that economic geographers should also consider what we might call "labor's spatial fix." Producing the economic landscape in certain ways is just as crucial for workers to reproduce themselves as it is for capital to do so (cf. Herod 1994). Workers clearly have a vested interest in ensuring that the geography of capitalism is made in some ways and not in others. The locked out Ravenswood workers, for instance, were keen to maintain their plant as a unionized, rather than non-union, component of the local and global economic landscape. Considering how workers seek to produce a spatial fix reflective of their own needs and wants allows us to locate them at the center of efforts to theorize the production of space, rather than peripherally as is currently the case. This provides for a richer, more dynamic linking of workers' social practices into economic geography theory and moves explanations beyond the capital logic arguments that dominate the literature at present.

References

Aglietta, M. 1979. *A theory of capitalist regulation: The US experience.* London: New Left Books.

Barry, T., and Preusch, D. 1990. *AIFLD in Central America: Agents as organizers.* Report by the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, Albuquerque, N.Mex.

Bendiner, B. 1987. *International labour affairs: The world trade unions and the multinational companies.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bluestone, B., and Harrison, B. 1982. *The deindustrialization of America: Plant closings, community abandonment, and the dismantling of basic industry.* New York: Basic Books.

Bornschier, V., and Chase-Dunn, C. 1985. *Transnational corporations and underdevelopment.* New York: Praeger.

Busch, G. K. 1983. *The political role of international trades unions.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Chapman, J. 1992. Personal interview by author with Joe Chapman, staff representative for District 23, United Steelworkers of America, Charleston, W.Va., 27 July.

Clark, G. L. 1989. *Unions and communities under siege: American communities and the crisis of organised labour.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Copetas, A. C. 1985. *Metal men: Marc Rich and the 10-billion-dollar scam.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Cox, R. W. 1971. Labor and transnational relations. *International Organization* (Special issue on "Transnational Relations and World Politics") 25(3):554–84.

Curtin, W. J. 1973. The multinational corporation and transnational collective bargaining. In *American labor and the multinational corporation*, ed. D. Kujawa, 192–222. New York: Praeger.

Daniels, P. W. 1985. *Service industries: A geographical appraisal.* London: Methuen.

Daniels, P. W.; Thrift, N.; and Leyshon, A. 1989. Internationalisation of professional producer services: Accountancy conglomerates. In *Multinational service firms*, ed. P. Enderwick, 79–106. London: Routledge.

Dicken, P. 1986. *Global shift: Industrial change in a turbulent world.* London: Harper and Row.

Donaghu, M. T., and Barff, R. 1990. Nike just did it: International subcontracting and flexibility in athletic footwear production. *Regional Studies* 24:537–52.

Dunning, J. H. 1988. *Explaining international production.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Elements of victory 1: An interview with the AFL-CIO's Joe Uehlein on the Steelworkers Ravenswood campaign. 1992. *LRA's [Labor Research Association] Economic Notes*, May–June, 3–6.

Fröbel, F.; Heinrichs, J.; and Kreye, O. 1980. *The new international division of labour.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fryer, D. W. 1987. The political geography of international lending by private banks. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* n.s. 12(4):413–32.

Grimwade, N. 1989. *International trade: New patterns of trade, production and investment.* New York: Routledge.

Haas, G., and the Plant Closures Project. 1985. *Plant closures: Myths, realities and responses.* Boston: South End Press.

Hallsworth, A. G. 1990. The lure of the USA: Some further reflections. *Environment and Planning A* 22(4):551–58.

———. 1991. The Campeau takeovers—the arbitrage economy in action. *Environment and Planning A* 23(8):1217–23.

Hardy, M. 1936. The influence of organized labor on the foreign policy of the United States. Ph.D. diss., University of Geneva. Liége, Belgium: H. Vaillant-Carmanne, Imp. de l'Academie (Thèse No. 30).

Harrod, J. 1972. *Trade union foreign policy: A study of British and American trade union activities in Jamaica*. Publications of the International Institute for Labour Studies. London: Macmillan.

Harvey, D. 1985. *The urbanization of capital: Studies in the history and theory of capitalist urbanization*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

———. 1988. The geographical and geopolitical consequences of the transition from Fordist to flexible accumulation. In *America's new market geography*, ed. G. Sternlieb and J. W. Hughes, 101–34. New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University.

Heaps, D. 1955. Union participation in foreign aid programs. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 9(1):100–108.

Hecker, S., and Hallock, M., eds. 1991. *Labor in a global economy: Perspectives from the U.S. and Canada*. Eugene: Labor Education and Research Center, University of Oregon.

Heckscher, E. F. 1919. The effect of foreign trade on the distribution of income. *Economisk Tidskrift* 21:497–512. Reprinted in *Readings in the theory of international trade*. 1949. H. S. Ellis and L. A. Metzler, eds., 272–300. Philadelphia: Blakiston.

Hennart, J-F. 1982. *A theory of the multinational enterprise*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Herod, A. 1991. The production of scale in United States labour relations. *Area* 23(1): 82–88.

———. 1992. Towards a labor geography: The production of space and the politics of scale in the East Coast longshore industry, 1953–1990. Ph.D. diss., Department of Geography, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

———. 1994. On workers' theoretical (in)visibility in the writing of critical urban geography: A comradely critique. *Urban Geography* 15(7):681–93.

———. 1995. Labor as an agent of globalization and as a global agent. In *Globalization and its politics: Critical reappraisals*, ed. K. Cox. New York: Guilford Press (forthcoming).

van Holthoon, F., and van der Linden, M., eds. 1988. *Internationalism in the labour movement, 1830–1940*. 2 vols. London: E.J. Brill.

Hood, N., and Young, S. 1979. *The economics of multinational enterprises*. London: Longman.

Horne, W. W. 1991. Milgrim Thomajan strengthens ties to fugitive Rich. *American Lawyer* (July/August):16.

How the USW hit Marc Rich where it hurts. 1992. *Business Week*, 11 May, 42

Hudson, R., and Sadler, D. 1983. Region, class and the politics of steel closures in the European Community. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1:405–28.

———. 1986. Contesting work closures in Western Europe's old industrial regions: Defending place or betraying class? In *Production, work, territory: The geographical anatomy of industrial capitalism*, ed. A. Scott and M. Storper, 172–94. Boston: Allen and Unwin.

Hymer, S. 1971. The multinational corporation and the law of uneven development. In *The multinational corporation: A radical approach: Papers by Stephen Herbert Hymer*, ed. R. B. Cohen, N. Felton, M. Nkosi, J. van Liere, and N. Dennis, 54–74. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1976. *The international operations of national firms: A study of direct involvement*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Jarley, P., and Maranto, C. L. 1990. Union corporate campaigns: An assessment. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 43(5):505–24.

Jenkins, R. 1987. *Transnational corporations and uneven development: The internationalization of capital and the Third World*. London: Methuen.

Jonas, A. 1992. Corporate takeover and the politics of community: The case of Norton Company in Worcester. *Economic Geography* 68:348–72.

Labor in cyberspace. 1994. *Labor Notes*, March, 2.

Langdale, J. V. 1985. Electronic funds transfer and the internationalisation of the banking and finance industry. *Geoforum* 16(1):1–13.

Larson, S. 1975. *Labor and foreign policy: Gompers, the AFL, and the First World War, 1914–1918*. Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses.

Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The production of space*. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell.

Lipietz, A. 1986. New tendencies in the international division of labor: Regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation. In

Production, work, territory: The geographical anatomy of industrial capitalism, ed. A. Scott and M. Storper, 16–40. Boston: Allen and Unwin.

Losch, A. 1954. *The economics of location.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

McCarthy, J. D., and Mayer, N. Z. 1977. Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 82:1212–41.

McDowell, L. 1991. Life without father and Ford: The new gender order of post-Fordism. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* n.s. 16:400–419.

Mair, A.; Florida, R.; and Kenney, M. 1988. The new geography of automobile production: Japanese transplants in North America. *Economic Geography* 64:352–73.

Making Marc Rich squirm. 1991. *Business Week*, 11 November, 120–22.

Marshall, J. N. 1988. *Services and uneven development.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martin, R.; Sunley, P.; and Wills, J. 1993. The geography of trade union decline: Spatial dispersal or regional resilience? *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* n.s. 18(1):36–62.

Massey, D., and Painter, J. 1989. The changing geography of trade unions. In *The political geography of contemporary Britain*, ed. J. Mohan, 130–50. London: Macmillan.

Moberg, D. 1989. Workers challenged by the global marketplace. *In These Times*, 26 April–2 May, 6.

———. 1992. Lock-out knock-out. *In These Times*, 24 June–7 July, 12–13.

Moody, K. 1988. *An injury to all: The decline of American unionism.* New York: Verso.

Morris, G. 1967. *CIA and American labor: The subversion of the AFL-CIO's foreign policy.* New York: International Publishers.

Mutual convenience. 1990. *Forbes*, 30 April, 36–37.

NewsWatch. 1991. *Labor Notes*, November, 4.

———. 1992. *Labor Notes*, March, 4.

Ohlin, B. 1933. *Interregional and international trade.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Peet, R. 1982. International capital, international culture. In *The geography of multinationals: Studies in the spatial development and economic consequences of multinational corporations*, ed. M. Taylor and N. Thrift, 275–302. New York: St. Martin's Press.

———. 1983. Relations of production and the relocation of United States manufacturing industry since 1960. *Economic Geography* 59:112–43.

———, ed. 1987. *International capitalism and industrial restructuring.* Boston: Allen and Unwin.

Piore, M., and Sabel, C. 1984. *The second industrial divide: Possibilities for prosperity.* New York: Basic Books.

Puette, W. J. 1992. *Through jaundiced eyes: How the media view organized labor.* Ithaca: Cornell University Industrial and Labor Relations Press.

Radice, H., ed. 1975. *International firms and modern imperialism: Selected readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Radosh, R. 1969. *American labor and United States foreign policy.* New York: Random House.

Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation (RAC). 1992. Complaint for determination of rightful Board of Directors in the matter of *Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation, A Delaware Corporation, Rinoman Investment B.V., I-Suk Oh, Willy R. Strothotte, Craig A. Davis and Jean L. Loyer v. R. Emmett Boyle and Charles E. Bradley*, Case No. 12528, Court of Chancery for New Castle County, Delaware. Complaint filed 14 April 1992.

Ravenswood buyers quit scab product. 1992. *AFL-CIO News*, 2 March, 1, 6.

Ravenswood fined $600,000 on safety. 1991. *Charleston Gazette*, 21 December.

Ravenswood shows global potential. 1992. *AFL-CIO News*, 6 July, 2.

Ravenswood Steelworkers get international support. 1991. *AFL-CIO News*, 22 July, 12.

Roberts, S. M. 1995. Small place, big money: The Cayman Islands and the international financial system. *Economic Geography* 71: 237–56.

Samuelson, P. A. 1948. International trade and the equalization of factor prices. *Economic Journal* 58:163–84.

Sayer, R. A. 1986. Industrial location on a world scale: The case of the semiconductor industry. In *Production, work, territory: The geographical anatomy of industrial capitalism*, ed. A. Scott and M. Storper, 107–24. Boston: Allen and Unwin.

Schoenberger, E. 1985. Foreign manufacturing investment in the United States: Competitive strategies and international location. *Economic Geography* 61:241–59.

———. 1988. From Fordism to flexible accumulation: Technology, competitive strategies, and international location. *Envi-*

ronment and Planning D: Society and Space 6:245–62.

———. 1989. New models of regional change. In *New models in geography*, vol. 1, ed. R. Peet and N. Thrift, 115–41. London: Unwin Hyman.

———1990. U.S. manufacturing investments in Western Europe: Markets, corporate strategy, and the competitive environment. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80:379–93.

Schwantes, C. A. 1979. *Radical heritage: Labor, socialism, and reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885–1917*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Scott, A. J. 1988. *New industrial spaces: Flexible production organisation and regional development in North America and Western Europe*. London: Pion.

Scott, J. 1978. *Yankee unions, go home! How the AFL helped the U.S. build an empire in Latin America*. Vancouver: New Star Books.

Shostak, A. B. 1991. *Robust unionism: Innovations in the labor movement*. Ithaca: Cornell University Industrial and Labor Relations Press.

Simms, B. 1992. *Workers of the world undermined: American labor's role in U.S. foreign policy*. Boston: South End Press.

Smith, N. 1984. *Uneven development: Nature, capital and the production of space*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Smith, N., and Dennis, W. 1987. The restructuring of geographical scale: Coalescence and fragmentation of the northern core region. *Economic Geography* 63:160–82.

Smoking out Marc Rich. 1992. *Institutional Investor*, August, 40–46.

Spalding, H. A., Jr. 1988. US labour intervention in Latin America: The case of the American Institute for Free Labor Development. In *Trade unions and the new industrialization of the Third World*, ed. R. Southall, 259–86. London: Zed Books.

Stidham, D. 1992. Personal interview by author with Dan Stidham, president, Local 5668 United Steelworkers of America, Ravenswood, W.Va., 27 July.

Storper, M., and Christopherson, S. 1987. Flexible specialization and regional industrial agglomerations. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77:103–17.

Storper, M., and Scott, A. 1989. The geographical foundations and social regulation of flexible production complexes. In *The power of geography: How territory shapes social life*, ed. J. Wolch and M. Dear, 21–40. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Storper, M., and Walker, R. 1983. The theory of labour and the theory of location. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 7(1):1–43.

Sturmthal, A. 1950. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 3(3):375–82.

Taylor, M., and Thrift, N., eds. 1982. *The geography of multinationals: Studies in the spatial development and economic consequences of multinational corporations*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

———, eds. 1985. *Multinationals and the restructuring of the world economy*. London: Croom Helm.

Thrift, N. 1987. The fixers: The urban geography of international commercial capital. In *Global restructuring and territorial development*, ed. J. Henderson and M. Castells, 203–33. London: Sage.

Thrift, N., and Leyshon, A. 1991. *Making money*. London: Routledge.

Uehlein, J. 1989. Using labor's trade secretariats. *Labor Research Review* 8(1):31–41.

———. 1992. Personal interview by author with Joe Uehlein, director of Special Projects, Industrial Union Department at the AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C., 10 August.

United Steelworkers of America (USWA). 1991. RAC to Rich: The corporate web of the Ravenswood Aluminum Company. Memorandum dated May 1991. Copy in author's possession.

———. 1992. *Summary: Proposed agreement between the United Steelworkers of America and the Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation*. Pittsburgh, Penn.: USWA. Copy in author's possession.

———. n.d. *Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation: A stakeholders' report*. Pittsburgh, Penn.: USWA. Copy in author's possession.

U.S. Mint makes Marc Rich richer. 1992. *Forbes*, 13 January, 85.

Vernon, R. 1966. International investment and international trade. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 80:190–207.

———. 1971. *Sovereignty at bay: The multinational spread of US enterprises*. New York: Basic Books.

———. 1979. The product cycle hypothesis in the new international environment. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 41(4): 255–67.

Warf, B. 1989. Telecommunications and the globalization of financial services. *Professional Geographer* 41:257–71.

Weber, A. 1929. *Theory of the location of industries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wells, L. T., Jr. 1972. *International trade: The product life cycle approach*. Boston: Graduate School of Business, Harvard University.

Who aided fugitive's Mint biz? 1991. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 December.

Why the world is closing in on the U.S. economy. 1991. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 October.

Windmuller, J. P. 1954. *American labor and the international labor movement, 1940 to 1953*. Ithaca: Institute of International Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University.

Wrigley, N. 1987. The concentration of capital in UK grocery retailing. *Environment and Planning A* 19(10):1283–88.

———. 1989. The lure of the USA: Further reflections on the internationalisation of British grocery retailing capital. *Environment and Planning A* 21(3):283–88.