

INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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R.I.P. Fellow
Worker Ray Jessop
5

Special: IWW
Delegation Report
on Palestine 6-7

Special: Opposing
the U.S. Occupation
of Haiti 8

The Latest
International Labor
News 12

Ft. Worth Starbucks Joins The One Big Union: Group Of Women Wobblies Take On The Coffee Giant—And Win!

By Liberte Locke

On Dec. 18, 2009, four brave women baristas of the 8th & Rosedale Starbucks in Ft. Worth, Texas, declared their membership with the IWW Starbucks Workers Union (SWU).

It was exactly one week before Christmas, which is Starbucks' busiest time of year. More importantly, the store manager, Lindsay Karsh, had declared it Partner (Employee) Appreciation Day. In past years, Partner Appreciation Day was when the manager would use company money to purchase pizza for all the workers as a sort of holiday gift right before Christmas. This year, on top of cutting hours, delaying raises, forcing baristas to work with H1N1 ("swine flu"), and disrespecting workers, the store manager decided to save the store money and made the day a potluck. Workers—who are struggling to survive and are making just above minimum wage—were forced to buy their own food in order to participate. The entire store was furious and not a single worker par-

ticipated in the potluck.

At 10:00 a.m. on Partner Appreciation Day, local Wobblies parked a car at the order screen of the drive-thru for the 8th & Rosedale Starbucks and exited the car. They taped a poster to the back window that read "Honk If You Want Baristas to Have a First Aid Kit!" A supporter stood closer to the front of the drive-thru with another sign, this one saying, "Honk if You Want Baristas to Make a Living Wage!"

Once the drive-thru was successfully shut down, union baristas Bree Bailey, Michelle Cahill and Casey Keeling entered the store with other Wobblies and supporters, including myself. Immediately, customers were given small fliers that simply declared, "This Starbucks Just Went Union!" while baristas working the floor were given pizza as a gift from the IWW. The pizzas came in fully decorated pizza boxes mostly painted red and black with the IWW globe. One box said, "In the Union, Baristas Are

Continued on 11

Fight For Union Freedom In Germany: Workers Struggle At Babylon Cinema

By Tom Wetzel

A struggle by the workers at the New Babylon Cinema in Berlin—a relatively small firm—has now blown up into a fight with much larger legal consequences for German workers. A Dec. 11, 2009, court edict in Berlin now poses some serious questions: Will German workers have the legal right to have a union of their own choosing? Will they have their legal right to form grassroots alternative unions?

For some time now, a large proportion of the workers at the New Babylon Cinema (Neue Babylon GmbH) have been working together as a grassroots union as a part of the Freie Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter Union (Free Workers' Union, or FAU). Since June they have been engaged in a struggle with the

cinema's management to obtain a labor contract.

As part of this struggle, the FAU mounted a boycott of the cinema. This boycott and worker struggle has been widely covered in the media. The FAU struggle has been built on the direct participation of the workers—something that is rarely seen in Germany. Workers have participated in developing innovative demands and methods of struggle.

However, on Dec. 11, the Berlin Regional Court (Landgericht Berlin) banned the FAU from acting as a union. The court even banned the FAU from calling itself a union. Moreover, this court edict was issued without holding a public hearing and without even notifying the FAU of a legal action against them. This type of secretive court action

is called a "star chamber" proceeding in the Anglo-American legal tradition and is regarded as an abuse of legal authority.

New Babylon Cinema receives funding from the "red-green" coalition government in Berlin. Apparently a deal was worked out between New Babylon management, their political friends, and the large national union Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (United Services Union, or ver.di). Ver.di is part of the bureaucratic German Trade Union Federation (DGB) and is known for its "partnership" deals with management and its corporatist participation on boards of directors of German companies. With virtually no support among staff at New Babylon, and without notifying the workers, ver.di entered the fray to negotiate

a sweetheart deal with the New Babylon management.

The workers at the cinema were surprised by this action, and were excluded from any participation in the negotiations. If this kind of action stands, it means the bosses can choose which union its employees belong to and what the union looks like.

In court ver.di also attacked the FAU on the grounds that its lack of existing union contracts shows it has no ability to enter into contracts. This is important because, under German labor law, no organization can legally take collective action if it doesn't have the ability to negotiate a contract. On two occasions the Berlin FAU has been threatened with €250,000 fines or jail sentences.

Continued on 11

Emergency Relief, Solidarity Needed For Haiti

By Nathaniel Miller

A devastating 7.0 earthquake hit Haiti on Tuesday, Jan. 12. Thousands have been killed, and much of Port au Prince has been leveled. This follows a series of deadly hurricanes in late 2008, and decades of foreign-influenced economic terrorism, culminating in a U.S.-led coup in 2004, and continuing U.N. occupation. Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, is the only country to successfully liberate itself from slavery, and the former colonial masters have not let them forget. Most people live on less than \$2 a day, and many on less than \$1. In April 2008 I participated in an IWW delegation to Haiti where we met with workers and farmers struggling against neo-liberal slavery. We pledged our continued support to their struggle, and FWs donated

generously to support their organizing, and again for aid following the hurricanes. As I write this, communications with Haiti are nearly impossible, but no doubt they will need our help again. Our delegation made a short video about our trip, called "Haiti's Tourniquet" which we're selling for \$15 (includes shipping) to raise money for our comrades in Haiti. Any donations, large or small, are greatly appreciated.

You can purchase videos or send donations to: Nathaniel Miller, PO Box 31909, Philadelphia, PA 19104—or you can make donations via Paypal to iww-haitifund@gmail.com. Please mark checks and Paypal payments "IWW Haiti Fund," and note if you want a video. Contact nathaniel@iww.org for other questions.

See special report on Haiti, page 8.

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Press Date: January 25, 2009.

"Workers' Power" Column Defended

Dear Industrial Worker:

I am writing in response to the letter titled "Workers' Power" Column Should Be About Workers' Power," which appeared on page 2 of the January 2010 *Industrial Worker* and which critiqued the November 2009 "Workers' Power" column. I have been editing the "Workers' Power" column for over three and a half years and the November column generated the strongest response of any of the submissions that I have published. The response to the column has been uniformly negative. I received about half a dozen personal emails as a result of the column, all expressing similar sentiments to x361737. Pretty much everyone seems to agree that the column was not about organizing for economic power at the point of production and, therefore, had no place in the "Workers' Power" series.

I cannot quite agree. In my mind the purpose of the "Workers' Power" column is to spark debate and discussion, to give Wobblies tools to improve the quality of our organizing and organization, and to push us to think about the ways that working-class people can build power. In that the column clearly sparked debate and discussion, I think that it fit these criteria. I hope that future columns will be as provocative and challenge people to think about what types of activities

IWW members should be advocating. If any readers of the *Industrial Worker* have ideas for future "Workers' Power" columns please send them my way. I can be reached at cboessen@gmail.com. Submissions must be less than 800 words in length and will be edited for clarity but not content.

In the spirit of love and solidarity,
Colin Bossen

Neo-Liberal Assault On Education

Dear Industrial Worker,

The article "Support For Belgrade University Students' Protests," which appears on page 12 of the January 2010 *Industrial Worker*, is most heartening, drawing attention to a global struggle that is of vital importance for today's higher education students from the "lesser" classes and all future generations of them to follow.

As the author of the *IW* article observantly points out, "The survival of educational programs that aren't competitive in the market—particularly humanistic sciences—is increasingly being put into question in Universities across the world." The dominant focus, of course, is on those subjects and 'disciplines' that are of use to bureaucratic capitalism—various forms of engineering, double-entry bookkeeping (accounting) and the most dismal of all "sciences," capitalist economics!

Equally important to bear in mind is that this is but one arm of a pincer movement by the forces of bureaucratic capitalism; the other being the "re-structuring" and de-funding of our public education systems at primary and secondary levels along with the transfer of huge amounts of public monies to privately controlled religious schools.

There can be little doubt that this is a carefully planned and well-orchestrated "strategy" by the forces of bureaucratic capitalism worldwide to "dumb down," dishearten, and thereby exclude, the millions of children of the working and lower middle classes worldwide from the limited number of well-rewarded and influential (i.e. "good") jobs in the marketplace.

Thinking about this vital issue, I find it ironic that the neo-liberal assault on higher education was launched at the oldest and original Western university at Bologna. Also interesting is the fact that it is not only the "Washington Consensus" and the U.S. neo-conservatives leading the play! The current Italian prince of darkness, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, is one of the leading players behind "The Bologna Process."

For more information, see <http://www.bolognaburns.org>.

Sincerely,
John Foster

"Readers' Soapbox" continues on 4

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Strikes, Boycotts & Arrests Mark San Francisco Hotel Dispute

By Carl Finamore, *BeyondChron*

The San Francisco Hilton is the city's largest, taking up a square block of prime downtown real estate and boasting 1,900 rooms. Celebrity heiress Paris Hilton's signature phrase, "That's Hot!" might very well apply to the "stunning million-dollar views" advertised by her hotel namesake. But it's more like "That's Cold!" when describing the views of the Hilton owners towards their employees.

In fact, the Blackstone Group, which owns the Hilton chain, proposes cutting starting wages for new hires by 25 percent. According to a union fact sheet, the CEO and part owner of Blackstone was paid \$1,385,391,042 in 2008—that's right, one billion dollars plus. The average union hotel worker earned \$30,000 in that same year.

This explains why over 800 members of UNITE-HERE! Local 2 and 400 supporters staged their impressive rally and civil disobedience action, blocking for several hours the main hotel entrance before 140 sit-in protesters were arrested, cited for misdemeanor trespassing and released a short time later.

Arrestees included Richard Trumka, new President of the 13 million member AFL-CIO, and John Wilhelm, International President of the 265,000 member UNITE-HERE!. Trumka called the attitude of the hotels a "disgrace" while Wilhelm congratulated Local 2 for its "heart, spirit and endurance" which he said "would spread across the country in 2010" as other hotel contracts expire.

The rally attracted city firefighters, nurses, machinists, teachers, engineers, longshoremen, Teamsters, construction workers and letter carriers displaying union emblems in support.

The protest also drew several hundred community supporters organized by Reverend Israel Alvaran, assigned by Clerics and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) to work exclusively on

winning community support for hotel workers.

Refusal to come to an agreement with the modest demands of the union is producing growing public outrage because hotels have been profitable the last few years. In fact, according to PriceWaterhouseCoopers, profits soared nationally to over \$200 billion in the last decade.

While each of the 61 city hotels has chosen to negotiate separately with the union, the corporations that run many of the largest hotels remain united in demands to shift more health care costs to employees, increase workloads and reduce staffing.

They have rejected Local 2's minimum one-year contract proposal. In Hilton's case, the whole package would cost just \$550,000 this year, or an approximate 1.5 percent increase in labor costs.

"We've proposed the cheapest contract in the union's history while the corporations continue to make millions," said John Elrod, a bartender at the W Hotel. "I think the hotel workers have sacrificed enough. It's time the hotel corporations realize that we're not going to give up."

So far, the union has called three brief strikes, five boycotts, numerous "sieges" of all-night picketing and two peaceful civil disobedience actions resulting in several hundred arrests.

Bargaining Prospects in 2010

Nonetheless, facing stiff resistance and a lull in the tourist season, Local 2 realizes this dispute will not be settled soon. These major international corporations have enormous financial resources that allow them to absorb indefinitely the costs of ordinary labor disputes.

So, the union has adopted a variety of tactics looking forward to mid-2010 when tourists begin flooding the city. This influx provides an inviting audience

for the union's very effective protests at boycotted hotel entrances with bullhorns blaring. "Years before, We would Cower, Now We have Union Power!" and "Don't Check-In, Check Out! This is Local 2! Boycott is what we're all about!"

New negotiating allies are also in the wings. At the moment, 9,000 hotel workers in San Francisco and another 16,000 in Chicago and Los Angeles are negotiating.

This bargaining leverage will soon substantially increase later this year with the addition of units in Toronto, Minneapolis, Vancouver, Honolulu, Monterey and Washington, D.C. In total, over 50,000 UNITE-HERE! members in the hotel industry will be fighting for new contracts in 2010.

In the meantime, Local 2 will be busy planning regular street protests and considering more of their patented surprise strikes while still vigorously enforcing their boycotts.

The union has a history of mobilizing local broad actions and UNITE-HERE! nationally has recently adopted very high standards for its boycotts. A most important new feature is that a majority of union members are urged to consider a boycott of their selected hotel before one is announced.

As a result, all current Local 2 boycotts are worker-initiated, minimizing employer attempts to divide employees from boycotters. There must also be a funded staff and a clear program of active enforcement before any boycott is launched.

This includes regularly scheduled pickets with amped-up sound systems to remind guests there is an ongoing labor dispute. It means organized visits to major clients showing videos of protests and taped interviews with disgruntled guests who endured the stress of strikes, loud picketing and boycotts. It means enlisting the national support of non-profit and socially-conscious conven-

tioneers to join the boycott.

One important endorsement occurred the day the Hilton boycott was announced. Sarah Shaker, Executive Director of the Instituto Laboral de la Raza, a workers' rights advocacy organization, issued this Jan. 5 statement: "It is very unfortunate that we have to move our annual awards banquet. Normally, we have over 1,000 people from all over the country attend and we spend close to \$100,000 with the Hilton's banquet department. We now have changed our plans and moved the event to a solidly union banquet hall, the United Irish Cultural Center."

More of the same is sure to come. The *San Francisco Examiner* estimates the 53-day strike/lockout and two-year boycott from 2004 to 2006 cost San Francisco hotels approximately \$100 million. Owners made it worse for themselves by locking out workers during that strike, something that turned out to be a major public relations blunder.

Enormous political and community pressure forced hotels to back off, end their lock out and return to negotiations. But the union still continued full-scale boycotts until the hotels finally agreed in 2006 to all the workers' demands.

Local 2 President Mike Casey considers this victory as validation of the current strategy of staggered, brief strikes, longer boycotts and regularly scheduled mobilizations.

As a result, the union is determined to reinvigorate boycotts as one of their tools, especially useful in an industry dependent on delivering consumers comfort and relaxation uninterrupted by clamorous rallies and periodic strikes.

"We want to bring back boycotts that have the scale and commitment of the Farmworkers' enormously successful and historic Grape Boycott," UNITE-HERE! boycott organizer Mark Westerberg told me.

While Casey is quick to remind hotels that a city-wide strike is never off the table, the union has shown it has a formidable array of other tactics as well. All of them will be necessary to pry open the pocket books of the powerful owners.

This story originally appeared on Jan. 6, 2010 on <http://www.beyondchron.org>.

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.

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Charting Is Pertinent For Organizing

By Nate Holdren

Anyone who works out regularly knows that results in physical fitness pretty much come from only two things: persistence and time. The same thing is true in organizing. Organizing gets results when it is persistent over the long haul. Persistent long-term organizing must be systematic. Systematic organizing requires putting things in writing.

Recently, the IWW has mostly organized relatively small workplaces or small units within larger workplaces. With small groups of people it's pretty easy to remember everyone's name, what they do and what experiences we've had with them. As a result, many of us have gotten into the habit of keeping a lot of information in our heads.

Keeping information in our heads works in smaller settings but does not work when we organize in settings of

more than 20 or 30 people. It all gets to be too much to remember. What's more, when we only store information in our heads, it's harder to assess what's really happening at work. Our feelings shape our perceptions of the organizing we do. Depending on whether we're feeling optimistic or pessimistic, this can lead us not to see real progress or to overlook important steps.

Regular charting is a key tool for systematic organizing. Charting is when the organizers on a campaign get together and do a written assessment of their current presence on the job.

Charting is simple. Start with one sheet of paper. List all the facilities or departments in the campaign. Then list all the IWW members in each facility or department, followed by the names of other people we have contact with and the total number of people in each place. Next to every name, write down whether or not someone has had a real one-on-one meeting with them, when this was, and how it went. There will be more to say that does not go on the chart. This conversation can happen as part of the charting activity. This is also a good op-

portunity to do a "role play" about what the organizer might have said differently, though this is something that will be covered in another column.

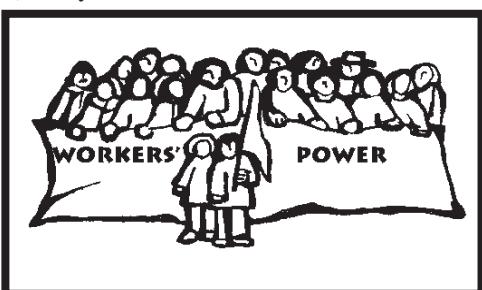
The process of charting helps us make decisions about who to talk to—the people we haven't talked to in a long time, the people who are slipping and the people we haven't talked to at all. That can sound obvious, but charting tells us exactly who those people are. Charting also helps us identify the gaps in our knowledge (i.e. "I just realized, I don't know how many custodians work third shift. We should find out."). Getting information to fill the gap is a task that someone new to the campaign could take on with the help of a more experienced organizer.

Charting allows us to know where we are in a campaign and also what steps we can take. On another sheet of paper,

write down the tasks that have come up based on the chart. Write down who is going to do each task and who is going to check in with everyone to make sure they did their task.

Written charts and task lists should be kept after the meeting, and ideally should be typed up. The next time the organizers chart, they should get out the old charts and compare. Get out the task list too, to make sure everyone did their tasks, and to discuss how the tasks went. This helps show progress—"In the last month we've talked to 15 more people, this means we have talked to half the workers by now!"—which can keep our inspiration going. It also helps show patterns we might not have noticed—"We're talking to a lot more of the white workers, and to day shift workers, let's figure out how to break out of those networks and talk to more people"—which can in turn help us identify new tasks.

Unless we are systematic we will rely too heavily on the social groups at work that we are most comfortable with. Charting is not the only part of organizing systematically, but it is one key piece of the puzzle.



"Workers Power" Revisited

By x361737

This letter is in response to "Union Talk at Thanksgiving," which appeared on page 4 of the January *Industrial Worker*. Simply put: I'm at a loss as to understand the point of the piece... That business unions suck, anti-union training works, and that these two facts make organizing nearly impossible?

I'm all for acknowledging the difficulties of organizing and, more importantly, offering solutions to these problems.

This article, however, didn't offer any suggestions and, instead, seems written only to leave readers depressed and hopeless. Why should such an article appear in a newspaper that IWWs give out to fellow workers in an attempt to encourage them to organize?

(On a practical note, I suggest FW Miller and every other Wobbly read "Know the Union, See the Union, Be the Union," which appeared in the *IW* some time back. The point of the piece is simple: most workers probably won't be "talked into" the union and that's okay. Instead, they'll have to see solidarity and struggle in action to become convinced. The advice is simple: organize around real issues and facilitate struggle. This

will open up the space to begin talking about the benefits of unionism proper.)

The IWW should be praised for having a rank-and-file paper that allows the membership's collective—and individual—voices to be heard. However, our editor needs to feel empowered to return submissions to their authors and

not publish them until they meet the high standards the *Industrial Worker* holds for itself and its content. Part of running a democratic paper is ensuring that con-

tributors learn all facets of journalism, including editing and revising an article until it is at a publishable standard. Anything less sells short the *Industrial Worker*, our union, and the entire independent workers movement.

Corrections

Due to an oversight, the last stanza of Doug Tarnopol's limerick was not printed "Limericks on Chomsky," which appeared on page 7 of the December *IW*. Here's the punchline:

It's not all that subtle, my pets,
So proffer I will, with regrets:
It ought to be clear
That notions held dear
View logic and data as threats."



WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 31 A Dismal Beginning

When the Federation of Trades' and Labor Unions was organized in 1881, not a single representative of America's 2.5 million working women was present at the founding convention. The next year the Federation invited women's organizations to affiliate; in 1883 Charlotte Smith, president of the Women's National Industrial League, was admitted as a delegate. Resolutions encouraging women to organize and join the federation were adopted but largely ignored.

Nothing changed in 1886, when the Federation of Trades' and Labor Unions was reorganized as the American Federation of Labor, an association of mostly craft and skilled workers' unions. AFL President Samuel Gompers urged unions to organize women, although women often lacked the skills necessary to join the exclusively-male craft unions. When women and men had the same skills, men didn't always want to share the benefits of organization. Only two national affiliates of the AFL, the Cigar Makers and Typographical Union, accepted women as members. Some unions actually banned women from membership!



And when the AFL expressed solidarity with female wage earners, some "brothers" had a strictly selfish motivation. Gompers admitted that the "equal pay for equal work" rule endorsed by the AFL might benefit men more than women: Women were often hired because they were "cheap labor." If bosses were forced to pay women the same as men, they would hire men only.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

In memory of a fallen worker

The 330 Organizing Committee would like to extend our condolences to the family, friends, and fellow workers of brother Ray Jessop killed on the job December 8th 2009.



Steady Growth Spurs Twin Cities IWW To Open Space In Northeast Minneapolis

By Jeff Pilacinski

For decades IWW members in the Twin Cities were without a place to call home, but beginning in November, the branch will open shop in the historic Grain Belt Bottling House in northeast Minneapolis—a neighborhood whose early residents had a vision of industrial organizing that was instrumental in establishing the One Big Union here and beyond.

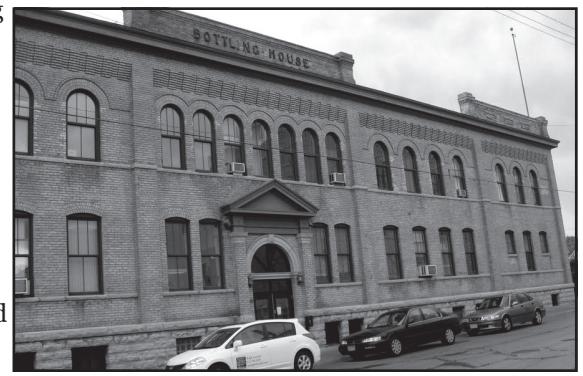
In 1905, two northeast railroad workers—William Bradley and Fred Henion—participated in a private Chicago conference that laid the groundwork for a unique labor organization that would later be dubbed the Industrial Workers of the World. Unlike the American Federation of Labor, the IWW proposed that all workers in an industry should harness their power together in one union,

instead of dividing themselves according to the many different crafts or trades on a job. This new union grew quickly, and for several reasons, it immediately appealed to Northeast workers employed in the Harrison Street Railyard and in the massive Mill District. The IWW welcomed immigrant and non-white workers, as well as “unskilled” workers, who were denied membership by the exclusive, craft-based AF of L locals.

Just as in 1905, the IWW is thriving and continues to organize in industries that are considered low-wage and “unorganizable” by today’s large business unions. The determined efforts of local IWW branches have yielded considerable success in several workplaces, and subsequently we have seen the Twin Cities branch grow exponentially in just a few short years. With this expansion

has come the need for a gathering space, and the Bottling House fit the bill.

Along with the connection to the union’s past, this landmark offers room for significant future growth. The office will now house the meetings of workers in food service, transportation, retail and education to name a few. They’ll hold basic organizer trainings and courses from our Work Peoples’ College. The building’s sizable atrium provides an ideal venue for large public discussions, film showings, and gala events. All in all, this space will become a destination where local working people can access myriad resources on labor law and organizing and meet others struggling to make their jobs and communities better places for all.



The old bottling house.

Photo: Jeff Pilacinski

If you are in the area, please make arrangements to drop by the space at 79 13th Ave. NE, near the intersection of Marshall Street and 13th Ave., a few blocks from the #11 bus line, and talk to IWW members about what they’re up to and how you can get involved.

Angelica Workers

Win Strike

By Jake Carman, BAAM

After a five day strike beginning on Dec. 10, 2009, the largely immigrant workforce of Angelica Textile Services in Somerville, Mass., won a new contract with benefits and higher wages. Angelica is a billion-dollar company with over 5,000 workers nationally and counts the likes of Jeb Bush (George’s brother and former governor of Florida) on its board. The company had stalled negotiations with the Somerville workers. The workers, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 1445, were asking for a one dollar wage increase, more company contribution to the healthcare plan, and an extra 10 cents per hour to the pension plan. They voted to strike on Dec. 1, and as Local 1445 representative Fernando Lemus told the *Boston Globe*, they were willing to “sacrifice this Christmas” as “the cost of living is so high.”

For five days, hundreds of workers and supporters from other unions and Centro Presente, an immigrant workers

center across the street from Angelica, maintained picket lines from 6:00 a.m. until midnight everyday until the company offered a new contract. The workers voted to sign the contract, ending their strike and declaring victory. According to the Party for Socialism and Liberation, the workers of Angelica received support from the following unions: the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 35; the International Brotherhood of Operating Engineers, Local 877 Area Trades Council; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 2222; the American Federation of Government Employees; UNITE HERE!, Local 26; and the Teamsters, Local 25. Along with the outpouring of support, Local 1445’s impressive unity and resistance to the bosses’ attempts to divide them contributed to the overwhelming victory.

This story originally appeared in the Boston Anti-Authoritarian Movement (BAAM) Newsletter, Issue #28, January 2009.

Obituary

Goodbye Fellow Worker Ray Jessop

By James Young

On Dec. 6, Fellow Worker Ray Jessop of Hull was killed in a workplace accident. Enquiries are continuing into the circumstances of Ray’s death, but evidence is emerging that the cost-cutting policies of his employer, Kier Group, played a large part. It will be some time before a formal inquest takes place, but I have heard that Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT), of which Ray was a member, is seriously considering making a case for a corporate manslaughter prosecution.

Although Ray was not well known in the One Big Union, he was a loyal member and supporter of our union, which he joined in 2002. He was an active member of UCATT and spoke out against managerial abuses. Workmates had tried to persuade him to take the shop steward’s position, but he declined as he did not feel that he was the right person for that task.

Ray was also active in other areas of struggle and was particularly active in the animal rights movement, among whose ranks he had many friends. He was a conscientious member of the Hull branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and active in the Campaign Against the Arms Trade and the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases.

Ray was also a very sociable person who enjoyed a drink and a (vegan) meal with like-minded friends, and he was particularly fond of live music, his preferences being reggae and ska. He



Photo: lastingtribute.co.uk

will be sorely missed by those who knew him, as the large number of tributes and affectionate memories published locally testify.

An old friend of Ray wrote in his memory:

“If the measure of someone is how [he is] remembered, then Ray was truly remarkable because he has drawn tributes from pagans, trade unionists, animal rights activists and, in the local paper, where people can comment on articles, people who said they didn’t agree with him on anything [but] still respected him and regarded him as honest. Many commented ‘this country needs more people like Ray.’ As well as a large gathering at Ray’s funeral, he has also been honoured by his favourite pub with a tree and a photo, and a pagan ceremony is also arranged for next summer.”

Ray was 53 years old.

Obituary Rest In Peace, Dennis Brutus: 1924-2009

By Kenneth Miller

Dennis Brutus is most well known for organizing apartheid South Africa’s expulsion from the 1976 Olympic Games. He began by organizing interracial Black vs. Coloured athletic competitions in South Africa and ended up challenging the International Olympic Committee. Brutus organized entire blocks of the world around a simple question: How can the Olympics say they stand for brotherhood and fair play if apartheid nations could join the festivities? Along the way he took a bullet and spent time in jail with Nelson Mandela, in the cell next to him on Robben Island.

Dennis Brutus was a socialist. He was profoundly disappointed by the African National Congress (ANC) government’s unwillingness to make fundamental changes to the economy. Perhaps that is why he spent so much time as an expatriate living in Pittsburgh, Pa. He fully engaged in the struggles of the people here. He was a champion of the peace and justice community and strongly identified with the people and mission of the Thomas Merton Center, a resource and organizing center that advocates for social justice, based out of Pittsburgh.

He worked with his friend and fellow South African expatriate Mongezi Nkomo to found Azania Heritage International, which later spawned the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance. I don’t know if Professor Brutus believed that we were going to build a civil rights bridge from PNC Park to the floor of the global sweatshop, but he wanted us to. He said that to the Pittsburgh Pirates in some letters, and he testified on behalf of the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh at Pittsburgh’s City Council. He understood the power dynamics within the sports hierarchy and talked about how the

Pittsburgh Pirates could be moved—and the impact that would have on the global apparel industry.

Before his arrival in Pittsburgh, many diverse sectors had joined in the struggle against apartheid, bringing ANC members to speak, collecting used clothing to send there, demanding divestment from South Africa by the University of Pittsburgh, and by protesting coin dealers that sold the Krugerrand (South African gold coins) in downtown Pittsburgh. The experience of apartheid’s fall and Mandela’s release from prison made these activists feel powerful. Professor Brutus’s presence in Pittsburgh kept the memory of that victory uniquely alive here.

He was often there for local activists who would visit him at his University of Pittsburgh office, which had a poster of Paul Robeson dressed as Othello on the wall. Many current members of the Pittsburgh IWW had the opportunity to spend time with Dennis Brutus.

Professor Brutus loved poets. I saw him perform some poetry from “Leaf Drift” at Robin’s Bookstore in Philadelphia during an open mic night. It meant so much to him to be there with other poets and to share with them. He brought them all onto the stage for a group photo and spent time talking with each one.

The best overview of his life and poetry was edited by Lee Sustar Aisha Karim, “Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader” (Haymarket Books, 2006). “Welcome to the Terrordome: The Pain, Politics and Promise of Sports” by David Zirin (Haymarket Books, 2007) contextualizes Dennis Brutus’s contribution to sports alongside the likes of Mohammad Ali and Roberto Clemente. Radical lovers of poetry will do us all a service by reading Professor Brutus’ poems aloud at a meeting.

In The Words Of Dennis Brutus

This was written about his hope for the new South Africa. The excerpt was taken from “Poetry and Protest, A Dennis Brutus Reader” (Haymarket Books, 2006).

This is a land
so vibrant and alive
that laughter will come bursting through
as imperious as the sun
and the spirit will survive
resilient as the soil.

This is an excerpt from his poem “For Ruth First,” written for Ruth First, assassinated by the racist apartheid regime in 1982:

They would come again
you wrote
you knew
but what they did not know
was that your spirit would live on
in thousands willing to fight for freedom
in thousands willing to die for freedom
that you might be gone
but that you would come again

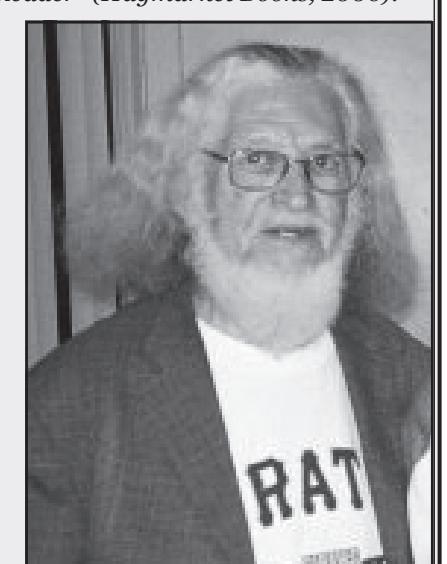


Photo: Kenneth Miller

From The River To The Wall:

By X359599

With a population just shy of 2.4 million and a labor force of 640,000, the West Bank exists in perpetual economic depression. This reality, according to a 2009 United Nations (UN) "Trade and Development Report," is "rooted in the relentless Israeli internal and external closure policy, the attrition of the Palestinian productive base and the loss of Palestinian land and natural resources" that has occurred since 1967 under the Israeli occupation. In reality, these policies result in crippling unemployment and generations of unrealized economic potential.

A recent IWW delegation to the West Bank witnessed firsthand the economic conditions described in this and other UN reports. In Ramallah, the streets are full of unemployed workers, and in the countryside farmers struggle to compete with Israel's subsidized crops and find it impossible to prevent the endless expansion of Israeli settlements (which cover more than 40 percent of West Bank territory). There are few jobs for experienced professionals, who thus resort to sporadic, menial labor, the compensation for which barely covers basic needs.

The West Bank exists under a military occupation that stifles economic development and buoys the West Bank's poverty rate to more than 46 percent (according to recent CIA statistics). The area is overseen by a military government that was instituted by the state of Israel following its takeover of the area in 1967. Pockmarked with checkpoints and settlements, the West Bank is also encroached upon by a 30-foot high wall snaking in and around the area that was annexed another 10 percent of Palestinian land, including one-fifth of the area's most fertile territory, by the state of Israel.



A view of the Separation Wall, near Bethlehem.

Photo: Rob Mulford

Our delegation traveled to the West Bank with the intention to learn about labor organizing in Palestine and to offer solidarity on behalf of the IWW. We met formally with labor unions organizing under the Independent Federation of Unions in Palestine (IFUP), the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), and the General Workers Union (GWU).

The IFUP was established in 2007 with a commitment to politically independent, structurally democratic organizing. The organization has approximately 50,000 members, in contrast to PGFTU's more than 200,000, and organizes primarily in the financial, agricultural, pharmaceutical, and education sectors, and also unemployed workers. The organization realizes its commitment to democracy by ensuring that its members annually elect each union's executive committee members, and that all leaders have worked in the industries they represent.

The PGFTU is the oldest union oper-

ating in Palestine, with activity that has ebbed and flowed since the 1920s. With close ties to Fatah, the PGFTU brings a top-down structure to organizing in such industries as healthcare, electricity, carpentry, and education. The PGFTU has been criticized for its lack of organizational democracy, a critique that prompted its former president, Muhammad Arouri, to establish the IFUP. This criticism has also been taken to heart by a PGFTU branch called the Left-Labor Coalition, which is working to reform the PGFTU from within.

The third umbrella organization we met with as a delegation was the GWU, which organizes construction, public service, health, textile, print media, education, and agricultural workers. In contrast to both the PGFTU and IFUP, GWU has representation in East Jerusalem, an area currently being annexed by Israel but viewed by most Palestinians as the capital of any future Palestinian state. Like the PGFTU and IFUP, GWU pioneers initiatives that seek to educate workers about their rights and train them for skilled professions. This is achieved in part by lobbying the Labor Ministry for vocational training services, as well as by providing programs of their own. Despite structural differences and varying political affiliations, each of these organizations expressed a common goal: to better the lives of Palestinian workers. All also expressed a commitment to direct action, a commitment we witnessed firsthand at a University Employees Union strike organized under IFUP.

The organized labor force in the West Bank spans an array of industries. As a delegation, we met with unions in the fields of farming, pharmaceuticals, building trades, banking, education, and the service industry. In the West Bank,



Israeli soldiers outside the Hebron Mosque.

Photo: Rob Mulford

discretion of the Israeli government. Today, unions are legal under the PA, but have never been legal under Israel's occupying government—a tension that puts union organizers at risk of Israeli detention despite the PA's *de-jure* sovereignty. Nearly every organizer and political activist we met told us stories of arbitrary arrests and detentions, most occurring in the middle of the night in front of shocked family members. This commonly used practice, called "administrative detention," allows Israel to lock Palestinians up indefinitely without a charge or a trial, and has caused several of our hosts to be imprisoned for periods of several years.

Under the occupation, each labor industry faces its own hurdles, yet all are subject to the travel and trade restrictions imposed by the occupation. Palestinian farmers, for example, must compete with subsidized Israeli crops and pay more money than they do for the water that is stolen from aquifers within the West Bank and sold back to them by Israeli water corporations. Our delegation met with the Independent Farmers Union (IFU), a year-and-a-half-old constituent union within the IFUP, comprised of small farmers who pool together their crops and sell them through a local distributor. Unionizing, according to one member, offers communal insurance. If one farmer's land is stolen, for example, fellow members will give a share of their own crops. The Israeli "land grab" was one of the driving forces behind the union's formation.

In addition to the challenges Palestinian farmers face, the delegation witnessed firsthand the

obstacles imposed on the West Bank's manufacturing sector by restrictions on the transport of materials in and out of the West Bank. Despite the challenges, at least one pharmaceutical company has been able to attain a level of success. Birzeit Pharmaceuticals, a unionized factory we toured with our delegation, has been able to expand its market presence due to eased restrictions on their exports. The company, which produces generic drugs, recently expanded its clientele to include markets in Kuwait, Algeria, Kazakhstan, the United Arab Emirates, Belarus, and parts of Western Europe. Birzeit is unionized under the umbrella of IFUP, though its management, like in other shops the world over, works to suppress union activity—namely through the threat of job transfers for organizers.

Both women and men are part of the West Bank's labor force, as we witnessed at job sites and in meeting rooms, though gender disparities persist on the job and in paychecks. Much like in the United States, women are under-represented in union leadership, and male leadership dominated our meetings with union organizers. In the West Bank, most women are employed in the public sector (education, health, and administration), in private services (education, health, and business services)

and in agriculture, largely as unpaid family laborers. Women comprise just one-fifth of the West Bank's labor force and are paid 75 percent of what their male counterparts earn, directly comparable to the gender wage disparity in the United

Continued on the next page



Photo: Rob Mulford

Meeting with members of the GWU.

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Union Organizing In The West Bank

Continued from previous page

States. Interestingly, wages for women have dropped 5.5 percent in recent years, while wages in the West Bank as a whole have increased slightly.

Some women, unable to find jobs in other sectors, turn to small-scale manufacturing. In the Jenin refugee camp, our delegation met with the Union of Women Workers (UWW), a cooperative of local artisans who make olive oil soap, bags, pottery, wall art, and other goods. The UWW seeks to alleviate poverty for women by offering a means of employment, as well as affordable daycare and other services. The UWW's focus on handiwork has proven difficult due to a nearly nonexistent market. Tourists comprise the majority of their customer base, but because of the occupation there are few tourists. In our meetings with a workers' rights-oriented non-governmental organization (NGO), the Democracy and Workers Rights Center (DWRC), organizers relayed their experiences of uniting workers in the informal sectors, many of whom are women earning a living by selling handicrafts and food. According to the DWRC, the informal sector, which also includes street vendors and unpaid family farm laborers, is a difficult sector to penetrate, owing in large part to the size of the shops and the disconnected nature of the industry.

The high level of unemployment in the West Bank has created many idle hands in search of sustainable employment. Under IFUP, the Unemployed Workers Federation (UWF) organizes approximately 11,000 of the more than 150,000 unemployed workers in the West Bank. The UWF focuses on expanding the PA's unemployment benefits and creating jobs. The organization works towards the former by pressuring the Palestinian government, which, while it does not have the resources to adequately compensate the unemployed, does have the means to increase benefits. The latter is attained in small doses, through project-development programs that encourage local initiatives and find funding for them (primarily from NGOs). Union members in Ra'fat, a small village outside Ramallah, spearheaded one such initiative. Here workers are planning to build a chicken farm that, pending funding, will provide five or six jobs for the village.

Our delegation traveled to Ra'fat to meet with some of the workers organizing under the UWF. One member that we met with, Waheed Hamin, a father of five, has been without steady work since the Second Intifada began in 2000. Before the Second Intifada, when some West Bank and Gaza residents were still able to legally work inside Israel, Hamin was working as a maintenance man inside a Jerusalem hotel. Following the second Intifada, more than 250,000

Palestinian workers within Israel (some with work permits, others working "illegally") were fired and forbidden from working inside Israel proper. Hamin has since switched professions, now working as a house painter, but he finds it nearly impossible to compete with young single men who are willing to work for less than a living wage. As a result, Hamin is left with little to provide for his family.

Organizations such as the GWU and the IFUP have developed programs that attempt to bridge the gap for people such as Hamin. The PA does not adequately address the needs of the West Bank's unemployed population, and while it provides health coverage, it merely covers clinic visits, not life-saving surgeries or other complicated—and expensive—procedures. Most of the PA's budget is allotted for government salaries and the implementation of security measures demanded by the Israeli government. In response to this, the IFUP has set up a service that provides food, medicine, money, and free insurance to more than 2,000 of its unemployed members, and the GWU has initiated a program that is currently supplying medical care to more than 300,000 people.

As previously stated, the depressed job market facing Hamin and others in the West Bank is caused by several contributing factors: checkpoints that inhibit workers from traveling freely; restrictions on imported and exported goods, stagnating economic growth; the resulting poverty and lack of fully developed infrastructures that make it hard for new businesses to get off the ground; the apartheid wall; the settlements; and the artificially inflated water prices that make farming (which had once been the predominant industry) almost impossible to profit from. Waheed Hamin's family lost 19 acres of land to the Israeli separation wall and adjacent military detention facility, both of which we could see from his window.

The economic realities of life in the West Bank contrast starkly with those of Israel, where the economy has the ability to expand and develop. Specialized industries, innovative start-ups, and foreign corporations can all be found in Israel's high-tech, investor-friendly marketplace. The most recent unemployment figures put Israel's rate at 7.8 percent, a number far below the West Bank's unemployment figures. The unemployment rate in the West Bank has risen significantly since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, an event that began the process of cutting off West Bank residents from legal employment in Israel. Once participating in Israel's agricultural, construction, and tourism sectors, Palestinian workers found themselves jobless and with few work opportunities in the West Bank.

Today, migrant laborers from South East Asia (countries such as Thailand,

Union Organizing In The West Bank



Photo: Rob Mulford

A protest against the Separation Wall in Bi'ilin; tear-gas from U.S.-made canisters.

the Philippines, and Sri Lanka) occupy jobs in Israel that were once filled by Palestinian workers. These workers, who are essentially slaves, are denied the rights that accompany full citizenship, such as caps on work hours, a minimum wage, protection from employer abuse, and so on. The scheme that currently operates demands a sum of several thousand U.S. dollars for permission to work in Israel for a period no longer than five years, though this is often extended illegally, and employers usually confiscate the workers' passports, making travel home impossible.

After our official delegation visited the West Bank, we had the opportunity to meet with a labor organization in Nazareth, the largest Palestinian city in Israel (approximately 20 percent of Israelis are Palestinian, a population that lives in similar conditions to blacks in the Jim Crow South). The visit to the union organization in Nazareth, Sawt Al-Amal ("Voice of Labor"), gave us insight into the dynamics between working-class Jews and Arabs, as well as the situation of Palestinians inside Israel. Sawt Al-Amal works to unite Jewish and Arab workers, but finds it difficult because of racial segregation within Israeli society. Most aspects of Israeli public life are separate for Arabs and Jews. Of all the cities in Israel, only five are considered to be officially "mixed." In education, there are two school systems, one for Arabs and one for Jews, and the mandatory military service, from which Palestinians are exempt, offers educational and financial benefits to Israelis and not Palestinians.

In terms of labor conditions in Nazareth, there are many Israeli employers that refuse to hire Palestinian-Israelis, and all public industries bar Arabs from employment, such as the electricity company, the telecommunications industry, and the airports and seaports. Sawt Al-Amal considers the struggle of Palestinian workers to be the same struggle as workers all over the globe, but unique because of the conflict. Palestinian-Israelis not only face obstacles related to privatization and globalization, but also suffer from institutionalized racism.

Sawt Al-Amal's efforts to unite Jewish and Arab workers include working with some of the smaller Jewish unions who are organizing immigrant workers, as well as unions within the service industry. Sawt Al-Amal frequently engages in political discourse with these organizations with the belief that "if discrimination exists, all workers are hurt." Arabs and Jews who are employed in the same shop will take to the streets together, demanding their rights side by side. But as soon as the conversation turns to the causes of economic disparities between Jews and Palestinians, unity dissolves. Political tensions run deep and too often make Jewish-Arab

organizing a nonstarter.

The preamble of the IWW's Constitution states that "the working class and the employing class have nothing in common," and according to Sawt Al-Amal, this line is no less true with Palestinian employers of Palestinian workers than with Jewish employers. According to Sawt Al-Amal, Palestinian employers are not necessarily more sympathetic to Palestinian workers and are just as likely to break a union as any other boss, often playing the nationalist card in defense of union-busting. It is a difficult situation, in part because there is little awareness in the Palestinian-Israeli community about the rights of workers and the obligations of employers. In general, there is a lack of organizing infrastructure, as Palestinian institutions were destroyed or crippled following Israel's formation in 1948.

With annual aid to Israel topping \$2.4 billion, most of it in the form of military support, the United States plays a large role in shaping the realities of West Bank life. At each meeting we asked, "What can we do?" and each time we were asked to support—and encourage others to support—the economic, academic, and cultural boycott on Israel. The occupation hurts all workers: Palestinians, migrant laborers in Israel, and Israelis, both Jewish and Arab. For example, the cost of sustaining the settlement network alone is about \$556 million a year. Thus, to benefit Israeli as well as Palestinian workers, the boycott must be endorsed. The consensus was that a boycott campaign, coupled with Palestinian-led, non-violent resistance, is the only thing that can end the occupation.

Our delegation zig-zagged across the West Bank, passing through innumerable Israeli checkpoints, and seeing fields of centuries-old olive trees that had been chopped down or burned by Israeli settlers in the shadow of the apartheid wall. We saw soldiers threaten civilians. We saw charred rooms in Hebron where children had been murdered by firebombs in their sleep. In the past two years, 64 Palestinians and four Israeli settlers have been killed in the West Bank. And that says nothing about the 1,300-plus people killed last year in Gaza, nor the countless daily humiliations faced by Palestinian workers unable to travel a few miles to work because they might be held up for hours at a checkpoint. All for a military occupation that continues to claim the economic potential of generations of Palestinians living in the West Bank—from the Jordan River to the Separation Wall.

We are forming a "friends of Palestine" working group within the IWW. Please email katezaidan@gmail.com, or call 267-455-9279 to get involved.

Kate Zaidan and Nathaniel Miller contributed to this story.



University Employees Union strike in Ramallah.

Photo: Rob Mulford

Special

Why We Should Oppose The U.S. Occupation of Haiti

Editor's note: Due to the urgency of this issue, we are publishing this special report on Haiti instead of the usual entertainment reviews.

By John Reimann

When the earthquake leveled much of Haiti on Jan. 12, including the Presidential Palace, it destroyed not only buildings and lives, but the capitalist state apparatus as well. In a country whose history includes bloody repression and paramilitary death squads, all reports were that both the police and the military had disappeared from the streets.

For several days, the U.S. administration dithered, uncertain of what to do. Then Obama announced he'd send troops to Haiti along with the commitment of the miserly sum of \$100 million in aid (less than two-thirds of the total spent on his inaugural ball).

What is the purpose of the troops?

"Restoring Order"

The conservative Heritage Fund spelled it out on its web site: "We should rapidly deploy sufficient U.S. military and civilian forces to help Haitians restore order in the capital of Port au Prince and in surrounding areas." It also clearly sees the necessity of using the troops to prevent the Cuban and Venezuelan regimes from increasing their influence in Haiti. Nobody should be surprised if conflicts develop along these



Photo: anti-imperialist.org

Mass march for the return of Aristide in 2008.

lines in Haiti.

Obama also carried out the Heritage Fund's recommendation of appointing Bill Clinton and George Bush to head up U.S. initiatives in Haiti. Clinton has a long history of helping foster neoliberal policies in the country (low wages and privatization) as well as having supported the coup against Jean Bertrand Aristide. Bush is infamous for his administration's "relief" effort in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The failure to provide timely aid in Haiti shows that the direction of efforts in New Orleans was no mere accident, nor the product of the incompetence of one particularly stupid U.S. president. It was the result of massive privatization. The fact that Bush and Clinton have been appointed to oversee U.S. "efforts" in Haiti shows that nothing has changed.

One of the U.S. military's first steps was to seize control of the port and the airport at Port au Prince. Their priority has been to land more troops and lift out endangered U.S. citizens. In fact, as the British *Guardian* newspaper reports on Jan. 17, this is creating serious tensions with other countries—both rivals and allies—who are seeking access to the airport.

Delays In Providing Urgent Aid

The main issue, though, is the delay in food, water and medical supplies reaching Haitians. The U.S. media gives the impression that the main reason involves "bottlenecks" at the Haiti air-

port, destroyed and blocked roads, etc. However, the U.S. priorities are clarified by Jarry Emmanuel, air logistics officer for the U.N.'s World Food Program, who told the *New York Times*: "Most flights (allowed by the U.S. to land) are for the U.S. military. Their priorities are to secure the country. Ours are to feed. We have got to get those priorities in sync." This is the reason that, as *al-Jazeera* reports, "People could see helicopters flying overhead, U.S. military vehicles in the city and aeroplanes arriving at the airport with supplies, so it was difficult to understand why little aid appeared to be reaching the people."

The Return of the State Apparatus

Meanwhile, a few Haitian troops and police are back on the streets. Already some clashes with crowds are reported. When U.S. troops go out on patrol, as they inevitably will, what will their focus be?

The U.S. press, ever a good predictor of coming U.S. policy, is now full of comments about "looters" and near riot situations. This serves to establish the justification here at home for direct repression by the U.S. troops, up to and including shoot to kill orders.

This shows the priority of the U.S. military: to establish the presence of some sort of state apparatus until the Haitian ruling class can reestablish Haiti as a functioning capitalist state. Naturally, during a time of utter crisis such as now, the state apparatus will have to carry out some "humanitarian" aid. After all, capitalism cannot function and profits cannot be made if the working class is in such desperate straits. But this is purely a secondary by-product of reestablishing the state.

Neighborhood Committees

There is and was a clear alternative to reliance on U.S. (and U.N.) troops. The 1985 earthquake in Mexico City shows this. As opposed to Haiti, the Mexico City earthquake did not devastate the nation as a whole, and therefore the state apparatus was not nearly destroyed. However, in Mexico the state failed to provide the forces for rescue and similar operations. As a result, neighborhood committees developed to clear the rubble, carry out rescue operations, etc. They showed how workers' councils could start to develop. These neighborhood committees continued and flourished and out of them developed a mass community-based political movement in Mexico.

In Haiti, there was already the infrastructure for such a development in the form of the Lavalas Party, which has strong roots in working-class communities. The strength of their base was demonstrated once again just last April, when Lavalas was barred from participating in the elections. They called for a boycott and practically the entire Haitian population responded. Voter turnout was only 3 - 10 percent.

With little but their bare hands, Haitian workers are starting to organize to carry out rescue operations, including digging people out of the rubble. Following the example of the Mexican workers, they should create an organizing center of neighborhood committees that could start to take on a national role, such as controlling both the port and the airport to coordinate aid in situations such as



Earthquake victims aid each other in Port au Prince.

Photo: nj.com

the current crisis.

Working-Class Appeal

Most of the foreign troops in Haiti are composed of working-class people. Given the history of racism in the U.S. and the racial composition of the U.S. troops, as well as the severe economic crisis at home under which many of these U.S. soldiers are suffering, they would be very open to fraternization with Haitian workers' committees. Nevertheless, although there is very little chance of a permanent U.S. military presence in Haiti, the workers' movement should oppose their presence for any length of time.

Now, several unions are mobilizing aid for Haiti. These same unions have a long history of acting as a front for the CIA and the U.S. State Department. Their efforts to mobilize aid are positive, but it is likely that it will be used to buttress the aims of the U.S. administration, rather than to help Haitian workers free themselves from the chains of poverty. Especially on the East Coast, many of these unions have a large Haitian membership. The IWW and other anti-capitalist forces within the labor

movement can play an important role. We should involve ourselves in these efforts and through this make direct contact with our Haitian fellow workers. In the process, we should seek means of campaigning for:

- A real, worker-based aid program.
- Getting all foreign troops—including U.S. and U.N.—out of Haiti.
- The establishment of direct links between the Haitian workers movement—community groups and unions—and that of the rank-and-file workers here in the US.
- Allowing foreign soldiers that are already in Haiti to fraternize with Haitian workers, international aid workers (including those from Cuba and Venezuela), and other troops.

Only by supporting a program such as this can Haiti be rebuilt as a country based on social justice and workers' rights. Crises, for all their destruction, provide opportunities for social change. The IWW and radical workers all over the world must act now to show support and solidarity for our Haitian brothers and sisters.



Graphic: Tom Keough

Football Through Labor's Lens, Part 1

By Neil Parthun

This is part one of a two part article about football, health and labor issues.

A union that has fought for minimum salaries for workers, extra compensation for extra work, respectable pensions for retired laborers, better health and medical benefits, impartial arbitration between the union and management during disputes, demanded a larger piece of the profits made through their labor and has walked the picket line to achieve these goals, would and should have our respect. The union I am talking about is the NFLPA, the National Football League Players Association.

The National Football League (NFL) was created in 1920. Instead of the multi-billion dollar monolith we know today, the NFL was highly unorganized. Championships were given to the team with the best win-loss record yet some teams played more games than others while some teams scheduled games with non-league franchises. Due to these issues, a yearly championship game was established in 1933. By the end of World War II, the NFL was quickly gaining popularity. In 1945, the Cleveland Rams left Cleveland for Los Angeles and became the first team on the west coast. In 1950, three new franchises—the Cleveland Browns, San Francisco 49ers and Baltimore (now Indianapolis) Colts—were accepted into the NFL. The geographic diversity of teams and increasing popularity also led to national broadcasts of football games starting in the 1950s. As the prospects of the NFL were steadily increasing, the players began to organize themselves.

The NFL Player's Association was founded in 1956. The members of each team elect a player representative and an alternate player representative to serve on the Board of Player Representatives. The Board elects an executive director and a player to be the union's president. At the outset, the players had simple requests of team ownership. The NFLPA wanted a minimum salary for all players, teams paying for pads and equipment rather than the individual player paying, continued pay for players that were injured on the job and extra compensation for playing in pre-season games. The owners quickly made many concessions to the fledgling union. It was not an act of benevolence but the result of a 1956 Supreme Court case, *Radovich v NFL*. The Court ruled that the League was subject to antitrust laws and the owners wanted to prevent a flood of lawsuits from disgruntled players looking to better their working conditions. Unfortunately for the players, the concessions were hollow statements. By the middle of 1958, the owners were still not paying players for participating in pre-season games. Quickly, the union sprung into action. If the owners would not follow the terms of their agreement, the union threatened further antitrust litigation. As a result, the owners finally began meeting the terms of their previous agreement and even began to fund players' pension benefits by the start of the 1959 season.

The 1960s began with the creation of a second football league, the American Football League (AFL). The increased competition did not benefit players. The NFL athletes were not able to change leagues for more pay unless they wanted to sacrifice their owner-funded pensions. When the AFL and the NFL eventually merged in 1966, a split emerged between the AFL and the NFL because the AFL players were represented by the American Football League Players' Association (AFLPA) and the NFL players were represented by the NFLPA. The separate unions ultimately cost the players a lot because owners were able to play both unions against each other.

In 1968, the NFLPA prepared to strike when their demands for increased minimum pay were not met. Before the players could strike, however, the owners locked them out for a week by preventing the players from accessing the stadium and training facilities. A continued lockout would mean the players would be without pay. Upon the owners lifting the lockout, the NFLPA staged a brief strike. The result of the strike—the first collective bargaining agreement (CBA)—was a historical milestone, but the agreement itself represented only minimal gains for the NFLPA. The owners and the AFLPA had already agreed to a similar contract prior to reconvening negotiations with the NFLPA, thus minimizing the NFL players' bargaining power. The NFLPA knew that replacement players—college grads, Canadian footballers or AFL players—could scab during another possible strike, so the Players' Association's bargaining position was weakened.

Two years later the NFLPA and AFLPA finally merged. In July 1970, the now-unified players' union went on strike after another "lockout" by owners. The strike only lasted two days, however, as the owners threatened to cancel the entire season, which would keep players from getting paid. The most significant issue for players was the so-called "Rozelle Rule." Enacted by the NFL under new Commissioner Pete Rozelle in 1960, the rule prevented players from moving to another team after their contracts ended. It required teams that signed a free agent to give up draft picks, often multiple first round picks, to the player's former team. The NFL's revenue sharing arrangement, encompassing both ticket sales and national television broadcast contracts, allowed teams in small markets such as Green Bay, WI, to compete with teams in larger markets such as Los Angeles, CA. But because of this revenue sharing model, the cost of signing a star free agent could not be offset by additional revenue tied to increased local interest. Also, few owners wanted to give up multiple first round draft picks to sign free agents under the Rozelle Rule. The Players Association went to court to end this practice in *Mackey v NFL*. The courts ultimately decided in favor of the players, and for the first time players had the right to free agency. The NFLPA ultimately bargained away the right to unrestricted free agency in order to gain monetary compensation for the many athletes who had been negatively impacted by the Rozelle Rule.

The 1974 season marked another set of negotiations between the NFLPA and the owners. The players wanted an end to the Rozelle Rule, new contracts that guaranteed salaries to players and an impartial arbitration process. The owners, however, refused to engage in collective bargaining, believing that they would ultimately win an appeal in the Mackey case. On July 1, 1974, the NFL players went on strike. Unfortunately for the players, the owners still refused to budge on any of the main union demands. By mid-August, the players called an end to the strike and filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The legal proceedings continued until 1976 when the courts found in favor of the NFLPA in *Mackey v NFL* and the NLRB found that the owners had violated labor and antitrust laws.

In 1982, the players' association decided that since it was their labor producing the huge profits for owners that they should be paid 55 percent of the

club's league-wide revenues. As the players' association described it: "Those revenues would be divided among players based on years of service, playtime and individual and team performance. The proposal was designed to pay players based on performance, not on how high a player was drafted or how well he was expected to play." The owners strenuously opposed the proposal and a 57-day strike resulted. A close to the strike was called and a collective bargaining agreement was signed in December 1982. The owners paid \$60 million in "money now" which helped to offset the lost salaries of the striking players. The union was pleased as it had made gains in minimum salary, pension and medical coverage/decisions.

While players were finally able to be free agents able to sign with any other team, teams were still required to give up draft picks to sign free agents. The 1987 negotiations focused almost entirely on winning the right of the NFL players to sign with any team at the conclusion of their contract.

Owners again refused to negotiate the matter and yet another strike was called. The 1987 NFL work stoppage is probably the most famous of the labor struggles because owners used scab replacement players to continue the regular season. Fans quickly jeered at the replacement teams calling them the San Francisco "Phoney-Niners," the Chicago "Spare-Bears" and the Los Angeles "Shams." On Oct. 15, 1987, the NFLPA voted to go back to work while also filing an antitrust lawsuit against the owners for continuing to fight unrestricted free agency.

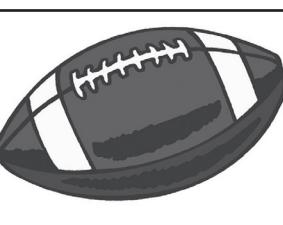
Owners tried to compromise, offering a "Plan B" for free agency that would allow teams to demand draft picks or other compensation for 37 of the players on each roster, but the NFLPA was not swayed. The legal actions by the NFLPA hit a snag in 1989 when a federal judge ruled that only individuals, not a union acting on behalf of its membership, can use antitrust litigation against their employer. The court cases ultimately concluded in September 1992, when a jury found that the Plan B system violated antitrust law.

With the legal victories in hand, the Players Association was reconstituted in January 1993 and got to work on the next set of negotiations, which were approved that August. Owners had agreed to free agency, but only if there was also a salary cap. As the NFLPA described the

agreement: "Players agreed to the cap, but only if player costs first exceeded 67 percent of league revenues. Even then, the cap would have to be high—64 percent of revenues—and the clubs would have to guarantee that at least 58 percent of revenues would be spent on players. (Historically, up until then, the players' share of revenues had averaged less than 50 percent). And most importantly, the owners would have to agree that there would be no cap in the last year of the deal—1999. In addition, \$195 million in damages would have to be paid to settle the various court [antitrust] actions."

The current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the NFLPA and the owners is due to expire in February 2011. As the players bargained for, the upcoming season potentially will be without a salary cap, but it will also restrict the movement of players who in prior years would have been unrestricted free agents. Once again there are very real rumblings of a work stoppage in 2011. Concussions and football players' well-being have reached center-stage with even Congressional committees investigating the dangerous conditions faced by these workers. Part 2 of "Football Through Labor's Lens," which will appear in the April 2010 Industrial Worker, will look at the current issues being faced by the NFLPA as it enters this highly precarious time for negotiations.

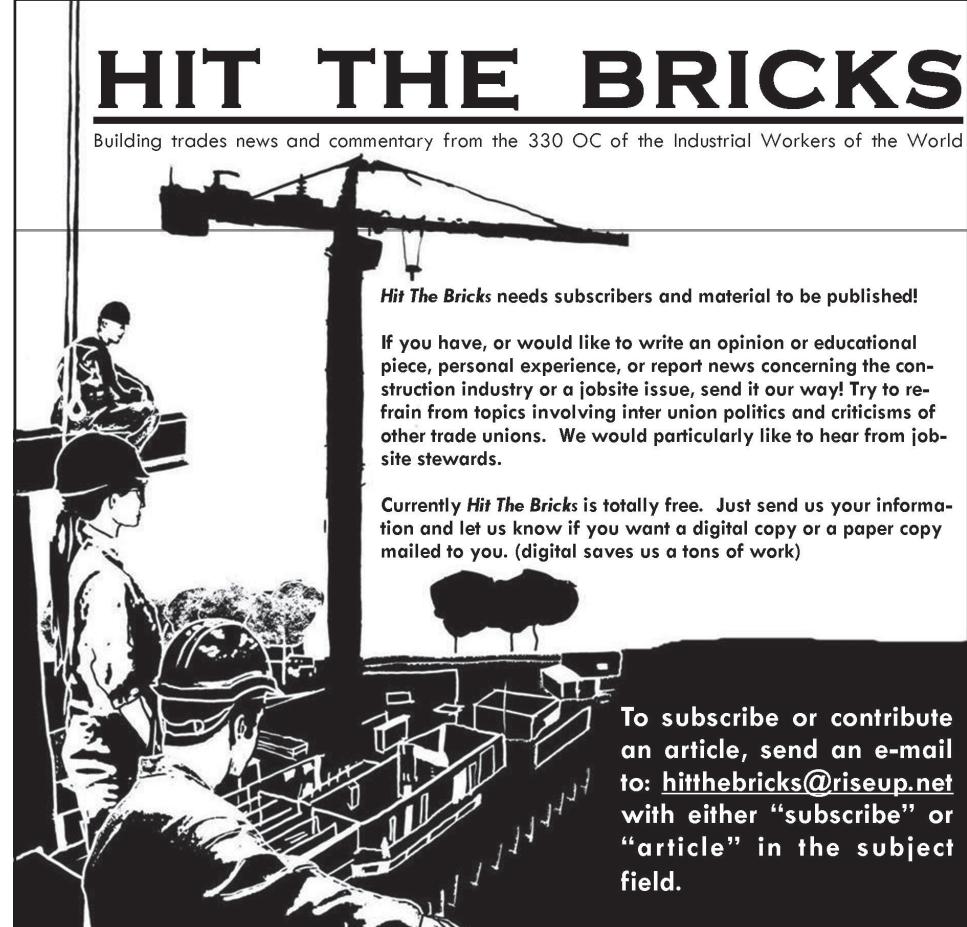
Sports are interactive media that can make progressive issues more meaningful for the general public. A city's residents may get angry when state employees expect the government to honor their pensions. Yet, these same city residents will be madder than hatters at NFL owners like Al Davis and Jerry Jones if the NFL season doesn't happen. It is up to activists and organizers to help connect the public's outrage at owners/management in sports to the outrage that should be felt when other workers are disrespected. Sports can serve an excellent springboard to make these connections. Too often 'the left' as well as everyday people, portray professional athletes as greedy and overpaid. It is worth remembering that only decades of organization, struggle and professionalism have allowed these athletes to retain so much of the massive amount of wealth that their labor creates. The NFLPA's example could, and should, provide a valuable lesson to all of the nation's workers, especially as they enter negotiations for a new contract.



Graphic: insidesocal.com

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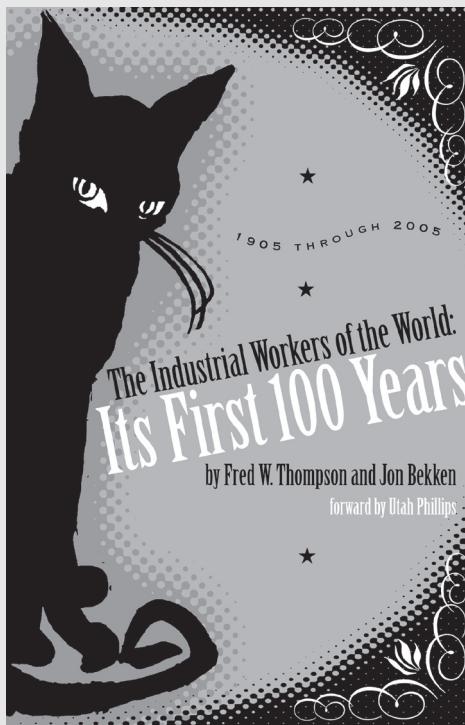
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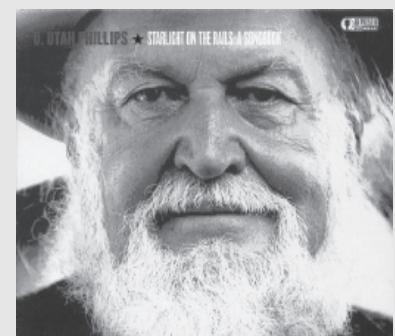


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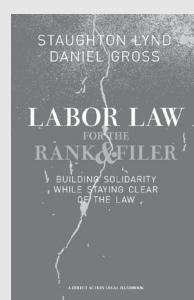
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Ft. Worth Starbucks Joins The One Big Union: Group Of Women Wobblies Take On The Coffee Giant—And Win!

Continued from 1

Appreciated!" and another box was designed to be a play on Starbucks Christmas decorations.

Somehow, Karsh and district manager Lisa Noble didn't realize what was happening until the women and I waited patiently in line, as if to order a drink, to speak to Karsh. Once we got to the front of the line, we were face to face with Karsh, who had a very tense smile stretched across her face. FW Casey handed Karsh their demand letter while FW Michelle stated that they were happy to announce they had joined the international Starbucks Workers Union. While Michelle was speaking to Karsh and Noble, it was clear in that instant that power had changed hands—and it became too much to bear for the startled managers.

Seeking a distraction from having to hear their employees' concerns, the managers started to tell Steven Morrow, the Panther City IWW delegate who was filming the action, to stop videotaping. Starbucks, always concerned with their public image, hates it when we film workers engage in concerted activities. Knowing our rights, FW Steven continued filming. That issue settled, Karsh tried another distraction by straining over the pastry case to try taking orders from customers standing behind the Wobbly baristas. Little did she know that she was trying to take orders from other Wobblies that were there to support their Fellow Workers. After their list of demands was delivered, we all left the store and prepared for the press conference that we had planned for two hours later.

The press was notified of the baristas joining the IWW and demanding, among other things, a first aid kit, sick pay, and to not be forced to work while showing H1N1 symptoms. At the same time, each public branch of the IWW Starbucks Workers Union in the country notified both their district managers and store managers of the baristas' union affiliation, along with a warning about what would happen if the company retaliated against our new union sisters—making it abundantly clear that the entire union is watching and that our dedication to our Fellow Workers is fierce and steadfast. During the press conference, we held a banner and signs at the busy intersection. One sign read "Don't Mess with the IWW Starbucks Workers of Ft. Worth" and another said "Baristas Make a Nickel Above Poverty Wage." At one point, a woman pulled over and identified herself as a member of the SEIU

out in Portland. She asked if we were Wobblies. We told her we were, and she asked if we were accepting donations. She gave what was described as her "last five dollars" to the Ft. Worth Starbucks Workers Union because she said that Wobblies in Portland were always so kind and supportive and she was glad to see that there were Wobblies in Ft. Worth. Many customers showed support also. One regular came over to talk and left with an IWW pin on her shirt, declaring that she was going to talk to the Starbucks manager about giving them raises and a first aid kit.

To give the press something additional to shoot, we went back to the drive-thru, this time not entirely blocking it, but chanting "No Union, No Latte" and "What's disgusting? Union busting! What's outrageous? Starbucks wages!" to the people in the cars who were waiting for drinks. FW Michelle went over to several cars to explain what was happening and got reassurance from many regular customers that they supported them and believed they were doing the right thing.

At the time, we didn't realize what an impact the press coverage was going to have, but by that evening we were all over the local news, including NBC and FOX. This prompted the president of the Teamsters Local 767 to call and personally invite the Ft. Worth Starbucks Workers Union to be guests of honor at the next evening's Teamster Christmas party in Dallas. There are so few unions in Texas that they all try to stick together and support one another. Months back, the local IWW had shown up to support the Teamsters 767 sanitation workers at a rally, and those workers remembered them once they saw the IWW on the news. We all went to the Christmas party and had a very funny moment on stage when it was me, Casey, Bree, Michelle, FW Steven, and Bree's partner, and the stage was full of men in suits that were Teamster officials. One official approached us and we said we were from the IWW Starbucks Workers Union and it became obvious that these men had assumed that the men we were with were the union baristas, going to shake their hands first and congratulate them. Being supportive male comrades, they referred the Teamsters over to the women organizers. FW Michelle spoke in front of nearly 2,000 Teamsters about the IWW and the Starbucks campaign, getting a lot of applause and supportive words from members throughout the evening.

Within one day of delivering their

demand letter, the baristas got their first aid kit. Also, their schedule was redone to give workers more hours and to have shifts fully staffed (another of their demands). There was a little note written by the manager on a white board that declared "Happy Partner Appreciation Day! Thank you for all that you do!" Over the weekend, the other union baristas

and I took turns sitting in the cafe during shifts when any of the newly public Wobblies were working just to show a presence of solidarity for those working. We spoke with workers, and we flyer'd other Starbucks stores in the area. Many baristas recognized us from the news and were happy to see us in their stores. Within two weeks of the action, the manager gave out performance reviews that were well overdue, and the entire staff finally received their raises.

This was a truly inspiring experience. I am confident in saying that we, as the IWW, did this the right way. Through the tireless efforts of Wobblies throughout the country and the world, we were able to hit Starbucks hard, make serious wins, give real tangible support to our Fellow Workers, and make another push toward having organized labor in the South.

IWW branches from around the world sent cards to the union baristas welcoming them to the IWW, and many branches and individual members sent donations for the action and the branch. Because of Fellow Workers' donations and support, I was able to take a week off from work and fly from New York City—where I've been organizing at my Starbucks for nearly three years—to Ft. Worth to play a supportive role for our Fellow Workers going public, hoping to solidify their connection with the international campaign and share my experiences and the lessons I've learned so that they would be better prepared than I was when my store went public. Also, I wanted to join the action so that

The baristas celebrate their hard-earned first aid kit.

Starbucks could see the power of the union. The last thing they expected was another broke barista flying down there to show support.

There is also a serious feminist bent to all this: a woman organizer flying down there to work with a group of all-women workers to stand up to their female bosses. This was an important point that was not lost on us. In part, it's why I'm writing the article. We know that women still have a long way to go before being seen as equals in a real way in society, at our jobs, and, on some occasions—though it's sad to admit—even in this union. Something that really left an impression on me and the other women was how much true solidarity we felt from all the men in the IWW that really stepped up to help us however they could, some to the point of complete exhaustion. We want to thank every person and IWW branch that lent their support in any way for this action.

This is the first Starbucks in Texas, or any "right-to-work" state, to declare union membership. Baristas Bree Bailey, Michelle Cahill, Casey Keeling, and a barista signed up after the action, Alena Springer, have joined in what has already been a five-year battle with Starbucks to treat its employees with respect and dignity. Please send emails of support to starbucksunion@yahoo.com. Watch the YouTube video "Ft. Worth Starbucks Workers Union" to see the action for yourself. Buy a Starbucks Workers Union assessment stamp from your local delegate or donate online at <http://www.starbucksunion.org>.

Fight For Union Freedom In Germany: Workers Struggle At Babylon Cinema

Continued from 1

lon Cinema struggle is important in that the freedom of German workers to form autonomous labor organizations—grassroots, democratic organizations—is at stake here.

Some years back I spent some time in the Rhine region (my father's ancestors were from that part of Germany) and had an opportunity to talk with members of the Köln and Frankfurt am Main branches of the FAU. This left me with an impression that the FAU is a well-organized group with serious and committed activists.

The FAU derives from a tradition that goes back to the decentralist unions of the late 1800s and early 1900s, which separated from the main centralist labor federation (the predecessor of the present DGB) over the issue of local autonomy. After World War I, the autonomous unions came together to form the Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands (FAUD). The



Graphic: fau.org

FAUD was part of the radical grassroots unionism movement in Germany in the years immediately after World War I. In the late 1920s the FAUD had approximately 30,000 members. The FAUD was banned after the Nazis came to power in 1933, and many of its members ended up in concentration camps.

Kersten, my Frankfurt FAU contact, told me that during World War II, the German SS rounded up thousands of FAUD members and formed them into an armed battalion and stuck them out on the Eastern Front, facing the Red Army. An SS division was behind them, armed with machine guns. The FAUD people were told, "You fight the Russians or we kill you." Few FAUD members survived to tell about that.

In the late 1970s a new generation of German anarcho-syndicalists decided to rebuild the FAU. In more recent years the FAU has gradually grown to have more than 300 members and has finally

reached a stage of being able to organize a number of worker union groups in some workplaces.

If the FAU is banned now, this will be the third time the anarcho-syndicalists have been banned in Germany. They were banned in 1914 due to their opposition to the German war effort, and again by the Nazis in 1933.

However, the FAU believes that the court order can be overturned, if there is sufficient public outcry and solidarity. They are suggesting actions such as protests at German embassies or consulates, sending protest letters to German embassies, and sending protest faxes to the German court.

The FAU has set up a webpage in English for information on how to contact German diplomatic embassies and the management of New Babylon Cinema, to express opposition to the banning of FAU and to support for the right of the New Babylon Cinema employees to have a union of their own choosing.



Photo: Liberte Locke

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

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

By Matt Antosh Introducing the 2010 ISC

A new year, a new International Solidarity Commission. This year's ISC includes Fellow Workers Nathaniel Miller from Philadelphia, Pa., who is recently back from the IWW delegation to Palestine; David Kloker from Oakland, Calif. and Matthew Antosh from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. We are all really excited to get down to the work that needs to be done to build international solidarity across borders!

If you would like to contribute to the work of the ISC, or wish to contact the ISC, please email solidarity@iww.org.

MLK Day in Bangladesh – Jonathan Christiansen and the Twin Cities IWW

As Martin Luther King, Jr. Day approaches our Fellow Worker Jonathan Christiansen of the Boston IWW is in Bangladesh spending time with the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity. As an official representative of the ISC, Fellow Worker Christiansen will be talking to our allies about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahandas Gandhi and how these historical figures connect us. This MLK Day, the Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance will be pondering ways to better connect with garment workers in Bangladesh and how to share those deepening connections on May Day 2010, which happens to be on a Saturday this year.

The Twin Cities IWW is now working with SweatFree Communities to host Bangladeshi garment workers in their homes during a workers tour in April. These are the same workers that the Pittsburgh IWW welcomed to Freedom Corner in 2004. These workers will be presenting testimony from factories that produce apparel procured by local governments such as the State of Pennsylvania and Allegheny County.

Please consider contacting Erik Davis of the Twin Cities IWW to learn more about the potential for hosting these garment workers in your town in April. Please make room for some sort of exchange between IWW members and members of the BCWS and the NGWF at your May Day events, celebrations and strikes.

Support IWA Sections in Germany and Serbia

Across the world, member sections of the anarcho-syndicalist organization, the International Workers Association, are under attack. From Germany, where the Berlin local of the FAU (Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union) is under threat of being denied the ability to even call itself a union, to Serbia, where six members of the Anarcho-Syndicalist

Initiative (ASI) are being framed for "international terrorism."

Fellow Workers, please take a moment of your time to send an e-protest letter. To send a letter to the employer in Berlin go to this website: <http://www.fau.zsp.net.pl/send-a-protest-to-kino-babylon/emailpage>. Also, one can send letters of protest to the Serbian Embassy through this website: <http://asi.zsp.net.pl>.

Further information on the FAU can be found on the FAU website at http://www.fau.org/verbot/art_091216-010818, while more information on "Belgrade 6" support can be found here: <http://www.belgradesolidarity.org/how-to-support>.

Get Involved with the ISC!

The 2010 ISC is seeking to expand our contact database and relationships with international unions. If you are planning to travel to other parts of the globe and would like to be an ISC delegate please contact solidarity@iww.org and we can try to put you in touch with workers in the region. Also if you have connections to any international workers groups and unions please put us in touch.

Occupation At Collar Textile In Opatów, Poland

By John Kalwaic

On Dec. 10, 2009, workers in the Collar Textile Plant in Opatów, Poland, began an occupation of the plant to protest unpaid wages. Some of the managers and directors had been stealing company property and the company was cutting its losses by not paying its workers. During the sit-in more company property disappeared due to the underhanded dealing of the managers. The sit-in was supported by the Polish anarcho-syndicalist union known as the Workers Initiative (WI). Approximately 150 workers of the 360 crew members took part in the sit-in. On Dec. 15 a protest took place against the company and the politicians who made empty promises to the workers about receiving their wages.

The cheated workers from the textile plant in Opatów marched for one-and-a-half hours through the streets of Opatów. The temperature of 17 degrees below zero (Celsius) did not disturb the more than 150 workers. Protesting workers occupied the mayor's office the following day on Dec. 16 for 30 minutes. The workers shouted: "Give our money back," "We fight with dishonest employers," "We demand justice in our land." The participants, mostly women, shouted slogans: "Thieves" or "Rowicki go to work for 500 złotys." The workers have not gotten their money for more than six months. Their debt has risen to 120,000 złotys.

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Israel: Histadrut To Allow Migrants Entry

By "treeofjudas," Libcom.org

Histadrut, the biggest Israeli trade union federation, has declared that it will be allowing legal migrant workers to become members as early as March 2010. Sources from Kav LaOved claim that this is a result of pressure from competing federation Koach La Ovdim, as the latter gains ground in traditional Histadrut areas and is also starting to make headway into the migrant labor section.

Until now, migrant workers could not be members of Histadrut. As it is the biggest Israeli federation of trade unions, and trade unions in Israel are only acknowledged when they are part of a federation, this meant that the workers could not legally organize. This gap was covered by a non-profit called Kav LaOved—literally "Worker's Hotline"—which gives free advice and cheap labor representation, both for migrant workers as well as for others not covered by any of the unions. But Kav LaOved does not have the legal protection afforded to actual union organizers.

Then, just three years ago, a new trade union federation came into being, Koach La Ovdim ("Power to the Workers"). It started organizing in many heretofore non-unionized jobs, mostly in contract work and temporary employment, such as security workers, baggage

handlers, waiting, and even lecture work at Israel's Open University—the only university without a prior collective employment agreement. More relevant to this latest move by Histadrut is the reported progress by Koach La Ovdim in their organizational drive among Nepalese care-workers. This, along with increasingly common outbursts of militancy among Chinese construction workers, has probably contributed to Histadrut's policy change.

The ability to join Histadrut may help migrant workers overcome their basic precariousness in the Israeli workforce: the fact that they are automatically made illegal as soon as their employers decide to fire them, leaving them with little in terms of practical legal recourse, and with occasional debts to the head-hunters who had brought them, making "illegal" work in Israel their only course of action. But this depends on how Histadrut organizers and lawyers deal with actual disputes as those occur. Moreover, the fact that it will only allow legal workers to join could make its involvement moot, with increased dues being the only benefit. It seems that the second quarter of 2010 may well be interesting, in any case.

This story originally appeared on Dec. 29 2009 on <http://www.libcom.org>.

Garment Workers Rally For Human Rights In Bangladesh

By Amirul Haque Amin,
President of the National
Garment Workers Federation (NGWF)

On the occasion of World Human Rights Day, 2009 there were a lot of programs in Bangladesh.

The National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) organized a rally of garment workers named "Garment Workers Human Rights Protection Rally" in the capital city, Dhaka. Several hundred garment workers participated, holding red flags. It was led by the president and general secretary of the NGWF, Amirul Haque Amin and Safia Pervin. At the rally, they urged the government and employers to protect trade union rights in the garment sector—because this is a human right. Also mentioned was the fact that although the garment workers are supposed to have the right to organize and bargain, in reality they do not. Workers rallied because of the weakness of labor laws, the absence of commitment from the government and the anti-union attitude of the employers.

EPZ (Export Processing Zone) Workers Center, a sister organization initiated by the NGWF in 2000, also organized a Rally of EPZ workers in Dhaka. More than 100 EPZ workers participated in this rally, named the "Trade Union Rights—Human Rights Rally." It was led by its co-coordinator and member secretary, Amirul Haque Amin and Jessmin Begum. The rally raised the issue

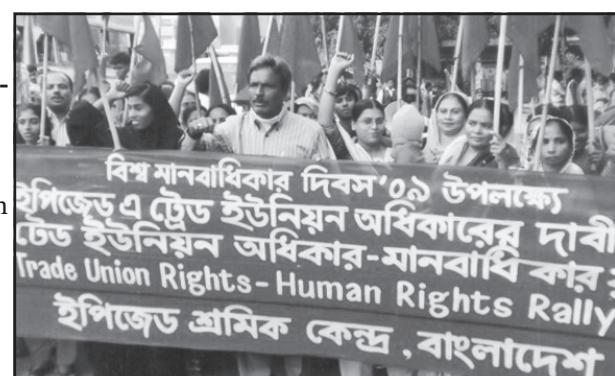


Photo: NGWF
Women workers carried the Bangladeshi flag and the red flag.

that—in contravention of international law, human rights and the country's constitution—EPZ workers are deprived of trade union rights, and that is a violation of their human rights.

On Dec. 16, 2009, the NGWF organized a Women Workers Procession in the capital city of Dhaka. It's notable that Dec. 16 is the Freedom Day of Bangladesh. On that day in 1971, Bangladesh became an independent country. During the War of Independence, 3 million people were killed and 200,000 women were raped by the war criminals and their collaborators.

There were three demands from the processions: trial of the war criminals and their collaborators responsible for the killings and rapes; equality for women in regards to property and in society; and equality for women workers' rights, dignity, wages and job status.

The Women Workers Procession was inaugurated by M. A. Matin, Architect of the Bengali Language Movement.

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