

Industrial Worker

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

April 2006 #1683 Vol. 103 No. 4 \$1.00 / 75 p

Give a friend a ride, Go to prison, Lose your car

BY JIM CRUTCHFIELD

Workers who move from countries whose economies have been destroyed by foreign competition are merely obeying the laws of the free market, taking their labor power from one market, where they can find no buyers for it, into another, where buyers are abundant.

Increasingly, however, obedience to economic law threatens to place these workers in violation of the United States' criminal laws. The U.S. Congress is presently considering a raft of proposed legislation intended to resolve the contradictions of American economic rule by punishing its victims.

The most controversial of the current bills is HR 4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, introduced by Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, which passed the House of Representatives last December by a vote of 239 to 182, and is now before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bill represents an all-fronts attack on human and civil rights, not only of undocumented immigrants, but also of any American citizen who "assists, encourages, directs, or induces a person [who has entered illegally] to reside in or remain in the United States." The bill appears to make all groups that help undocumented immigrants – including churches, workers' centers and labor unions – into criminal organizations. It could prevent any undocumented worker from receiving humane services, medical care, legal counsel or any other benefit of society.

Under the bill, anybody who knowingly "transports" an undocumented worker – even just to give a friend a ride to work or the doctor's office – could be punished with five years in prison. Under already-existing law, vehicles allegedly used in the commission of federal crimes can be seized and sold before the owner is even convicted of anything.

The act of entering the U.S. without permission would for the first time be made a crime by HR 4437. And virtually any offense committed by an undocumented immigrant – even one committed years ago – can be declared an "aggravated felony" under the Sensenbrenner bill. "Aggravated felony" status has previously been reserved for the most serious of violent crimes, like rape and murder. Under the Sensenbrenner bill, virtually any violation of law by an undocumented immigrant – or by anybody who helps such an immigrant – is considered an aggravated felony. Conviction of an aggravated felony has devastating consequences for immigrants, including mandatory detention, mandatory deportation and banishment for life from the United States.

Immigrants charged with aggravated felonies under the bill would be presumed guilty of illegal presence in the U.S. until they proved themselves innocent. The bill also expands the authority of the executive branch of government by

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Workers' Memorial Day commemorated April 28

The bloodiest war is the one fought every day at work; honor the victims, stop the carnage **5**

Building solidarity with workers around the world

Meeting with Central American unionists, supporting Bangladeshi garment workers' struggles **6-7**

Immigrant workers *paro* for their rights

BY MIKE HARGIS, CHICAGO

It was so incredible: I never saw the beginning of the march, nor the end. I didn't hear one speech and never even made it to the Loop where the march was supposed to end. There was just this sea of humanity gathered in the streets, flowing in the same direction with the same object in mind: defeat the new, draconian immigration bill known as "The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" (HR4437).

On March 10 at least 300,000 people took the day off work or school and converged in Chicago's Loop to protest this bill, which would turn undocumented workers into "aggravated criminal felons" and those who assist them, such as priests and nurses (and unionists) into criminals as well for "aiding and abetting" them. The bill passed the House of Representatives just before Christmas, it is currently being debated in the Senate.

While the crowd was predominantly Latino there were also substantial contingents of Polish, Irish, Korean, Arab and other immigrant communities.

Chanting "¡Si, se puede!" (Yes, it can be done) and "¡El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido!" (The People United Will Never be Defeated), factory workers, dishwashers, carpenters, high school students and even small shop-keepers marched from Union Park two miles into the Loop. They carried hand-



PHOTO: INDYMEDIA CHICAGO

lettered signs saying: "We are America," "My Mexican immigrant son died in Iraq," "I'm a dishwasher – not a criminal" and "Don't deport my parents."

More than 100 factories in the Chicago area shut down for the day because so many workers had told their bosses that they were planning on taking the day off for "the general strike," according to Jose Artemio Arreola of the Coalition Against HR4437.

The predominant colors of the day, however, were red, white and blue as U.S. flags were evident everywhere. There was even one small group who insisted on chanting "USA, USA." (Were they being ironic, I wonder?) Undoubtedly many were eager to show their fellow Americans that they were just as patriotic as them – that all they wanted was to work, pay their taxes, raise their families and partake of the American Dream. "We are all America" and "We Pay Taxes" were other signs in evidence. *continued on page 9*

French workers fight for secure jobs, work rights

FROM LIBCOM.ORG, PARIS

French unions and student organizations have called a nationwide general strike for March 28, as part of a wave of strikes, protests, marches and university occupations as workers, students and young people fight a new legal assault on employment rights.

The French Senate adopted the "first employment contract" (CPE) legislation Feb. 28, stripping workers under age 26 of a wide range of job protections.

The government claims that the only way to reduce chronic youth unemployment is by giving bosses the right to sack younger workers without notice, compensation or even a reason during the first two years of their employment. But with unemployment amongst under-25s running at 22 percent many young workers feel they have little to lose.

Protests continue on a daily basis as we go to press, and a postal worker is in a coma after he was trampled under by riot police.

The Senate vote was held a week early in an effort week to pre-empt a national day of protest called by student unions for March 7. The protests went ahead anyway, with 400,000 people attending 160 demonstrations according to police estimates. (Organizers' estimates are much higher.)

The demonstrations included a mix of unionists, students, the unemployed and education workers. Students from the Lycées (roughly equivalent to high schools) were well represented at demonstrations. There have been occupations and strikes across France, mainly focused around universities. More than half of France's 84 public universities are occupied by protesters; Rennes II university has been blockaded by anti-CPE protesters and strikers since early February.

The protests and upcoming general strike



have been endorsed by all the major unions, as well as by student organizations and the syndicalist CNT union, which raised the call for a general strike when other unions still hoped that massive weekend demonstrations would force the government to back down. The CNT is also demanding the repeal of the CNE, passed a year ago, which strips workers in small businesses (fewer than 20 employees) of basic job security rights. In Le Havre the CNT local led a march of 7,000 upon the university and blockaded it.

These attempts to reduce job security, a process referred to by the CNT as précarisation, are aimed at taming the strongest union culture in Europe. Although all workers had been theoretically guaranteed social benefits, paid holidays and job security under French law, in fact employers have long been exploiting high youth unemployment to place workers in "internships," temporary contracts and other schemes.

The government has called out riot police in full riot gear to break up demonstrations. A 39-year-old member of the SUD postal union was trampled by police March 18 as they attacked an anti-CPE demonstration at the Places de la Nation in Paris, and remains in a coma. The union says police refused first aid *continued on page 12*

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Industrial Worker
PO Box 13476
Philadelphia, PA 19101

ISSN 0019-8870 
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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mailing offices

Reality, Canadian style

Canada’s unemployment rate, at 6.4 percent in February, is hovering at 30 year lows. The official figures are even rosier if you’re looking only as the two western-most provinces. In BC and Alberta, the unemployment rate is actually below 5 percent. And, to hear both the corporate and state media toll the story, the only possible conclusion is that capitalism is working just fine here in Canada.

The only trouble is that the mainstream media here, as elsewhere, tells life as it isn’t: employment may have increased lately, but you’d have to go back to the Great Depression to find comparable levels of homelessness and poverty. Homelessness has more than tripled in Vancouver during the past decade, precisely when the Canadian economy has supposedly been recovering.

Canada’s rich, and their corporations benefit from among the lowest tax enforcement levels within the Western World. Canada’s actual taxation rate is somewhat tricky: “Officially” our taxes lag most European countries but are supposedly much higher than those of the U.S.

But because Ottawa consciously refuses to enforce the taxation laws, the actual level drops Canada to just ahead of Hong Kong.

Sorry to sound like a broken record, but the electoral arena has proved itself to be one gigantic mistake. Latest piece of evidence comes from Saskatchewan, the birthplace of Canadian medicare. Seems the local “Social democratic” premier has betrayed the unions by obtaining a most dubious distinction for the province: dead last in health care spending for Canadian provinces.

X355424, Lower BC

Greetings from Argentina

From Argentina, from the National Movement of Recovered Enterprises (MNER), we invite you, our compañeras and compañeros to participate in the second Argentina Autonomista Project Summer Abroad Program

to continue to share our experiences, to continue learning.

The excellent bond created between the MNER and the compañeras and compañeros of the United States and Canada allowed us to share our experiences, our sacrifices, our dreams, our ways of struggle to recover our jobs. It allowed us to narrate those stories and work together on the new ways of production and social relations, where solidarity is more important than the economic product, where cooperation appears as overcoming competition and work is more important than capital.

It is also important for us to find out about the situation that the people of the United States and Canada are going through – the reality of the labor world in those countries. The encounter of workers of Argentina and compañeros and compañeras from other countries makes us grow and overcome our visions. It allowed us to meet in conversations where we dared discuss from micro to macro necessities of the people of the world, from the organization of the recovered enterprises to the need to generate new world institutions to achieve a just world and a free humanity.

We would also like you to know that the money we receive for our Movement through the program helps us help other compañeros and compañeras who are starting the process of recovering an enterprise, to publicize our

projects, to cover expenses of transportation in demand of public policy toward full employment.

We await you to keep on generating ideas that will help us transform society and transform ourselves.

Eduardo Murua, President, MNER
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(For more info on this program see www.autonomista.org/summer.htm or contact Graciela Monteagudo at autonomista1@aol.com)

School for union women

The Evergreen State College Labor Center is hosting its 16th annual Summer School for Union Women and Community Activists from June 28 - July 2 in Olympia, Washington. This year the theme is Women Bringing It Back Together: Building Alliances between Union and Community Activists to Realize Our Goals Locally and Globally.

The Summer School is a leadership program that helps women light their passion and find their voice in the labor movement. Discussions and brainstorming sessions happen in small work groups, enabling participants to share their knowledge and skills.

Come develop creative organizing and leadership skills! Learn how we as women can build a grassroots labor movement from the bottom up by discovering our common ground, forging alliances, and sharing our strategies with community activists in the process of organizing.

Registration is \$475, including meals and lodging. The deadline is June 12th but space is limited to 60 participants. For program information or for help on obtaining scholarships, contact Nina Triffleman at (360) 867-6525; triffen@evergreen.edu, or visit our website at www.evergreen.edu/laborcenter

– Farewell, Fellow Worker –
Rafi Bey

Fellow Worker Rafi John Bey passed away in February. He had been a member of the IWW some 45 years, even if his red card was not always up to date.

His memorial service drew hundreds of people from all walks of life – testimony to the breadth of his organizing efforts and his work to bridge historic divides among Muslims and Jews, veterans groups and peace activists. Over the years he saw many generations of Wobblies come and go in Baltimore, and most recently was a welcome guest at Red Emma’s bookstore Café, spinning his tales of struggles from the 1960s and beyond.

FBI raids New York union offices, seizes computers

The FBI raided the offices of the New York City Central Labor Council at dawn March 2, carting out boxes of papers as part of an investigation of Brian McLaughlin. Agents said they were investigating charges that McLaughlin, who also is a Democratic state assemblyman, had received improper payments from electrical contractors as part of a bid-rigging scheme. A Democrat, McLaughlin supported the re-election of the city’s Republican mayor last fall.

Records, computers and other items were seized from the Labor Council offices even though the union says it has been assured that it is not a target of the investigation.

A week earlier, Martin Ludlow resigned as head of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor after the government accused him of receiving more than \$53,000 in secret union campaign assistance when he served on the City Council.

Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ EMANCIPATION

Official newspaper of the
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ISSN 0019-8870 Periodicals postage paid Philadelphia PA.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Industrial Worker, POB 23085, Cincinnati OH 45223

Individual Subscriptions: \$15
Library Subs: \$20/year
(Member sub included in dues)
Published eleven times per year

Articles not so designated do not reflect the official position of the IWW. Contributions welcome.

Press Date: March 20, 2006

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Around Our Union

Wobblies in Indiana, Pennsylvania, have formed an organizing committee and are working within the Pittsburgh branch for the time being as they build support.

The Pittsburgh branch continues its outreach to education workers with a new edition of the *Education Worker* focusing on defending labor's right (and will) to strike.

Workers in Finland have approached the IWW to discuss prospects for establishing a Regional Organizing Committee there.

In Tampa, Florida, veteran Wobbly Ted Lee joined a demonstration against the Patriot Act and political repression outside the jail where a USF professor recently cleared on terrorism charges is still being held. FW Lee briefly spoke from his wheelchair on the Palmer Raids and the deportation of hundreds of IWWs following World War I.

British Isles Wobs held an organizing meeting March 11, followed the next day by an assembly of Scottish members. They resolved to complete the process of formally registering the union with the authorities, so that members are entitled to legal cover in the event of reprisals for IWW activity, and launched an organiser training program to develop the union's organising capacity across all branches.

Delegates discussed organizing prospects, solidarity work they have been doing with refugees in the London area, and agreed to expand outreach efforts including a May Day edition of their magazine, *Bread & Roses*, advertisements in other workers' papers, and an updated web site.

The Regional Organising Committee is looking to hold its 2006 annual conference in Glasgow in early June.

Organizing Summit in Austin

Some 40 Wobblies from the U.S. and Canada (one up from Mexico where he is currently working) met in Austin, Texas, March 10-12 to discuss organizing strategy. The program opened with a presentation by Martha Ojeda of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras on independent workers' organizing in the maquilas of Mexico.

Over the following two days members discussed reports from organizers involved in most of the major recent campaigns within the union (Stockton, Portland, New York – Starbucks and food stuff workers, Chicago bike messengers, Bay Area recycling workers, Philadelphia South Street, etc.). A few branches distributed booklets on organizing: "Learning from Our Mistakes," an analysis of recent organizing drives in Portland; a guide to organizing in Starbucks and a booklet on Education Worker organizing. Participants also heard from an activist with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers on their successful campaign against Taco Bell.

There were sessions on dual carders, organizing national campaigns in chain stores, worker co-ops, establishing an Organizer Exchange program for members to visit and organize with branches in other cities, organizing immigrant workers and non-English speakers, building branch infrastructure, among others. There was also a presentation on strategic industrial organizing, and discussion of the initial proposal for creation of an IWW Organizing Department.

A follow-up meeting in conjunction with Midwest Wobfest in Minneapolis is in the works for July.

May Day Greetings Ads

The May IW marks International Workers Day, and offers IWW branches and friends an opportunity to place solidarity greetings in this special issue celebrating international workers' struggles.

Greeting ads must be received by April 10 to be included; you can send in the text and we'll make them up, or send in your design. Suggested donation levels are \$10 for a 1 inch tall ad (1 column wide); \$40 for 4 inches by 4 7/8 inches (2 columns); or \$85 for a quarter page. We can also provide extra copies of the issue at normal bundle rates.

Starbucks settles unfair labor practice charges

Two workers fired by the Starbucks coffee chain in retaliation for their efforts to organize their fellow workers into the IWW have been reinstated under a March 7 settlement with the National Labor Relations Board.

IWW organizers refused to sign the agreement because it did not require the coffee giant to admit guilt.

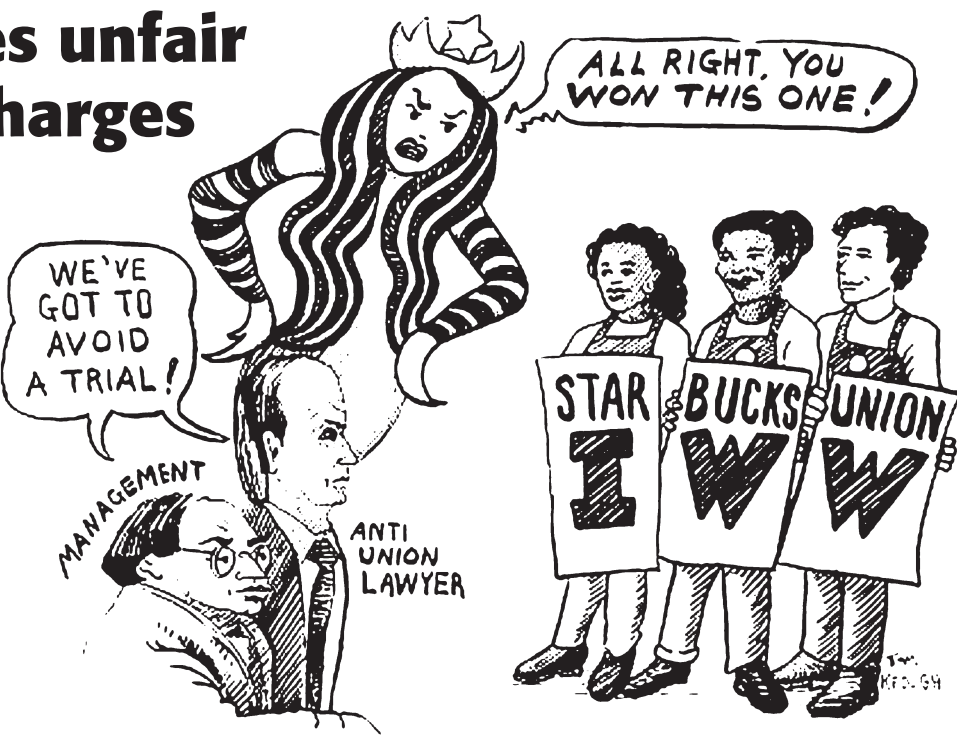
Because U.S. labor law does not provide for effective penalties against employers that violate workers' rights, Starbucks will be required only to offer modest payments totaling some \$2,000 to three workers who were suspended or fired for union activity, rescind disciplinary actions taken against a number of workers, and post notices in three stores promising that in the future it will not violate workers' legal rights to engage in union activity or discuss working conditions with their co-workers, deny pay increases to union supporters, bribe workers to abandon the union, or work to bring a company union into its stores.

Starbucks is also withdrawing policies barring workers from wearing IWW buttons and discriminating against union supporters in scheduling and transfer rights.

The NLRB settlement addresses illegal activity dating back to July 2004, shortly after the organizing drive began. Several more recent violations remain to be addressed.

Starbucks attorneys settled the cases on the second day of a public NLRB hearing was about to begin on its massive and systematic violations of workers' rights. The first day was devoted to procedural matters; testimony about Starbucks managers' unlawful activity would have begun being entered into the record that day.

"I'm pleased that Starbucks' blatant violation of the law has been remedied in my case," said reinstated barista Sarah Bender. "Now I'm just eager to get back to work to continue the organizing drive and chalk up



more gains in wages and security of hours with the Starbucks Workers Union."

"All I have to say to Starbucks is: I'm back," added discharged barista Anthony Polanco.

"The long-standing right to proudly display our union pins has finally been reaffirmed," said Pete Montalbano, an IWW barista whose disciplinary record was expunged by the settlement and who received compensation for being wrongfully suspended. "This is an important visual expression of solidarity for co-workers and customers alike."

The IWW complaint against Starbucks documented a widespread union-busting campaign that extended to the highest levels of management, including a Starbucks senior vice president.

The Starbucks Workers Union has demanded union recognition at three Manhattan Starbucks, and has organizing efforts underway at several outlets across the city and elsewhere. Those interested in joining the campaign can learn more at <http://www.starbucksunion.org>.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

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 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

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

- ☐ 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 make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

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Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Where is the CLAC Attack?

BY EUGENE PLAWIUK, EDMONTON

Last year, the Edmonton IWW launched our CLAC Attack campaign because we recognized the threat that CLAC poses to any rank-and-file union developing in the Alberta oil patch. Although the Christian Labour Association of Canada is not a business union like the Alberta Building Trades Council, they are legally considered a union and as such can keep employees from organizing to pursue common grievances. Many workers in the trades approached the Edmonton IWW out of frustration upon encountering an “all talk and no action” attitude in the building trades unions, and so the CLAC Attack was born.

CLAC has recently launched a massive public relations campaign in Edmonton and northern Alberta. In Edmonton, the campaign includes billboards and bus signs, many of which are centered around a group aimed at getting women workers into the Trades. It's called Women Building Futures, which appears to be in a CLAC alliance with the Merit Contractors Association, the non-union building contractors, and other construction management types.

The Board of Directors of WBF is a management “Who's Who,” featuring Bill Stewart, vice president of the Merit Contractors Association, and M.J. (Pemme) Cunliffe, who practices labour and employment law with McLennan Ross in Edmonton. McLennan Ross seems to be the bosses' favorite law firm.

CLAC's billboard advertising for WBF states “I work because of CLAC.” This organization seems to be trying to use the lack of women in the trades to get CLAC into more shops. Thus, CLAC provides contractors with an alternative to hiring members of

the Building Trades. CLAC has also invested in WBF through their pension fund, the Ceridian Canada Limited Pension Fund.

This is another example of how the business unions are outmaneuvered in this province by the government, social agencies, CLAC, and the Merit shops. CLAC advertises itself as an “alternative labour movement,” and shares with the Merit shops the same ideology: the open shop – or simply put, the non-union shop. WBF seems to be another open shop concept; the WBF online news listings advertised the 4th International Open Shop Conference, hosted by the Merit Contractors Association. In practice, the founders and backers of WBF are not simply promoting women in trades; they are undermining working conditions and pay for all workers.

So what happened to the CLAC Attack?

The CLAC Attack demonstrations that the IWW initiated last year sparked some controversy within the very labour movement that should have been behind our efforts. An exception is Communication Energy and Paperworkers Union, which was involved in the Building Trades/AFL anti-CLAC campaign. They have been having their own issues with the craft unions that don't want industry-wide organization, and who don't like the IWW or the CEP because we represent the Canadian tradition (dating back to the One Big Union) of promoting industrial unionism that is rank-and-file controlled.

The AFL has done nothing against CLAC because the Building Trades have refused to work with CEP. Meanwhile, CLAC, the Merit shops, and the Construction Association of Alberta continue to set up more and more



PHOTO: KIRSTEN MAYOH

non-union shops and front groups like their new partner, WBF.

The labour movement in Alberta continues to fight with each other, rather than the real enemy – the bosses and their union busters.

Canadian freight train accidents soar

Canadian freight trains are running off the rails in record numbers, according to a *Toronto Star* report, with only a handful of accidents being investigated. Last year there were 1,246 accidents, 215 of which involved toxic and dangerous materials.

The *Star* attributes the high accident rate to poor track maintenance, staff cuts, and over-reliance on technology to make up for the missing workers. Only 1.3 percent of accidents are investigated. The Transportation Safety Board says it lacks the staff to investigate more accidents and instead focuses on auditing rail operators' safety reports.

The rising accident rate comes at a time of record profits in the industry, reaping the financial benefits of 1990s layoffs when one-third of rail workers lost their jobs. In 2005, Canadian National Railway turned a profit of close to \$1.5 billion, up 24 percent

a dictatorship – for example, to Belarus or Burma – we are giving that regime a very good database of individuals who should be denied entry visas, at the very least.

Does this mean that online campaigns are to be avoided? Not at all – the reaction of Rubies, Puma and others confirms the effectiveness of what we are doing.

What it does mean is that we must be alert and ready for corporate disinformation campaigns. The moment a character like Marc P. Beige of Rubies de Mexico sends out his first message, we must be ready with a detailed response, which should be emailed to all those who participated in the campaign, as well as being made available on the web. Amazingly, unions and campaigning organizations are not always ready to do this, and their reaction time to corporate disinformation efforts can be painfully slow.

This does not, however, solve the problem of allowing repressive governments to develop up-to-date, comprehensive databases of their opponents. There is very little we can do to prevent this – but what we can do is refrain from collecting and sending on unnecessary information. LabourStart's campaigns require a name and email address. But other campaigns, such as one currently being waged by United Students Against Sweatshops against a factory in El Salvador, makes required fields out of street address, city, state, zip code and country. While it is possible to protect one's privacy a bit using a web-based email address, turning over all that other information tempts corporations and governments to build sophisticated databases of their opponents.

Beyond that, we will have to invest much more in educating our members to the pitfalls of working online. Members will need to be able to spot corporate disinformation campaigns and deal with them.

Overall, net-based campaigns do give us an edge over the corporations. We can mobilize larger numbers of people more quickly and at lower cost than ever before. Even if corporate disinformation campaigns become a regular feature of an activist's life, if we react intelligently and quickly, and train our members to cope, we will prevail.

from the previous year. Profits at Canadian Pacific Railway hit a record \$543 million, up 32 percent from 2004.

“When you look at the products they're carrying on the rails – chlorine, anhydrous ammonia, all sorts of dangerous commodities through urban areas – it's scary,” says William Brehl, president of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, which represents workers who maintain rail lines for CP.

Rail craft unions to fight bosses?

BY RON KAMINKOW, IU 520

Faced with rail freight carriers' demands for one-man crews, the leadership of the United Transportation Union and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen issued a public statement in February proclaiming solidarity with one another, and calling off – for the moment at least – their long-standing feud.

The unions have pledged to stop raiding, stop maligning, and stop threatening each other, and agreed not to sign agreements surrendering each other's jobs. The National Carriers Conference Committee, which represents the U.S.'s big freight railroads, complains that this violates bargaining ground rules under which the two unions had agreed not to share information with each other or to coordinate their bargaining.

While union leaders were raiding each other and trying to cut deals to preserve their jurisdiction at the expense of rail workers more generally, rank-and-file members of UTU and BLET formed Railroad Operating Crafts United and began to organize around a platform of rail labor unity, rank-and-file democracy, a BLET-UTU merger, and a militant fight back against single employee operation of trains, among other things.

Finally, when the NCCC threatened to seek a National Mediation Board ruling of impasse, union leaders finally were made to realize that the carriers are serious. They want to destroy our crafts, run their trains with a lone employee, eliminate thousands of jobs in the process, compromise our safety and that of the general public, and totally change the railroad landscape forever.

Unfortunately, while they may have finally woken up to the dire threat that the carriers' proposal entails, they have not developed any kind of fight back strategy. ROCU has drafted a proposal and is circulating it among the rank-and-file of both unions calling for community education and outreach about the dangers of one-employee operations, an assessment to build up a strike fund, organizing strike committees, and laying the groundwork for industrial “self help.”

Given the dire threat posed by the NCCC's aggressive bargaining stance, the need for the greatest possible unity in rail labor at this time, and the financial crisis brewing in the UTU, a merger could also be on the horizon. But cautions Ed Michael, a ROCU activist and Union Pacific engineer, “The rank-and-file does not want to settle for just any old business-as-usual merger agreement. That's why the last attempt failed. We want a merger based upon our proposal for a democratic rank-and-file based union.”

U.S. union presidents' pay averaged \$239,106 in 2004

BY HARY KELBER, LABORTALK

Presidents of the 20 largest unions earned an average \$239,106 per year during the unions' 2004 fiscal years, according to a review by the Bureau of National Affairs. Terence O'Sullivan, president of the Laborers International Union, had the highest gross salary of the group, receiving \$405,620.

Second in the top ranking was Douglas McCarron, president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, with annual pay of \$348,023. In fourth place was Joseph Hansen, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers, with \$296,011. Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) earned \$230,537.

New technology, new dangers

BY ERIC LEE

Imagine, if you will, a secret meeting of the directors of an un-named evil corporation. As they sit around their conference table, plotting and scheming, one of the directors comments on the growing problem of the company's bad image. “Too many people out there seem to think we are a bunch of cold-hearted exploiters,” he says. “If only we had a way to identify those people and target messages specifically to them – without addressing the broader public.” All the men in the room nod, but suddenly one who rarely speaks – the guy from the computer department – chimes in. “I think I might have a solution to your problem ...”

In conducting Internet-based, large-scale global campaigns against employers, we are also delivering to those employers whole databases full of information about people who are involved in our campaigns. We are telling employers (and governments, who are also targeted in these campaigns) exactly who their critics are, person by person, address by address.

Of course we did this in the pre-computer era as well, when we'd submitted hand-signed printed petitions, but this is different. Today, when a campaigning organization submits 5,000 email protests to a company, it is also giving that company instant access to its own greatest asset – the list of campaign supporters.

In theory, companies and governments could make use of that information. In practice, they already have.

For example, in October 2005 LabourStart was asked to campaign in support of Mexican workers employed by a company called Rubies de Mexico. According to union sources, Rubies workers were “illegally locked out for protesting child labor violations, unsafe and unjust working conditions, and the company's refusal to recognize their collective bargaining agreement.” Just under 2,500 messages were sent to the company using LabourStart's ActNOW online campaign system.

We know that the company received the messages because one by one, they actually



answered each person. Marc P. Beige, an official from the company, sent out a message to all 2,500 with the subject line “False charges of child labor – really a dispute between 2 unions at Rubies Mexico.” His letter went into some detail in an attempt to refute the union campaign. “I strongly recommend that you conduct a thorough investigation of the facts yourself,” he wrote, “and do not allow yourself to be misled by false accusations.”

It was not the first that time that a company chose to write back to all those who protested. Several years earlier, a campaign directed against German-based sportswear manufacturer Puma produced similar results. Hotel bosses in Nepal have been known to send angry emails back to some campaign participants.

Today with the push of a button, companies can conduct sophisticated online disinformation campaigns targeted specifically at those who are campaigning against them. If they do a good enough job, they may be able to divide campaigning organizations, or at the very least raise questions in the minds of participants in those campaigns about the accuracy of the charges being made, as Rubies had done.

And this is only the beginning of the problem. Once companies get hold of the thousands of email addresses (and sometimes phone numbers and postal addresses as well) of their critics, they can use that data for more subversive goals. For example, it would not be difficult for companies to use semi-legal and illegal tactics to trick campaign participants into thinking that a campaign had ended, or to deliberately spread false information.

And that's only corporations. It gets worse.

Often we campaign against repressive regimes, governments which do not hesitate to use death squads against their opponents. When we send thousands of messages to

Workers' Memorial Day

BY DR. JUKKA TAKALA,
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

About two million people are killed by their work every year. Massive though they are, these work-related deaths are just a small fraction of the suffering caused. An estimated 160 million people on this planet have work-related diseases. Some 355,000 fatal accidents take place every year, and for every fatal accident at work there are hundreds of other non-fatal injuries.

Two million killed. Two hundred and seventy millions injured in work accidents. If terrorism took such a toll, just imagine what would be said and done. Yet this workplace tragedy rarely hits the headlines.

Fatalities are not fated. Accidents don't just happen. They are caused. Cancer – for example caused by asbestos, other carcinogenic dusts and chemicals and ionizing radiation – is the biggest factor in work-related deaths (an estimated 32 percent); followed by circulatory diseases, accidents and communicable diseases.

Clearly, most of these deaths are preventable. ... The stronger the union, the safer the workplace. Even the best-framed health and safety regulations will have little impact unless the people concerned, the workers, are able to collectively defend their interests. Workers' involvement in planning and running safety and health programs and freedom of association are of vital importance.

Much of the action on safety and health must be local, but the framework must be global. This is both a moral and a practical necessity. Moral, because we cannot place a lower value on workers' lives in some parts of the world than in others. Practical, because in a global economy, we cannot allow safety and health to be undermined by false concerns about competitiveness.

It is sometimes claimed that high health and safety standards can reduce competitiveness, so that poorer nations "cannot afford" good health and safety. That was always a distasteful argument, and we now know that it is unsound. Recent studies show that the most competitive countries are also the safest.

On Workers' Memorial Day last year, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that "safety and health of workers is a part and parcel of human security. ... Safe Work is not only sound economic policy, it is a basic human right."

April 29 a global day to remember capital's victims

The first Workers' Memorial Day was observed in 1989. April 28 was chosen because it is the anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the day of a similar remembrance in Canada.

Every year more people are killed at work than in wars. Most don't die of mystery ailments, or in tragic "accidents." They die because an employer decided their safety just wasn't that important a priority.

NYC transit workers told: Vote 'til you get it wrong

Transport Workers Union Local 100 officials have called for a second vote on the concessions contract New York City transit workers narrowly rejected in January, hoping that enough workers would be discouraged by the union's refusal to put up a fight for a decent contract that the deal would squeak through. However, scenting blood, the MTA says that offer is no longer on the table, and demands that workers abandon \$130 million in pension overcharges the transit authority had agreed to reimburse to workers.

New York state's Public Employment Relations Board is considering the MTA's request to submit the dispute to binding arbitration, stripping workers of the right to vote on their contract. Union officials have opposed arbitration (which the Board is expected to order), but made it clear the union would not take industrial action against it.

Workers' Memorial Day commemorates those workers. All over the world workers and their unions conduct demonstrations, vigils and a host of other activities to mark the day as a memorial for all those killed through work but at the same time work to ensure that such tragedies are not repeated.

Open letter to new OSHA director Edwin Foulke

The Senate recently confirmed Edwin G. Foulke as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health. Foulke comes from a law firm well known in union-busting circles, where he has spent most of his career representing management in workplace safety and health cases. Nevertheless, he told the Senate committee reviewing his nomination in January that he could protect workers.

"As head of OSHA," he said, "I understand that I will be ultimately responsible for helping to ensure as much as possible that every employee in the United States works in a safe and healthy workplace."

We'll see. Here's my open letter...

Dear Assistant Secretary Foulke:

Congratulations on your appointment to head the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. It's an enormous responsibility, as I'm sure you are aware: you literally hold the lives and health of thousands of American workers in your hands. Don't screw it up.

I'm sure you're not happy that I've previously characterized you as a union-busting Republican political operative... And you may not be happy about my prediction that your administration will be (yawn) a continuation of the same tired, ineffective, moribund, anti-worker programs that have succeed in making OSHA almost totally irrelevant to workplace safety in this country.

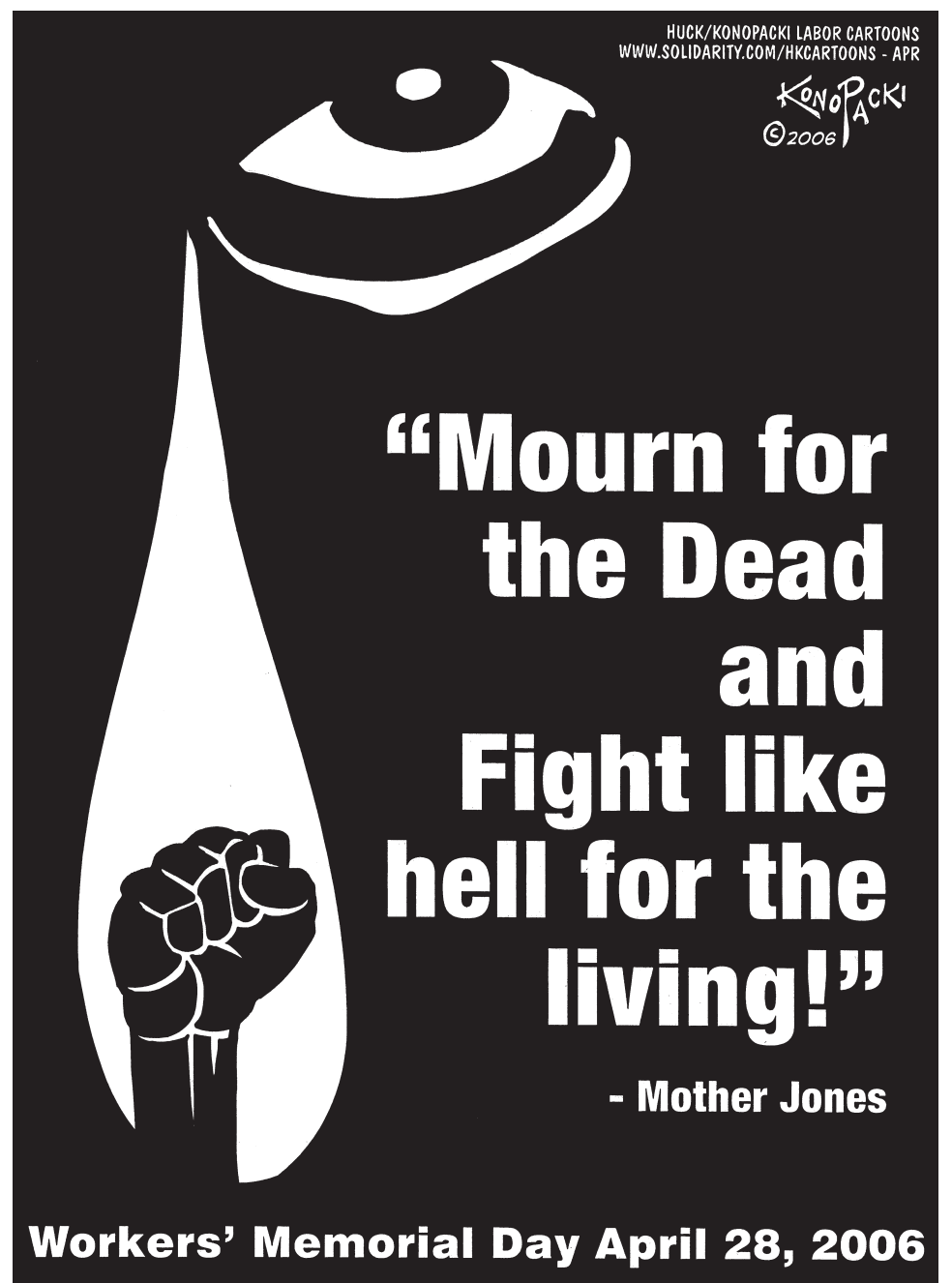
On the other hand, I'm sure, in the wee hours of night, as you lie awake in bed, wondering what the next three years hold, you're also asking yourself what contribution you can possibly make to humanity by heading up an agency that has been castrated by the president at whose pleasure you serve.

Well Ed, here's your chance to put your money where your silver-tongued mouth is. For a short period of time, you have an opportunity to take a number of giant steps to protect workers...

You can show the Mayberry Machiavellis at the White House... that all that B.S. you were spewing at your confirmation hearing about how OSHA's biggest challenge is to cater to small business, was just a bunch of confirmation claptrap intended to warm the cockles of Senator Enzi's heart.

OK, here's your 100-day agenda:

Issue the "Payment for Personal Protective Equipment" standard, which has been languishing at OSHA since the end of the Clinton administration. Explain that if anyone is going to take seriously OSHA's efforts to reach out to Hispanic workers, the first step must be to ensure that employers pay for their boots, gloves and other equipment.



Issue an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for a standard to protect health care workers against a flu pandemic. Show you're serious about ensuring that this country is ready for a flu pandemic by safeguarding the health of our caregivers

Propose legislation calling for increased criminal penalties and higher fines. Yes, maybe most employers may take safety seriously, but there are still far too many in this country who continue to knowingly and willfully cut corners and kill workers. Their only punishment is a relatively insignificant fine, considering that they killed someones' father, mother, son or daughter. Only the certainty of high fines and jail terms will stop them from considering violations, injuries, illnesses and fatalities to be an acceptable risk. (Spend a few hours reading Confined Space, and then tell me you don't agree...)

Launch a serious and sustained effort to update the OSHA's Permissible Exposure Limit for chemicals. Hundreds of chemicals are regulated by OSHA based on science from the 1950s and 1960s, making the agency a laughing stock, and exposing workers to thousands of hazardous chemicals.

Fill the empty labor liaison positions in the field. Due to deaths and retirements, fewer than half of the OSHA Regional offices have

labor liaisons. None of the empty positions have been filled. If you really want to know what goes on in American workplaces, you need people that workers will trust.

Announce that you are launching a review of the recently issued Hexavalent Chromium standard. New information has surfaced that the chromium industry hid important studies showing lung cancer at very low exposure levels, and there are numerous other flaws in the standard...

Announce that you are launching a serious review of OSHA's voluntary programs, based on the 2004 Government Accountability Office report that showed there was no evidence that the programs were effective...

Do these things and not only will you have made a name for yourself in workplace safety, but I'll eat crow, because right now, I don't think you really get what's going on in this country's workplaces. ...

So, come on, Ed, prove me wrong. What do you have to lose but your irrelevance? You'll never have more political capital than you have now. They can't fire an Assistant Secretary the month after he's confirmed. What are they going to do, send you on a hunting trip with Dick Cheney?

Jordan Barab, Confined Space
<http://spewingforth.blogspot.com/>



Longshore union urges ports, shipowners to cut pollution

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union says growing pollution from diesel-burning ships, trucks and trains is having serious health consequences for workers and residents of nearby communities.

ILWU officials plan to target the giant container ships responsible for most of the diesel fumes in port cities nationwide. In the Port of Los Angeles alone in 2001, ships contributed 55 percent of all diesel emissions and 36 percent of all emissions of nitrous oxides, a key component of smog.

Port officials say they can not impose clear-air restrictions because companies could simply divert their ships to other ports. The ILWU says it will seek common standards up and down the West Coast, and will reach out to unions on the East Coast and overseas to encourage similar measures.

Building solidarity across borders

BY MIKE PESA, PHILADELPHIA

Solidarity across borders has always been a central principle of the IWW. While the business unions pursue a nationalist agenda that pits one group of workers against another, the IWW dreams of one big union that recognizes no boundaries. The bosses will only be defeated when the working class is united all over the world. This basic concept, articulated in various ways throughout the past century, has never been more true than now. Given today's globalized economy, workers can no longer afford to limit their organizing efforts to the country they live in. The future of the labor movement hinges on our ability to connect with other unions in other parts of the world.

With this in mind, I set out a couple weeks ago on a journey through several countries in Central America. While much attention has recently been focused on South American countries like Venezuela and Argentina, Central America may not be on most people's maps. Yet there is quite a bit going down here, both in terms of new forms of repression and exploitation as well as exciting new forms of resistance. I am here – among other reasons – to make contact with various unions and workers' organizations to begin the difficult but important project of building solidarity between the IWW and the workers of Central America. I am here on behalf of the IWW's International Solidarity Commission, a committee that exists for the purpose of building cross-border alliances and manifesting support for the struggles of workers in other parts of the world.

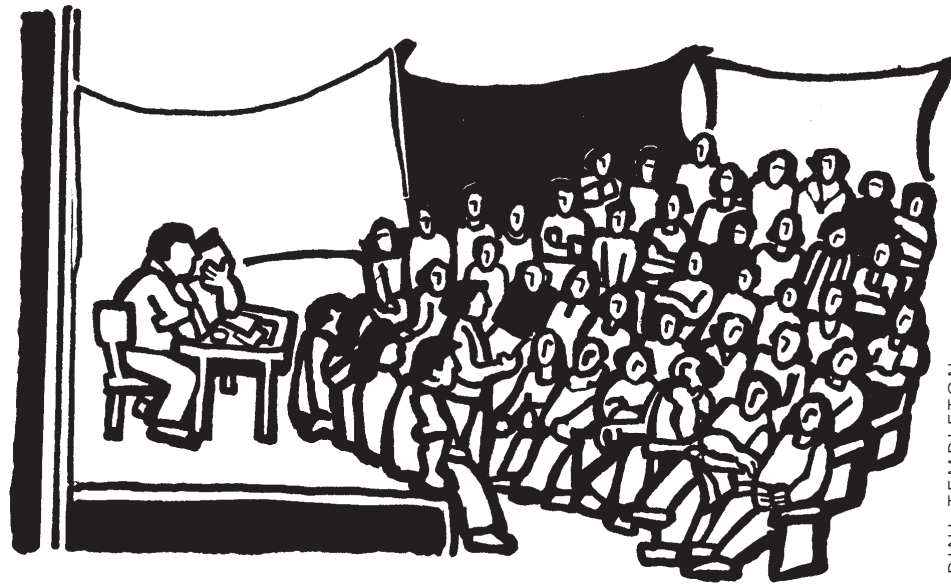
The first group I met with was the United Confederation of Honduran Workers (CUTH), a union federation that brings together workers from all industries including farm workers, the informal sector and even indigenous tribes and community organizations. This impressive alliance was gradually and painstakingly built over the past 50 years, dating back to the great banana strike of 1954 that marked the official beginning of the labor movement in Honduras. (The actual organization of CUTH is much more recent, however. It formed in 1992.)

On March 2, I met with some CUTH organizers in their small but busy office in the eastern Honduran city of San Pedro Sula, a central hub for foreign-owned maquiladoras (factories). After exchanging greetings, we quickly began to discuss some of the key problems facing workers in both North and Central America.

Confronting CAFTA

According to CUTH, the most urgent issue at hand is the Central American Free Trade Agreement, an extension of NAFTA to all of Central America and the Dominican Republic. By the time this article is published, CAFTA will have taken effect in most of the countries included in the treaty.

Just as NAFTA destroyed jobs in the United States and Canada and drastically undermined labor and environmental standards in Mexico, we can expect to see more of the same under CAFTA. CUTH, like all of the other unions I have met with here so far,



RINI TEMPLETON

is extremely concerned about the impact of CAFTA on the future of Central America's labor movements. Any "development" that might come about because of CAFTA will take the form of more sweatshops. It is already extremely difficult to organize in the maquila zones. Because of their high security level and their extreme malevolence toward unions, only a very small percentage of these factories are organized in Honduras or anywhere else in Central America. Under CAFTA, this situation will only deteriorate further, as workers will be forced to work even longer hours for even less pay.

CAFTA will also deeply impact the informal sector, particularly the hordes of poor and working class street vendors who hawk CDs, DVDs, clothes, backpacks and every kind of product imaginable. In a region where formal employment is considered a coveted privilege, these sales represent the difference between life and death for thousands of Central American families. Yet from the perspective of multinational corporations and their governmental counterparts, these street vendors are violating international copyright law. Under CAFTA, street vendors will face five years of jail-time for infringing on the "intellectual property" of the multi-nationals. In response to this serious threat, thousands of informal sector workers have been mobilizing for street protests in El Salvador and elsewhere in the region.

Finally, CAFTA will completely devastate the agricultural industry in Central America. Although CAFTA is ostensibly about leveling the playing field for trade between countries, in reality the U.S. government continues to subsidize large, well-equipped American agribusinesses. Now, poor Central American campesinos (farmworkers) are going to be forced to compete with these companies on an open market. Simply put, this means that millions of campesinos will be no longer be able to make a living selling their crops.

The consequences will be immense. Already many Central American campesinos have been forced to move to major urban centers in search of jobs, but instead have only found more misery and unemployment among the miles of cardboard shacks that constitute cities within cities. This problem will dramatically increase under CAFTA, as will mass immigration to the United States.

Immigration of "economic refugees" (as they are sometimes called) is already a serious problem. In El Salvador, for example, so many people have left the country to find work that remittances (money sent back by workers to support the families they left behind) constitute the single largest percentage of the nation's GDP. In other words, the biggest industry in El Salvador is emigration and economists predict that this trend will increase under CAFTA as farmworkers continue to lose their means of subsistence.

Moreover, if NAFTA is any indicator, Central American countries will become net importers of staple crops that are abundantly available on the domestic market. After just a few years under NAFTA, Mexico went from being a net exporter of corn to being forced to import the bulk of its corn from the United States. Fighting the effects of CAFTA is a top priority for almost every union in Central America and should be a top priority for the IWW's solidarity efforts as well.

Of course, for Central Americans CAFTA is just a new chapter in an ongoing saga of struggle. As one CUTH organizer explained, "Our struggle is permanent. This is fundamental to us."

During our meeting, one of the CUTH organizers pulled up the IWW web site on their computer. She said it would be really helpful if we had a more extensive Spanish language section on the site. I promised that I would bring it up when I got back. It is really vital that we make it possible for Spanish speakers to understand our message. Not only is Spanish the main language of Latin America, but it is also spoken by millions of workers in the U.S.

Later that day I paid a visit to one of San Pedro Sula's largest industrial parks, Zip San Jose, home to many of the sweatshops that produce clothes and apparel for export to the U.S. The 20-foot tall exterior wall was impressive and well maintained. Through a fence it was possible to see glimpses of a store and even a basketball court. It could easily be mistaken for the YMCA if it wasn't for the razor wire and security guards wielding assault rifles. Trucks were constantly coming and going and each one was stopped and inspected by one of the armed guards.

Needless to say, I was unable to actually enter the complex. Outside the walls, some street vendors were selling various products. I bought a drink and waited for the workers to leave. Some got out as early as 4:00 p.m. but they start work at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. When the time arrived, the workers exited out of a row of narrow gates that vaguely resemble the stalls of a rodeo arena. There are separate gates for men and women. Some of the workers had bicycles. The rest piled into the numerous chartered busses waiting in the parking lot. There are taxis waiting there as well, but these are not for the factory workers. A one-way trip by taxi costs almost a full day's wages.

After spending a few days in Honduras, I took a bus to El Salvador, which is where I am typing this from. I am also here as part of a delegation to observe the elections in El Salvador and work to prevent the fraud and

rampant human rights violations that characterize elections in this country. A fellow worker from the Portland GMB is also here on this delegation and her knowledge of the region has been helping me a great deal.

The first group we met with in El Salvador was SETA. Representing employees of ANDA, the nation's water utility, SETA is arguably one of the strongest unions in Central America. Dues are only \$3 a month, an affordable rate even here. The officers of the union are very activist oriented and work closely with the social movement in El Salvador. Through years of hard struggle, they have made significant advances, winning not only recognition and a decent contract but also the right to have a union office on ANDA property so the workers will have direct access to the union on the job. As one SETA organizer explained, "The cover of our collective bargaining agreement is red because it was won by the lives and blood of workers... We will continue to resist in spite of threats to our life."

Water privatization

The main struggle confronting SETA now is water privatization. Egged on by the neoliberal economists of the IMF and World Bank, Central American governments are contracting water services to private corporations based in Europe and North America.

For residents, this means a reduction in the quality of service as well as a drastic increase in prices. Poor and rural areas are hit hardest, and many communities only have running water for one hour out of the day. This is ironic because the poor neighborhoods are located at lower elevations where it is easier to transport water, whereas the rich neighborhoods tend to be higher up (where it's cooler) yet have 24-hour access to water. SETA alleges that ANDA's right-wing directors are purposely sabotaging water services in order to make privatization more palatable to voters. For water workers, privatization means massive layoffs, wage cuts and the destruction of unions that have thrived for decades.

SETA is working with local communities to stop municipal governments from contracting out their water resources. This alliance is an effective way to combat the right's strategy of bypassing resistance to privatization by encouraging local governments to contract out under the guise of "decentralization." They are also fighting to stop a proposed law that would require the Salvadoran government to contract out their water resources and services to the highest bidder.

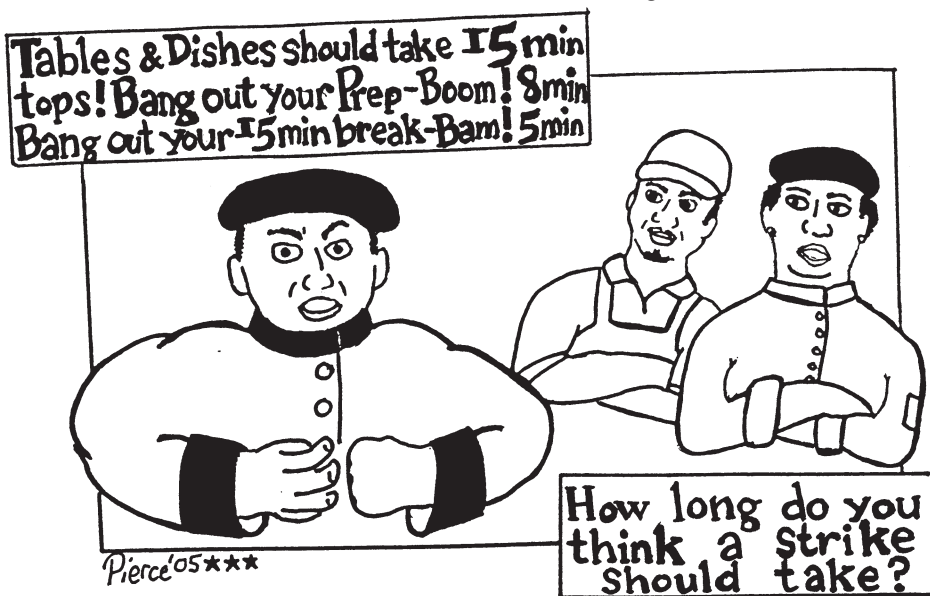
SETA is planning to send one of their members on a speaking tour in the United States later this year to obtain moral and financial support from North American unions. They are launching an education and media campaign to warn fellow Salvadorans of the dangers of water privatization and they have virtually no budget with which to do it.

Uniting the movement

I also met with members of the Popular Social Block (BPS), a grassroots coalition that brings together all sectors of El Salvador's social movement. Organized labor plays a strong role in the Block, with many unions and union members represented in the various issue-based committees of the organization. The unionists work side by side with students, women's organizations, community organizers and veterans of the civil war to accomplish joint goals and defend each other from the attacks of the right wing. Members are also combating repressive new laws and institutions such as the unconstitutional presence of a U.S. International Police Academy (ILEA) on Salvadoran soil. The BPS provides an excellent example of how organized labor can play an active and leading role in the wider social movement.

My last meeting so far was with the Salvadoran Union Front. The FSS is a new federation formed last July to mobilize the labor movement in El Salvador. Representing unions from many different sectors, the FSS is organizing around issues such as stopping the

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WIDE, WIDE WORLD OF SWEATSHOPS

Bangladeshi textile workers fight back

BY KENNETH MILLER, PITTSBURGH

On February 23, the KTS Textile factory in the Chitagong industrial area of Bangladesh collapsed in a fire. Nearly 100 workers were killed and many injured.

This was not an accident. The conditions that led to this factory collapse are typical throughout the free trade zones of Bangladesh. When members of the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh spoke in Pittsburgh on October 16, 2004, they told us about these conditions and warned that an “accident” like the one at KTS Textile factory was inevitable.

Workers are now in the streets of Bangladesh demanding money for the families of the dead, medical help for those who have been injured, compensation for the workers who are now out of a job, assistance finding new jobs, factory inspections throughout the industry, and formal recognition of their union. While the conditions in Bangladesh are similar to conditions in free trades in other parts of the world, the level of protest and industrial organization is not.

The National Garment Workers Federation has the largest and most sustained industrial union organizing drive in the world. Workers in hundreds of factories have joined the NGWF. While they have no legal recognition, workers in all these factories strike and protest together.

Workers in other countries organize shop by shop and judge their success with union contracts, when they lose a particular struggle they are left with no organization and no way to move forward. Long ago the NGWF made a decision to organize industrially and maintain their organization – and it’s paid off. The NGWF maintains its own campaigns and calls



implementation of CAFTA and another pending free trade agreement with the European Union, supporting the rights of emerging unions, demanding wage increases for public sector workers, improving social security, and resisting the push toward privatization.

Unlike U.S. federations like the AFL-CIO, officers of the FSS are not paid and most leaders perform their responsibilities in addition to working day jobs and organizing for their individual unions. Many are also involved in the BPS or other grassroots activist groups. The FSS doesn’t even have an office. Yet in the short time they have existed they have already taken huge strides toward creating a unified and militant voice for the Salvadoran labor movement. Much of the work that the FSS does involves popular education through means such as rallies, leafleting, visiting communities, going out on trucks with megaphones to spread the word (there is actually a word for this in Spanish), and coordinating with other social organizations.

The FSS is also taking the lead in organizing international alliances. On the social front, they are involved in the Bolivarian Alternative (ALBA), a collaborative effort that facilitates social and economic cooperation among the peoples of Latin America. It is a counter-initiative to the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. ALBA is sending Salvadoran students to Cuba to study medicine and it is hoped that they will return as doctors who are committed to care for the health of working-class Salvadorans. In the past few years, the idea of a “Bolivarian Revolution” (named after a historic leader who led a pan-Latino movement for independence from Spanish imperialism) has begun to transcend the cult of personality surrounding Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez and is becoming a catalyst for a new



PHOTOS: NATIONAL GARMENT WORKERS FEDERATION OF BANGLADESH

NGWF members celebrate International Women’s Day March 8 with a Red Flag Rally: Safe Workplace for the women! (90 percent of workers in the industry are young women) Equal salary! Equal Rights! Equal Dignity! Union! Union! Union!

for international solidarity. NGWF General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin is working closely with the National Labor Committee and information is available about KTS Textile and the current strikes in Bangladesh at www.nlcnet.org. The IWW’s International Solidarity Committee is also taking action.

Members of the Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance are writing local politicians and the embassy in Bangladesh. We are following up and asking questions about the situation in Bangladesh with the Fair Labor Association and contacting the distributors of KTS products. We are asking the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club to demand a full investigation into the conditions in factories that sew our baseball gear in Bangladesh. American Needle produces baseball caps in Bangladesh that retail here for \$27. We know that the average wage in the free trade zones of Bangladesh is about 17 cents.

The struggle of the NGWF is the best example of effective union organizing in any of the world’s free trade zones. Our solidarity can keep the cops and the security police from killing these organizers with impunity. If the workers’ most basic rights are respected, NGWF members are prepared to win their demands and lead workers in the global apparel industry.

grassroots internationalist movement among Latin America. FSS’s involvement in ALBA is an example of this.

Another international alliance that the FSS is active in is the Central American Common Union Platform (PSSC), a dynamic new initiative that is bringing together militant unions from all over Central America to fight CAFTA and other forms of economic imperialism. The FSS acknowledges that this is “a key region for the U.S. empire to dominate,” but insists that “it is a lie that the empire has it easy in Central America,” pointing as evidence to the fact that Costa Rica refused to sign on to CAFTA. “This means that solidarity and integration are very important to defeat the U.S. empire.”

The FSS is very clear about the need for international cooperation among workers and unions, especially between Central America and the United States. Members of the Salvadoran Union Front suggested that the new economic conditions that result from free trade policies will soon force the U.S. labor movement to unite and become more militant. “U.S. unions will be forced to unite with workers of other countries to fight the capitalist system.” An FSS organizer pointed out that the Bolivarian Alternative movement has already reached the U.S. For example, AMPA is facilitating the transfer of cheap oil from Venezuela to impoverished communities in New Orleans. The meeting ended on a high note, full of hope for the future, by declaring that “We triumph when we unite for social justice and peace.”

Advancing solidarity efforts

Such trips are just the first step in building solidarity with workers in the Global South. It is absolutely essential that the

Garment workers organize half-day protest strike

BY AMIRUL HAQUE AMIN, NGWF

Garment workers across Bangladesh joined a half-day strike March 2 to protest the fire and killing of garment workers at the KTS garment factory in Chitagong.

The main emergency exit to that factory was illegally locked, and workers put in 74 to 90 hours a week, for pay that averaged 10 to 14 cents an hour (several child workers who died were paid just seven cents an hour).

The March 2 strike, backed by 16 garment workers unions, closed most factories across the country including those in the export processing zone.

The National Garment Workers Federation is demanding compensation to the affected workers and the families of those who died, payment of full salary until the factory reopens, enforcement of regulations prohibiting the locking of factory exits during working hours, and the arrest and trial of the factory owners for industrial manslaughter.

The KTS factory made goods for U.S.-based firms including Uni Hosiery, ATT Enterprise, Leslee Scott, Mermaid Intl., Ambiance USA, O’Rite Intl., and Vida Enterprise.

Another Bangladeshi garment factory burned March 6, Saiem Fashion Ltd., killing at least three workers and injuring more than 50.

IWW follows up with this work. We need to establish an ongoing dialogue with these unions and other organizations, determine how best to support each others’ struggles, and start defining a path that will hopefully lead to more concrete alliances that will actually make a difference on the shop floor. This should include ongoing communication, solidarity actions through our media, campaigning against CAFTA and the still not-yet-quite-dead FTAA, hosting speaking tours by unionists from other countries, encouraging all IWWs who plan to visit other countries to meet with unions and social justice organizations in those countries, and expanding the capacity of the IWW’s International Solidarity Commission.

I cannot stress enough the importance of this kind of work, not only for the workers of the Global South but also for the formation of alternatives to the mainstream labor movement in the U.S. and the establishment of something that genuinely approaches the ideal of “one big union for all the workers.”

The people of Central America are incredibly generous and forgiving. The groups I met with here are willing to distinguish the American people from the American empire and see us as fellow victims of its oppressive policies. We owe it to the millions of workers, students and campesinos that have fought, suffered and died for justice and freedom, as well as to the globe-trotting, border-hopping heroes of the IWW’s own pantheon, to make these connections and work toward the creation of a genuinely global labor movement.

If you would like to learn more about the results of my trip, you can email me at mike.pesa@gmail.com. You can contact the ISC at solidarity@iww.org.

2006 All Star freeze

The Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance is pressing the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club to publicly advocate for all of Major League Baseball’s apparel licensing agreements to be locked in the factories where the apparel is currently being produced, thereby strengthening workers’ ability to press for better conditions. This is the “SweatFree Baseball Multi Fiber Freeze” that we think we can win at the 2006 All Star Game on July 11 at PNC Park.

This is a campaign intended to stop the “race to the bottom” and the practice of abandoning production sites when workers organize a labor union. Being able to tell workers that the baseball apparel that they produce is locked into their production site is a demonstration of solidarity that will facilitate a new level of labor union organizing in free trade zones all over the world.

The July 11 All Star game is the pinnacle of the baseball season and we have to use the momentum of the baseball season to arrive at PNC Park in force that day.

Building toward the All Star game is a unique opportunity for us to have a powerful demonstration in Pittsburgh – but we also have to depend on other SweatFree Baseball campaigns to go public and make local baseball demands this year. The Pirates are under tremendous pressure from Major League Baseball because everyone knows that any action that the Pirates take will have an immediate impact on the entire league and the other major league sports will be pressed to follow soon after.

It does not matter whether actions and demands are made on other Major League Baseball teams, minor league teams, or are procurement campaigns targeted at school teams, city leagues or softball leagues. Baseball is baseball and softball and it all boils down to momentum towards the All Star game in Pittsburgh. Whatever you do, mention the demonstration at PNC Park at the All Star Game on July 11, the SweatFree Baseball Multi Fiber Freeze, and copy PASCA in your correspondence.

The strength of PASCA’s campaigning has always been that we talk talk talk to baseball fans about sweatshops. Baseball fans do care and baseball fans in our communities have high expectations for workers’ rights.

Major League Baseball tries to control everything about the baseball experience at the ball park, the news media coverage, its relationships with politicians and local sports authorities... the Pittsburgh Pirates are learning that their message is out of control. People know how bad things are in the global apparel industry and that the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club is in a position to reverse the exploitation in the world’s free trade zones.

The 2006 All Star Multi Fiber Freeze will be presented at the third annual International SweatFree Communities Conference in Minneapolis April 9 by members of the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance, the Ft. Wayne Workers Project and the United Workers Association of Baltimore. Check out www.sweatfree.org for details on the conference.

Keep us posted on your local efforts: Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance, Azania Heritage International TMC, 1525 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15224, Nosweatshopsbucco@yahoo.com.

Labor Notes conference

Building Solidarity From Below is the theme of a conference sponsored by *Labor Notes* in Detroit May 5-7.

In addition to panel discussions, there will be over 50 workshops, including: Strike Strategy, Bargaining Strategies, Building Rank and File Organizing Committees, Solidarity Across Borders, Non-majority Unions, Workers’ Rights and Civil Liberties Since 9/11, and many more. To register: www.labornotes.org/conferences/

Labor Board strips temps, grad employees of labor rights

BY ALEXANDER NICE

When it matters most, the Republican members of the National Labor Relations Board – two of them former union-busting attorneys – consistently vote along party lines to strip workers of their rights. Since 2004 the Republican majority has repeatedly voted to overturn important rights, including recent decisions denying the rights of graduate student workers and temporary workers to organize into unions.

The federal NLRB, created by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, is intended to act as an independent agency to protect the rights of workers to organize into unions. However, since Board members are nominated by the president and confirmed by Senate, politics play an undeniable role in NLRB decisions. When NLRB Chairman Robert J. Battista was appointed by President Bush in November 2002, he called the Board “a dedicated impartial agency” and promised to enforce the NLRA “in a fair, balanced, and even-handed manner.” The record indicates, though, that the chairman and his former management attorney colleagues usually vote in a bloc, exhibiting a strong pro-employer bias in landmark cases.

Workers threatened with firings or disciplinary action for trying to organize a union can take their unfair labor practice case to a NLRB field office that investigates the claim. About two-thirds of the 30,000 complaints received each year are dismissed by the field office. Nearly all of the remaining cases are settled informally, but those that aren’t settled go to an administrative law judge whose decisions can be appealed to the national Board. Complaints that wind up in front of the Board, then, are the most controversial and set precedents that have a major impact on the rights of workers everywhere.

Rights of temp workers

The Oakwood Care Home in Oakdale, New York, is a 280-bed facility for elderly and disabled residents requiring the long-term care of a large medical and non-medical staff. Local 1199 petitioned to represent all nurse’s assistants, orderlies, transporters, maintenance, laundry persons, cooks and other support staff into the Health and Human Services Union. Many of those workers were what the Board called “jointly employed,” since their paychecks come from a third-party agency. Both Oakwood Care and the employment agency N&W refused to recognize the temporary workers’ right to join the union and asked the Board to review the case.

The “temporary” staff and regular staff

collect the same bedpans, mop the same floors, and walk the same halls and stairs every day. They work the same hours under the same supervision and conditions as regular workers. They wear the same name tags as regular employees, and identify themselves as Oakwood Care staff. The only thing that makes these workers non-regular is the fact that they received different paychecks. However, Chairman Battista and his Republican colleagues all agreed that even though the temporary staff do same work, they don’t have the same rights.

The Board majority justified its November 2004 decision by saying that the union would have to deal with two different employers, creating “fragmented bargaining,” meaning confusion and conflict between workers in the same union on different pay scales, and confusion between employment agencies and employers like Oakwood who are customers of such agencies. The two Democrat members of the Board – Wilma Leibman (a former union attorney) and Dennis Walsh (a career NLRB lawyer who did a short stint as a union attorney) – dissented, noting that “the Board effectively bars yet another group of employees from organizing labor unions, ... accelerating the expansion of a permanent underclass of workers.” The decision overturned an August 2000 decision that ruled in favor of temporary workers at an M.B. Sturgis manufacturing plant in Missouri.

Since July 2000, the U.S. has lost 3 million manufacturing jobs. As manufacturing jobs continue to leave the country, the temporary help industry continues to expand. In 1982 only 400,000 people worked as temps in the U.S., but by 2000 their number had swelled to 3.5 million. Those working in manufacturing jobs like Sturgis, or in the service industry like the workers at Oakwood Care, often start at temporary employment agencies at lower wages and less benefits than regular employees, working in the hope that their temp employment will lead to a permanent position offering a more livable wage. Temp workers are often led to believe that their time working through a temp agency is like part of a screening process.

However, the true value of temporary workers for a company is cost-cutting and flexibility. Keeping a large percentage of their workforce temporary is used by many companies to save on insurance, vacation time, and other labor costs. The company is under no obligation to hire new permanent workers, and can keep bringing in new batches of temps. Temps are also easy to terminate, and are the first necks on the chopping block dur-

Bosses seek to outlaw card check union recognition

Card checks – where employers recognize unions after a majority sign union representation cards rather than through NLRB representation elections – were used to sign up roughly 70 percent of the private-sector workers who joined unions last year, according to the AFL-CIO. That compares with less than 5 percent two decades ago.

Over the past year, the procedure has been used to unionize 4,600 workers at the Wynn Las Vegas hotel-casino, 5,000 janitors in Houston and 16,500 workers at Cingular, the cellphone company.

“Under the National Labor Relations Act, the election process in the United States has turned into a meat grinder for workers,” says UNITE HERE president Bruce Raynor. “Each year 20,000 workers are fired or retaliated against for supporting a union.”

“Elections just don’t work,” AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff told the *New York Times*. “The process is too broken.”

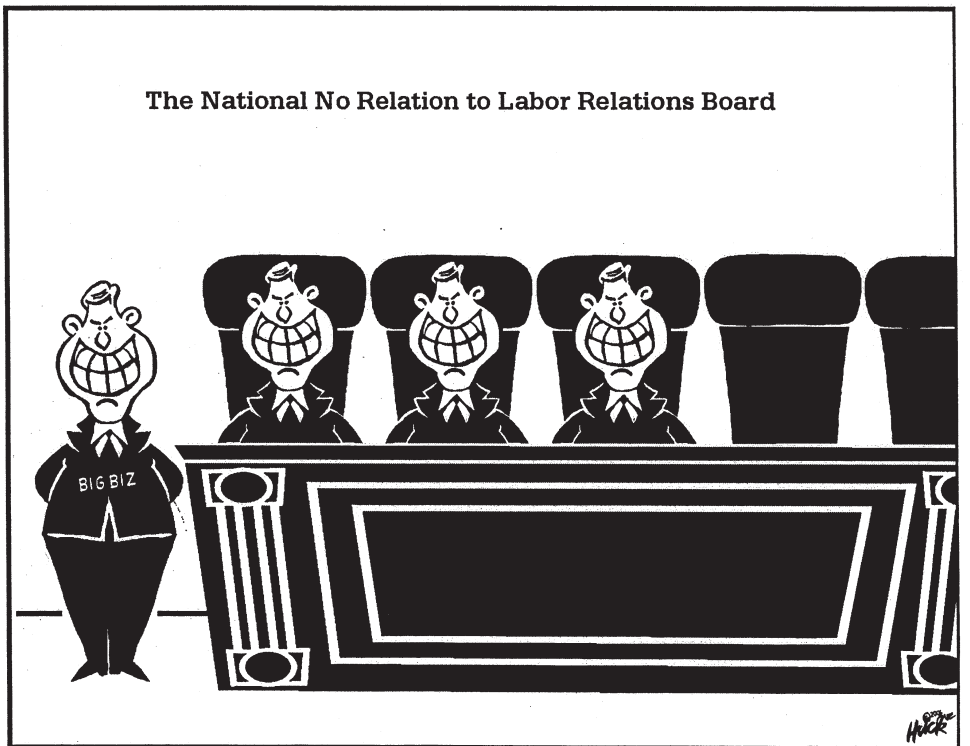
A recent study by professors at the University of Illinois at Chicago found that during unionization elections, 30 percent of employers fire pro-union workers and 49 percent threaten to close work sites if the

union wins.

Although employers are under no legal obligation to recognize unions that demonstrate majority support through card checks, they are nevertheless in an uproar over the tactic and are pressing to have it outlawed both through an NLRB challenge and in Congress. Representative Charlie Norwood, a Georgia Republican who chairs the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, is sponsoring legislation to outlaw card checks. His bill has 81 co-sponsors.

Unions are backing a rival bill that would give unions the legal right to demand recognition through card checks, but it has little chance of passage. Instead they use a variety of tactics to persuade companies to accept card checks, ranging from public pressure campaigns to raising the issue during contract talks at other facilities where unions already have representation.

“A worker can join a church or synagogue or the Republican Party by signing a card,” Raynor told the *Times*. “That’s how people join organizations in the United States. The idea that workers can’t join a union by signing their name is ludicrous.”



ing economic recession. During the post-911 recession of late 2001, more than 600,000 temp workers lost their full-time jobs.

In short, the bargaining position of the growing numbers of temporary workers was poor, and the NLRB made it worse.

Graduate student workers

Colleges, too, are increasingly relying on part-time, contingent workers to carry out their teaching and other functions. When 450 research assistants, teaching assistants and other graduate student workers at Brown University wanted to join the United Auto Workers, Brown University challenged their right to union protection. In July 2004 the Board ruled that they were “primarily students and not statutory employees... having a primarily academic rather than economic relationship with their school.”

The Board had decided in 2000 that a unit of 1,700 graduate employees were in a traditional work relationship with New York University, since they “perform[ed] services for another, under the other’s control and in return for payment.” However, the GOP-controlled Board overturned the NYU precedent. NYU’s grad employees were forced onto picket lines in November in an effort to preserve their hard-won union rights through industrial action, and TAs at several other private colleges (public colleges are covered under state labor laws) have lost not only their right to collective bargaining but also the right to be protected against a wide range of unfair labor practices.

Grad students working as TAs, RAs and medical interns are adults with professional skills. Though much of their time is spent working on their dissertations and class work, they often also end up working full-time hours in laboratories, teaching classes, grading papers, and serving a list of other functions that can only be described as hard work. Some are married or single parents without family leave and limited child-care options. The Board characterized their wages as financial aid or a stipend. Grad employees at Brown University receive a stipend of only \$12,800 a year, paid in small portions twice a month after subtracting the on-campus health services fee and tuition (and income taxes). In short, these are teachers and researchers living near the poverty line.

As with the Oakwood Care case involving temp workers, Democratic members Leibman and Walsh voted against the ruling. Their dissent notes that the decision is based on the flawed logic that the “academic world is somehow removed from the economic realm.” They state that the majority fails to recognize current economic and academic realities: that grad students work longer hours than they used to, that they depend on their stipend for their income, and that without this type of worker universities across the country would not be able to function.

In this line of cases, the Board majority has stripped temporary and part-time workers of basic labor rights at the very moment when such contingent labor is increasingly

central to the emerging economy. While the declining share of workers in more traditional jobs continue to have the right to choose union representation (if with ever more limited protections; other recent decisions have expanded employers’ rights to threaten employees considering unionization, to discipline workers for talking to one another, and to insist upon dealing with workers individually even when they have sought the assistance of their coworkers), the Board is carving out a second-class status for the contingent workers more and more prevalent in the new economy.

Danger signs ahead

With the recess appointments early this year of union-busting lawyer Peter Kirsanow and Dennis Walsh (these short-term appointments do not require Senate approval), the Board is back up to full strength for the first time in many months. As the *BNA Union Labor Report* notes, the new appointments “make conditions ripe for deciding a number of important pending cases.”

Among the cases that have been lingering on the Board’s docket is a challenge to the Board’s rule giving newly recognized unions a one-year period before they can be challenged, in order to provide an opportunity to negotiate a first contract. Anti-union forces are seeking the right to immediately seek to decertify unions recognized through card check agreements. Other pending cases involve management efforts to deny workers rights by classifying them as supervisors, refusal to collect union dues, unilateral withdrawal of union recognition, efforts to ban unions from using email systems, and a challenge to long-standing Board rules that employees must enjoy the same right to communicate about union and workplace issues during non-work hours as they have to discuss other matters (charities are being used as a stalking horse in this case).

As the NLRB is increasingly dominated by management attorneys whose professional life has been devoted to denying workers the right to organize, even the most established precedents are no longer considered safe.

FBI grills professor over support for Venezuela

A Pomona College professor who is an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy was questioned March 7 by two agents from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department and the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) in what he calls an act of intimidation.

The detectives questioned Miguel Tinker-Salas for about 20 minutes in his office. After they left, students told him the detectives had asked them about his background, classes and politics.

A Latin American and Chicano histories professor, Tinker-Salas believes he was targeted as a result of his criticism of U.S. policy toward Venezuela and Latin America. Tinker-Salas was born in Venezuela but has lived in the United States since high school.

General strike against immigration “reform”

continued from page 1

At the rally at the Federal Building local Democratic Party bigwigs spoke to those who were actually able make it there. Gov. Rod Blagojevich, Mayor “Little Dick” Daley, Senator Dick Durbin and Congressmen Bobbie Rush and Luis Gutierrez all denounced the pending legislation noting that the city of Chicago was build by immigrant labor. Employers are undoubtedly concerned that this legislation will cut into their profit margins by depriving them of low-wage labor and the politicians want those Latino votes.

A small group of the anti-immigrant Illinois Minuteman Project held a press conference in Grant Park at 10:00 a.m. Their Latina-token front, Rosanna Pulido, declared, “I don’t care if there’s three million people out there, if they are illegal they do not have a voice in America.” What a putz!

The Chicago GMB voted at our March 3 meeting to endorse the protest, at the request of Union Latina. Unfortunately, we were not able to mobilize a visible contingent in so short a time. A call was sent to our e-list to meet up at the edge of Union Park but when I got there with my IWW flag there were already so many people it was impossible to find any other Wobs. Several people, however, did ask me what IWW meant. When I informed them that it was “Trabajadores Industriales del Mundo, mi sindicato” they nodded in appreciation.

March 10 was the largest workers’ demonstration in Chicago history. Not since 80,000 workers marched down Michigan Avenue in 1886 to demand an 8-hour work-day has there been such a demonstration of solidarity in the streets of the Windy City. Still, in many ways, it was a conservative movement, aimed at preserving the chance at the American Dream for this new wave of immigrants that was enjoyed by those of past generations. On the other, hand it graphically showed the potential power of immigrant labor when united in a common cause.

Hopefully efforts to organize immigrant labor in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs will be given a boost by this show of solidarity. It should certainly awaken local Wobs up to the need to strengthen our connections to immigrant workers.

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Similar actions have been held across the country, including a March 7 rally in Washington, D.C. that drew some 20,000 workers. Philadelphia Wobblies will be joining the city’s second “paro” (work stoppage) March 27, as organizers deliberately schedule demonstrations on work days in order to force employers to recognize their reliance upon immigrant workers.



Give a friend a ride... from page 1 eliminating judicial review for many administrative decisions on immigration and visa applications. It allows the Attorney General to criminalize free association by declaring virtually any group a “criminal street gang,” making mere membership in the group, without any personal participation in criminal acts, a felony, for which an immigrant can be deported and banished for life.

Several similar bills are also pending before the Senate. They offer variations on the same program, some more, some less oppressive. None, however, appears to address, or even to recognize, the economic origins of the recent, dramatic increase in immigration to the U.S. The government seems content to continue its usual practice of treating social problems by declaring their victims to be criminals, while leaving the causes untouched. The possibility that the upsurge in immigration of impoverished workers from Latin America may be directly linked to the recent imposition of international free-trade

More American workers turn to soup kitchens

As the economy has steadily grown over the last four years, at least as measured by government economists, so too has the number of Americans going hungry.

Congress responded to the news by passing tax bills to give the richest Americans another \$70 billion in tax breaks.

America’s Second Harvest, the nation’s largest charitable-food distribution network, is now providing help to more than 25 million people, an 8 percent increase over 2001. Congress has approved some \$880 billion in tax breaks during that time.

That increase in the number of people who are hungry or “food insecure” – bureaucratized for “not sure where their next meal will come from” – is reflected in data collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture

agreements like the FTAA, seems to escape the notice of U.S. legislators.

Meanwhile, immigrant groups and advocates are not standing idly by. Though the bill’s rapid and easy passage in the House of Representatives seems to have come as a surprise to some immigrant groups, an opposition movement is building. In Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., demonstrations took place February 14th as part of a movement that is becoming known as “el Paro” (Spanish for “the stoppage”). Washington, D.C., workers again rallied on March 7th, drawing some ten thousand people. Then, on March 10th, immigrant workers in Chicago staged a mass strike, and paralyzed the central city with a rally that drew more than 300,000 people.

The significance and consequences of these actions have not yet become clear, but there are more than eight million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., and if the pending legislation wakens them to the need for economic organization, their power will be formidable.

as well. In 2005, it found that more than 38 million Americans lived in “hungry or food insecure” households, an increase of 5 million since 2000.

“Even though individuals may have a job, they still are having a hard time making ends meet,” said Maura Daly, a spokeswoman for Second Harvest, which is based in Chicago. “We find many people have to make choices between food and other basic necessities like paying for utilities and heat.”

More than 35 percent of the people who are served by the charity – about 10 million workers – come from homes with at least one working adult. But because incomes have not kept up with the rising cost of living, many workers can not afford enough food to feed their families, not surprising when you consider that the average household income of those working families is just \$11,250.

AK Steel Middletown lockout

Armco Employees Independent Federation members came to the negotiating table after a three-day lockout by AK Steel at the beginning of March. AK locked out union workers when their contract expired.

However, the 2,700 workers’ efforts were postponed when AK announced that U.S. Steel was discussing a buy out of the firm.

The union asked for time to collect information and assess its bargaining position. Meanwhile, scabs and managers are running the AK Steel facility in Middletown, Ohio.

Workers have been walking picket lines for three weeks now, with managers abandoning bargaining talks in less than an hour.

AK Steel insists it needs to cut pensions, lay off workers, change job classifications, and reduce health benefits in order to meet global competition in the 105-year-old mill.

AK Steel has a history of lock out tactics and manipulation of PR to bust the union. In 1999, 620 workers were locked out of its Mansfield plant for 39 months.

AEIF has no strike fund, AK Steel halted health benefits when the contract expired.

Northwest pilots accept concessions

Northwest mechanics and cleaning workers continue to walk picket lines alone, as flight attendants, ground crews, pilots and other workers scab on the seven-month old strike by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association. However, several unions are balking at the carrier’s insatiable demand for new concessions, even as they continue waltzing across picket lines.

While 7,700 clerical and passenger service workers represented by the International Association of Machinists voted to accept new concessions, 5,600 ground crew workers rejected \$190 million in concessions that would have reduced starting pay to as little as \$7.30 an hour and cost 2,500 IAM members their jobs. The airline has threatened to ask a federal bankruptcy judge to impose the cuts.

Pilots have accepted new concessions, and flight attendants are voting on a 21% pay cut and 1,200 lay-offs. The proposed contract runs through 2011 and would cut pay for flight attendants to a range of \$18,000 to \$36,000 a year. The contract would also cut vacation time and increase working hours, but would give laid-off workers the right to claim lower-paying jobs at Northwest’s new regional line.

Meanwhile, the Labor Department has launched an investigation into Northwest’s failure over three years to make required payments into its employee pension fund, leaving the fund \$5.8 billion short when Northwest dumped it on the federal government in the midst of the mechanics’ strike.

Second Wal-Mart goes union with UFCW Canada

Another Canadian Wal-Mart location has been certified seven months after a majority of workers at a Wal-Mart Tire and Lube Express shop in Surrey, British Columbia, voted in favor of unionizing. The vote was originally held in September 2005 but Wal-Mart held true to its usual pattern of litigation and delay. It took until March 3 for the British Columbia Labor Relations Board to work through Wal-Mart’s legal challenges and authorize a count of the ballots at two of the company’s tire and lube shops in Surrey.

The vote at one location was narrowly lost, 5-7, but at the other location the vote was 7-2 in favor of the union. UFCW Canada’s national director, Michael Fraser, said: “We are making steady progress in spite of Wal-Mart’s bullying and employee intimidation.”

Unions and the environment

An international Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment brought 150 union representatives to Nairobi in mid-January to meet with environmental experts and governments and exchange information on campaigns where workers struggles were successfully linked to environmental concerns.

The assembly agreed on major objectives including strengthening the links between poverty reduction, environmental protection and decent work, and integrating the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development with a rights-based approach. The Assembly also recognized that urgent action on climate change has to be taken, and that sustainable production and consumption patterns will have to be promoted.

Long hours in Britain

Alarmed at the growing numbers of workers “voluntarily” agreeing to work long hours in Britain, the European Commission has launched an investigation into the UK’s opt-out from the 48-hour working week.

Around 16 percent of people in the country work more than 48 hours a week, the most in Europe. Britain is the only country in the European Union where working hours have increased over the last decade.

Meanwhile, a poll of British school children found that more than a third said their parents frequently brought work home with them, interfering with family life.

Inequality & working hours

A recent paper by economists Samuel Bowles and Yongjin Park and published in the *Economic Journal* concludes that increased inequality induces people to work longer hours – something they attribute to the contagion of conspicuous consumption, rather than to economic coercion or hardship.



Swiss building workers block 48-hour week ploy

A strike call by the UNIA union forced construction giant Marti to rescind its decision to increase the work week from 45 to 48 hours to make up for time lost to poor weather. The union had given Marti 12 hours to withdraw the plan or face a strike on Marti’s Islisberg motorway tunnel project. The company and Master Builders’ Association initially responded by threatening to tear up its contract with the union, but backed down. Earlier, a threatened strike on a rail tunnel project forced contractors to pay premiums for Saturday work.

Switzerland’s constitution was amended to include the right to strike only six years ago. Employers continue to believe strikes are illegal, and that workers are required to submit to government arbitration instead.

Students protest for adjunct workers rights, free speech

BY BRIAN KELLY, NEW YORK

On March 13, students from the Campus Antiwar Network and the Students for a Democratic Society – joined by other students, professors, original SDSers and CAN members from CCNY – launched one of the largest demonstrations Pace University’s campus had seen, against Pace’s denial of our free speech rights. The university, not accustomed to being challenged, let alone having to deal with large protests, was not prepared for it.

While Pace University President David Caputo gave his “State of the University” address, an annual ritual of self-congratulation, we exposed the real state of the university: infringement of civil liberties; union-busting of the adjunct professors’, cafeteria workers’ and transportation workers’ unions; and a deficit of \$3.2 million. All this while Pace is “celebrating” its 100th anniversary.

First, we held a press conference on the steps of New York City Hall addressing repression of both students and workers at Pace. The latest example of Pace’s intolerance of dissent is its threat to expel two students (myself and Lauren Giaccone) who dared to heckle former U.S. president Bill Clinton – a war criminal whose sanctions on Iraq killed more Iraqis than even President Bush’s deadly war – at Pace’s Pleasantville campus on March 5 while he was giving a speech about

“spreading democracy” and “working for peace.” The threatened expulsion came on top of Pace’s apparent cooperation with the Secret Service in their attempt to get a hold of such information as our political affiliation and medical records.

Revealing Pace’s attitude to free speech, three top members of Pace University’s security office followed students through the streets to City Hall and watched the press conference closely. Undaunted, we then marched toward Pace’s downtown campus, chanting, “Free Speech! Free Speech!”

As we began our protest after the press conference, one of the NYPD inspectors pulled me and Lauren aside. They had the temerity to ask whether we intended to “burn down the building” or go inside. What kind of question is that?

Surrounded by a dozen police officers on motorcycles on one side and several Pace Security officers on the other side, we loudly demanded: “Support Free Speech on Campus.” We read out letters of support from Cindy Sheehan and other leading anti-war and free speech activists who had written to President Caputo asking him to drop all charges against me and Lauren.

We spoke out on a bullhorn for barely 15 minutes before the NYPD stopped us, claiming that it was a violation of city code

for us to use amplified sound. We put the bullhorn away in the interest of protecting all the supporters there, but not before we informed them of the First Amendment of the United States and *Saia v. New York*, in which the Supreme Court stated: “Loud-speakers are today indispensable instruments of effective public speech. ... It is the way people are reached.”

Police and campus security weren’t the only authorities present. A white Department of Homeland Security car drove by, pausing and then speeding away back onto the Brooklyn Bridge when activists attempted to photograph it. What was Homeland Security doing at a campus protest, you may ask? That’s par for course today. Remember when the Pentagon was caught spying on anti-war activists? Many Campus Antiwar Network rallies and counter-recruitment protests were on the Pentagon’s surveillance list leaked to the press. The government is making it clear: if you are against the war or step out of what

we define as acceptable free speech, We Are Watching You.

As the protest neared its end, several of us decided to enter the university and question President Caputo during a question-and-answer session after his “State of University” address. Not surprisingly, we were met with resistance from campus security, who said they would have us removed on “disorderly conduct charges” after one activist put a free speech sign up to the glass of the window where Caputo was speaking. After we were finally let in, Caputo swiftly ended the q&a session. As he was leaving, though, we confronted him about the repression of free speech on campus. Caputo agreed to meet with the group after spring break.

The battle is not over. Pace students plan to continue our fight until we are allowed to express ourselves freely, as guaranteed by the First Amendment, and until Pace University amends its unconstitutional policy that prohibits free speech and free assembly.

SEIU head seeks partnership with bosses

U.S. workers have become too expensive and need to become more competitive, Service Employees International Union President Andy Stern recently told Matt Bai from the New York Times. “American workers won’t be able to compete fairly for jobs until companies have to pay higher wages in countries like China and India.”

SEIU’s goal for 2006 is to go global and to bring unions and corporations together as partners, not enemies, Stern told Lenny Mendonca, in an article published by global think-tank McKinsey & Co. “What we’re going to see happen within ten years, if not sooner, is a convergence of a global labor movement, a global corporate responsibility movement, and nongovernmental organizations.”

“We are living in the most significant economic revolution in world history. The world is changing. Work is changing.”

Stern said SEIU’s goal is to create an environment where corporations are not trying to get the most out of the least, leaving workers without fair compensation.

“Employers need to recognize that the

world has changed and there are people who would like to help them provide solution in ways that are new, modern and that add value to companies,” Stern said. On the other side of the coin, union members have to understand that companies are not their enemy. “Labor should ask itself, ‘How can I contribute to meeting those [shareholders]’ expectations in a way that also meets mine?’”

Stern said he will work to build a network of affiliated unions worldwide to address the increasing globalization of jobs. U.S. unions could provide financial support to unions in other countries, and use their power in developed countries to support efforts to improve conditions. “Other unions have political power, and if we think together we may be able to use the global economy to our advantage,” Stern concluded.

Latin America’s autonomous organizing

BY MARIE TRIGONA, ARGENTINA

Activists met in Uruguay for the fourth Latin American Conference of Popular Autonomous Organizations February 24-26. Over 300 delegates from Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay organized the event as a space to strategize autonomous organizing and coordinate direct actions.

This year’s conference focused on building popular power in Latin America among organizations autonomous from the state, political parties and NGOs. The participating organizations orient towards class struggle and libertarian practices, grass roots organizing, direct democracy and mutual solidarity.

Delegates discussed how people can solve their own problems without depending on the state or any other institution. Social



PHOTO: JESSICA HAWTHORN

Art and Unrest

That was the theme of the Edmonton Branch’s art show, which featured an array of paintings, photographs, prints and multi-media work by local Wobblies. The show opened Jan. 5 to a packed house at the Remedy Café. The new issue of The Wobbly Dispatch (the Edmonton branch newsletter) features photographs of the opening and some of the art as well as an essay on the IWW’s artistic tradition.

Kaplan faculty seek to organize first union of ‘online’ university staff

Faculty at an online school called Kaplan University, owned by the Washington Post Company, are organizing a union to fight pressure from administrators to inflate student grades, disrespect and intimidation.

The initiative has been called by 50 professors with the assistance of the UAW, who would represent 110 full-time and 1,500 adjuncts located across the U.S.

Professors at Kaplan risk dismissal should they speak openly to the press in their organizing efforts, according to a report by Dan Carnevale in the March 15 *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Faculty at the for-profit online college are under pressure not only to avoid failing students, but also not to take measures against cheating. Kaplan asks that students should resubmit work that is suspect.

Since student evaluations carry a lot of weight in rehire decisions, professors, and especially adjuncts, risk not getting hired should they get unsatisfactory remarks.

According to the *Chronicle*, adjuncts have been asked to attend special retraining programs on their own time in order to satisfy the customer service criteria.

Kaplan enrolls 50,000 students online.

organizations face new challenges due to the resurgence of “progressive” social democratic victories. Take, for example, the case of Uruguay’s social movements. Many of Uruguay’s social movements have demobilized after the inauguration of Tabare Vazquez. In all of the workshops, participants discussed how to prevent growing expectations in social democratic governments from impeding the accumulation of popular power.

Everything at the congress was auto-gestionado (self-managed), from the olla popular (collectively cooked meal) to cleaning and maintenance. Artists performed spontaneous theatre and Afro-Uruguayan popular music, Candome, into the wee hours of the night.

The participants represented a diverse array of activist work and focuses that included human rights groups, unions, community centers, alternative media outlets, unem-

London May Day march

Unionists from South Africa and Australia will join the May Day March for Workplace Justice jointly organised by the TUC and the London May Day Organising Committee. Greg Combet of the Australian Council of Trade Unions will tell marchers about the campaign in Australia against the Howard Government’s plan to restrict employee rights. Randall Howard, the general secretary of the South African Transport and Allied Workers’ Union, will also speak.

The march will assemble on Clerkenwell Green at noon on Monday May 1 and march to a rally in Trafalgar Square.

*May Day
Holiday Celebration!*

Saturday, April 29, 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Bulgarian-Macedonian Hall
449 West 8th Ave., West Homestead, PA

Music (interested musicians are urged to contact the branch), **Dramatic Skit** from the IWW’s **Work People’s College**, cash bar, open mic, literature

Midnight march to Homestead Strikers’ Monument

Please bring food to share, not drinks

Co-sponsored by the Pittsburgh I.W.W.
For info e-mail: pittsburghiww@yahoo.com

ALL FRIENDS OF LABOR WELCOME – FREE EVENT

Our union & theirs

BY NICK DREIDGER, EDMONTON

So the big shots from Ottawa are in this week to negotiate with the bosses. They step out of their Cadillacs and into the main office. Two sets of pale men in tailored suits stand face to face, and you wonder if your bosses just stepped in front of a mirror.

“*These* people are here to represent us?” you think to yourself.

At the union meeting, the heads of the local went over the contract, with print as fine as the TV guide and language as dense as the law, and you nod like only someone who has no idea what the hell is going on can. Maybe the talking heads up front tell you it’s time to fight, or maybe they tell you it’s time to settle – either way, they give the impression they have a handle on things. They are in control, and they are here to protect you.

Unions weren’t always like this, and some unions today are worse than others. But I’d like to outline the way a union could work. Imagine a union with very few paid officials instead of a small army of them; imagine a union based on workers doing things themselves instead of waiting for ‘the experts’ to take care of it. Imagine a union that has so much faith in its own members it not only thinks they can run the union themselves; they think their members can run the whole economy too. Maybe you’ve heard of this union – it’s called the IWW.

The Industrial Workers of the World was founded in Chicago in 1905, about a hundred years ago. We were one of the first unions to organize blacks, whites, women, the Chinese, skilled and unskilled labour together into ‘One Big Union.’ Wobblies, as we came to be known in later years, may be idealists, but we have also been on the front lines of just about every major battle that labour has faced in the past 100 years – even if not officially, you better believe there was at least a dual carder (a member with a card in another union) nearby.

The IWW believes in organizing the workers first and the job second. To us, a union can and should have some members who do organizing, but every member is also an organizer in their own way. For this reason, we run our union as a model of democracy: the General Executive Board is elected annually and many important decisions are made at the local level instead of the national. Initiatives start at the grassroots level, and are carried out by the rank and file.

We may be idealists of sorts but we also stand at the intersection of ideals and practicality. There are few things as radical as the day-to-day struggles of ordinary people and it is this that we base our unionism on. Big tasks are made manageable if broken into smaller pieces, and while fighting sexual harassment (for example) in one workplace may not seem like a massive social change, without people doing something about it on a daily basis the big changes would never happen.

While many unions try to anticipate problems before they occur and try to build a contract with the boss that will ensure fair play, the IWW anticipates nothing beyond the boss looking out for himself, so the IWW does likewise. Where contracts are necessary we treat them as temporary truces and do our best to keep our hands from being bound by promises not to strike. Put bluntly, we don’t recognize any inherent right of the employer to decide how the company is run.

There is no doubt that most unions have their members’ best interests at heart, but sometimes we worry that they are running on empty. While we stand in solidarity with the rest of the labour movement, we are not ashamed of our different way of doing things, and we definitely aren’t afraid to criticize. After all, if solidarity merely meant agreement we would have been absorbed into the mainstream long ago, it is precisely because we are different that we have survived as long as we have. Because of this many consider us radicals; we prefer to think of ourselves as rebels.

Mexican unions fight for independence

Mexican unions are threatening a nation-wide general strike unless the government withdraws its effort to oust the head of the miners union. Some 30,000 members of the National Workers Union (UNT), the Mexican Electrical Workers (SME), and the National Mine and Metal Workers Union marched through Mexico City March 7 to demand the immediate reinstatement of mine workers’ union president, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, and the removal of Mexico’s labor secretary.

Earlier, more than a quarter million miners and steelworkers joined wildcat strikes at 70 companies in central and northern Mexico March 1-3, paralyzing the mining industry. The wildcat followed the Feb. 19 explosion in the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in Coahuila that killed 65 miners. The Mineworkers Union has accused owner Grupo México of industrial homicide, and claimed that government labor boards ignored its complaints of violations of safety standards.

After Gómez demanded a criminal investigation into the disaster, the secretary of labor revived a six-year-old complaint it had rejected four years earlier challenging the legitimacy of his election, and decided to install the challenger as acting president. Writing in *Labor Notes*, Dan LaBotz, who

has closely followed Mexican labor struggles for decades, suggests that the ouster may in part have been motivated by Gómez’s recent efforts to reposition himself and the union he inherited from his father as an independent force after decades of collaboration with the government and employers. (Gómez never worked as a miner; he is an Oxford-trained lawyer who took over the union presidency six years ago from his father, who controlled the union from 1960 to 2000.) In the last year, Gómez has campaigned against legislation to create a more “flexible” labor market, helping to defeat the measure in the Chamber of Deputies, sought to build alliances with unions in the United States, and waged a number of strikes for better pay and to bring mine maintenance and service workers into the union’s bargaining unit.

Ironically, even as he successfully fought flexibility in congress, subcontracting has grown enormously in the mines. Two-thirds of the miners who died in the Pasta de Conchos explosion were non-union miners working on temporary contracts.

The government also claims Gómez misused millions of dollars paid the union to assist workers who lost their jobs when the mining industry was privatized.



General strike in Greece shuts down country

On March 15 Greek private and public sector unions GSEE and ADEDY, which comprise 60 percent of the workforce or 2.5 million members, closed down most of the country and severely restricted transportation in a 24-hour general strike action. Thousands of workers occupied the streets in rallies against government-imposed economic “reforms” that would undercut workers’ rights and living standards.

Korean workers plan general strike

A militant South Korean union has threatened to launch a nationwide general strike April 3 against legislation aimed at allowing employers greater flexibility to use temporary and sub-contracted workers. The KCTU also demanded a halt to free trade agreement negotiations with the U.S.

The warning followed successful strikes at Hyundai and Kia motors and other major firms which led parliament to delay consideration of the legislation.

Hyundai, Korea’s largest auto maker, has sued 12 union leaders for losses caused by that strike. South Korean law allows strikes only over working conditions, and bars workers from striking over political issues. The KCTU rejects the notion that laws undermining workers’ rights do not concern working conditions.

The union also accuses the government of President Roh Moo-Hyun, a former labour lawyer, of launching a general crackdown on the labour movement.

“The government has been abusing its rights to emergency arbitration (in industrial disputes) in order to crack down hard on the

French general strike...

to the man, whose prospects are considered “serious” by doctors.

Public opinion surveys indicate that strong majorities oppose the legislation, and some analysts believe the protests could topple the conservative de Villepin coalition government. Some members of the government have said they are willing to suspend the new contracts and negotiate a compromise.



Resistance Without Borders

International Solidarity Commission member Paul Bocking spoke March 18 in Mexico City on the IWW, at the Centro Social Libertario Ricardo Flores Magon, as part of a one-day conference titled Resistance Without Borders.

Repression in Tehran

The ISC wrote Iran’s president for a second time in early March demanding the release of imprisoned union activists, and calling upon the government to recognize the Syndicate of Vahed Workers, an independent union representing Tehran bus drivers, and negotiate an agreement with the union.

Since then most union members were released March 19, although president Mansoor Ossanlou remains jailed (as does Afshin

Bahrami, an auto worker who was arrested for supporting the Vahed strikers) and independent unions remain illegal.

Solidarity with Bangladeshi garment workers

The Commission has written the government of Bangladesh and garment manufacturers association condemning the lack of enforced safety standards, and the continuing deaths of garment workers that result. It is exploring the possibility of organizing a day of action in solidarity with garment workers’ struggles for safe working conditions, a living wage, and union recognition with the National Garment Workers Federation and other workers’ organizations. Actions could include protests at consulates and stores that sell garments made in these death traps

Australia: Fines for seeking labour rights

The Australian government has released details of harsh new fines and penalties for workers and unions to be assessed under new industrial relations laws rammed through Parliament last year. Under the regulations workers and unions can be hit with Federal Government fines of between AUS\$6,000 and \$33,000 for seeking commitments from employers around job security or fair treatment processes and many union activities in the workplace have been effectively outlawed.

“Under the regulations workers or unions who even ask to have certain matters contained in a workplace agreement will be fined,” noted ACTU Secretary Greg Combet. “The question that the Federal Government ... need to answer is why should a worker or a union be fined by the Government for trying to make jobs more secure or asking for fair treatment for workers?”

The regulations also provide for fines for workers or unions who seek agreements that union or safety representatives will have access to training or that union members be allowed to meet to discuss workplace issues. Clauses regulating the use of independent contractors or workers hired through temporary agencies have also been banned.

New Zealand McDonald’s negotiator assaults journalist

New Zealand’s Unite union has forced McDonald’s to pay all workers the new minimum wage three weeks early, backing off of threats to only pay it to non-union members. However, negotiations with the union were called off March 14 after the McDonald’s advocate, Tony Teasdale, assaulted an independent Australian journalist who was filming in the foyer of the Teasdale Associates.

The journalist was making a film about unions in New Zealand. Without warning, Teasdale attacked her, seizing her camera and taking it to his office. The camera was later returned, but its film had been removed. A complaint has been lodged with police.

Unite’s Matt McCarten said Teasdale needs to apologize if the union is to work with him. “It is worrying when the representative of one of the biggest multi-nationals feels it is acceptable to act in this way.”

British workers threaten general strike over pensions

In Britain members of Unison, GMB, T&G, Amicus, Ucat, CYWU, Napo, NUJ, NUT, AEP, Prospect and Community unions affected by the local government pensions scheme have been voting to strike in order to protect their pensions. Some 90 percent of Amicus members have voted in support of a one-day strike on March 28.

The “Labour” government insists on portraying the workers as privileged with help from the media and politicians.

In fact, many of the affected workers are on the lower end of the pay scales for public sector workers – teaching assistants, garbage collectors, school crossing guards, street sweepers, home care, and police support staff. Seventy-three percent of those affected are women, and 60 percent are part-time. At issue, besides the threats to the pension plan is “Rule 85” abolishing the right to retire at 60 after 25 years of service. Statistically the lower-paid workers die at an earlier age.

Also affected are workers in higher education, public schools, environmental agencies, and those whose jobs have been privatised, once under local government control, as well as transportation workers, such as toll collectors, bus drivers and workers at airports in Leeds, Edinburgh and Cardiff. Altogether 1.5 million workers from the nine national unions could strike.

Siberian taxi drivers organize

BY VYACHESLAV DANILOV, SKT
On Feb. 25 the independent union Yamshchik (coach-driver), held a protest meeting in Omsk. The union represents drivers of “Marshrutnoe taksi,” or private minibuses, and was founded last autumn. It is a member of the syndicalist Siberian Confederation of Labour (SKT), and has some 100 members.

In recent years, Omsk’s municipally owned transport system fell into disarray, and private mini-buses filled the void. Last summer, city administrators made a deal with the owner of “Russian Aluminum” Deripask, who brought 200 new buses to Omsk and was promised a monopoly of public transport after a transitional period of five years. On February 1 the city auctioned off transport licenses and outlawed single vehicle operations, leaving 4,000 drivers without work.

Drivers initially ignored the licenses, but police drove them off the streets. The result has been chaos, as the 200 new buses are not nearly adequate to cover Omsk.

Djibouti: Unionists arrested

Repression of union activity, unfair dismissals, arrests and arbitrary detentions of independent unionists have been multiplying in Djibouti since September. On March 11 Adan Mohamed, General Secretary of the Djibouti Workers’ Union (UDT) and Hassan Cher Hared, UDT International Relations Secretary, were arrested, charged with “supplying information to a foreign power,” and committed to prison without access to a lawyer.

Two other union officials were arrested a week earlier on the same charges after attending an international labour training course.