

The NLRB and the Future of Graduate Student Organizing by Richard A. Greenwald

Are graduate assistants cheap labor for universities? Or are they, as universities insist, just students who receive training in an age-old tradition? At some point we must deal with the fact that graduate students teach and grade for 40 percent of all college classes in the United States. Universities, in their current incarnation, simply could not exist without them.

The National Labor Relations Board recently ruled that Teaching Assistants (TAs) are students not workers, and therefore are not entitled to unionization. (Public universities are guided by state labor laws.) In making this decision, the NLRB completely reversed its 2000 decision. What happened?

In 2000, the NLRB ruled, in a case involving New York University, that graduate assistants were indeed workers. This decision gave grad students firm legal footing. They could collect signatures, call for elections, and demand that the university collectively bargain with their chosen representatives. The NYU decision raised the hopes of grad students at other universities, including George Washington, Yale, USC, Tufts and Brown, to name just a few. The United Auto Workers began drives at Brown, Tufts, and Columbia, while the American Federation of Teachers began a drive at Penn. Each university fought grad student unionization. As organizing campaigns moved forward and elections were called, these universities appealed to the national NLRB.

In 2001, the New England NLRB ruled that TAs at Brown had the right to form a union if they voted for one. Organization proceeded apace, and in December of that year over 400 grad students voted on unionization. The ballots, how-

ever, were impounded by the NLRB pending an appeal by the university.

However, on July 13, 2004, the national NLRB reversed itself, overturning the New England Board decision in a 3-2 ruling. The New York Times called this decision "a crushing setback." Justin Pope, AP Education writer, called it a clear "victory for private universities." In its own ruling, the Board acknowledged that nearly 25 percent of all college teaching is done by graduate students, but insisted that these teachers were not workers. Thus, it completely bought the logic of the university's position. Henceforth, private universities no longer have to bargain with graduate student unions.

The Board decision was a blatantly partisan effort, with three appointees of President Bush voting in favor, and two holdover appointments from the Clinton

administration opposed. The simple fact was that the sole difference between the 2000 and the 2004 decisions was not substantial, but political. The only reason why it hadn't happened earlier is that the Board was missing its fifth member and therefore evenly split between the two Republicans and the two Democrats. The Chronicle of Higher Education's Scott Smallwood, speaking on NPR's "All Things Considered," said "the only difference is the board," plain and simple. The issues were essentially the same.

This reversal of the 2000 NYU decision throws the whole issue of graduate assistant unions into question. Next year, when the NYU contract comes up for renewal, it will interesting to see what the university does now that it doesn't have to do anything.

So, what can be done? The NLRB is a clear *(cont'd on page 11)*

Ludlow Lives On . . .

by Christine A. Berkowitz

Former Democratic presidential candidate and United States Senator George McGovern touched a chord this past April when he addressed an audience in Pueblo, Colorado. McGovern shared a story about an experience he'd had in the early 1940s while conducting research in southern Colorado for his dissertation on the coalfield wars of the early twentieth century. Needing a break from research, he decided to take in a movie at a local theater. In those days, newsreels came before the feature film, and this one involved the rather controversial figure, Mother Jones. According to McGovern, the theatre erupted, half cheering and half

jeering, as the image of Mother Jones appeared. For those who heard the story firsthand and then delighted in its re-telling, the audience reaction then, and now, was a clear demonstration of how the legacy of Ludlow lives on, at least in the lives of local residents.

Over a year has passed since the desecration of the Ludlow Massacre monu- *(cont'd on page 4)*

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Greetings from Jim Green

President of LAWCHA

As we look forward to our annual membership meeting this October at the North American Labor History Conference in Detroit, we can look back on a very good year for LAWCHA. As Membership Committee Chair Heather Thompson reports, our membership had grown by leaps and bounds thanks to the excitement over our journal *Labor*, our partnership with the editors and Duke University Press, some aggressive outreach, the timely appearance of this newsletter, and our excellent presence at the OAH in Boston.

I call upon all LAWCHA members to plan to join us at our official conference at the University of California at Santa Barbara during May 6-8, 2005. We are joining with the Southwest Labor Studies Association to sponsor the conference. This is the most important meeting in our history, because it marks the first effort to diversify our activities and work more closely with a variety of local and regional labor history groups. Please plan to be there. [For more on the Santa Barbara conference, see Message from the Program Committee in this issue.]

A few other items of note: LAWCHA member Rosemary Feuer has asked LAWCHA to be a sponsor of a documentary film project she is organizing to telling the story of the 1898 Virden, Illinois, massacre, a victory for union miners but a tragedy as well because of the violent attack on black workers that took place. The Executive Committee readily agreed to support the project.

Recently, I have been able on to represent LAWCHA and recruit members on a number of occasions, including:

*a 390 piece mailing -- financed by the U-Mass Boston Labor Resource Center-- to my former labor history students (all labor union leaders) from the Harvard Trade Union Program, going back to 1987.

*a welcoming talk to participants in the Boston Social Forum at U-Mass Boston July 23, and a Boston people's history time line for the website (go to boston-socialforum.org)

*a Labor Day radio show on KBOO in Portland focused on labor commemoration themes and hosted by LAWCHA Board member Laurie Mercier and Norm Diamond -- a good chance to describe our "Ludlow Committee" headed by Z. Vargas and Betsy Jameson. [For more on the "Ludlow Committee," see article by Christine A. Berkowitz in this issue.]

*a walking tour of Boston people's history sites for 20 funders from the Neighborhood Funders Group, including a number of foundation directors who are part of a "Labor and Community Working Group."

A personal note: I will be in Italy from Oct. 17-Nov. 17 at a writing institute (finishing my book on Haymarket), so I will not be able to join you in Detroit, where our Vice President Alice Kessler-Harris will preside, but I do look forward to seeing a whole lot of LAWCHA folks in Santa Barbara.

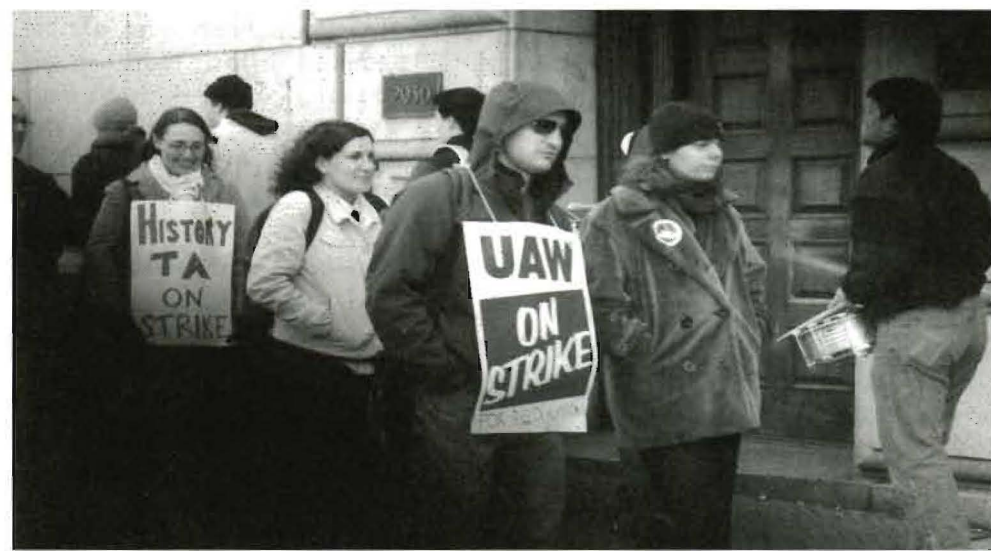
Union Busting in the Ivy League: Columbia University Takes a Hard Line

by Jennifer Carson and Jennifer Ann Fronc

[Editors' note: a longer version of this article came in just weeks before the NLRB decision overturning the NYU case allowing graduate student organization at private universities. See Richard Greenwald's article in this issue on the significance of this recent setback. We

run a truncated version of the original Columbia article, and will provide an update on the campaign there in future issues of the Newsletter.]

On 19 April 2004 hundreds of teaching and research assistants at



Message from Membership Committee

The Membership Committee is pleased to report that, as of early August, LAWCHA has welcomed over 250 new members and is actively engaged in reaching out to many more historians, trade unionists, historical society, and labor studies folks by next August. To that end some of our members have been promoting LAWCHA to various organizations that they come in contact with or give talks to throughout the year. We encourage all LAWCHA members to mark their own calendars for the North American Labor History Conference in October and the Southwest Labor Studies Association conference in May. Next to reading our new journal, *Labor*, attending these events that LAWCHA co-sponsors is a great way to connect with other folks interested in promoting awareness of working class issues.

Columbia University walked off the job. As members of Graduate Student Employees United (GSEU), they had cast ballots in a strike authorization vote the previous week. While the university administration depicted the action as sudden and rash, the strike was the culmination of a four year effort to have the union recognized. When GSEU began organizing in 2000, its grievances mirrored those of Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Research Assistants (RAs) across the nation: low stipends, meager health care benefits, and excessive work loads. But after a long and protracted struggle with both Columbia's administration and a conservative National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the TAs and RAs at Columbia found their cause involved something even more fundamental: the right to organize.

In the Fall of 2000, inspired by the NLRB's NYU decision granting TAs and RAs at private universities the right to organize, graduate students at Columbia began joining Local 2110 of the United Auto Workers, a local that represents the TAs at NYU, Columbia and Barnard support staff, the *Village Voice*, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Feminist Press.

Within a year, GSEU had signed up a majority of working teaching assistants and filed for a union election with the Regional NLRB. The university immediately went on the offensive. Represented by Proskauer Rose, a union-busting law firm that also represents other private colleges, the university

refused to allow the election to take place. Columbia's case went into hearings. The university advanced a contradictory argument. First, it argued that neither TAs nor RAs were employees; rather, that the work they performed was primarily educational. But in an effort to hedge its bets, the university also argued that if TAs were found to be employees, then RAs had to be considered employees as well. (Following the parameters of the bargaining unit set out in the NYU decision, GSEU had petitioned to represent only TAs.) Believing that the majority of RAs in the sciences would oppose unionization, the university insisted that the GSEU include RAs on both the Morningside Heights and Health Science campuses, the Lamont-Doherty Lab, and Nevis Observatories.

This strategy backfired. In February of 2002, the Regional NLRB expanded its earlier decision, ruling that both teaching and research assistants at private universities were employees, and thus entitled to union representation. The ruling doubled the size of the union's bargaining unit and directed the university to hold an election in March of 2002. Despite the administration's belief that graduate students in the sciences would reject unionization, hundreds of research assistants signed union authorization cards and voted in the election.

Yet over two years later the ballots had not been counted. On the eve of the election, the university had appealed the regional labor

board's decision to the NLRB in Washington. As a consequence, the ballot box was sealed and impounded for duration of the appeal. In an attempt to pressure Columbia into dropping its objections, TAs and RAs held a one-day work stoppage in April 2003, picketing at the gates of 116th and Broadway. GSEU was joined by colleagues from Yale and NYU, workers from the Transit Workers Union (maintenance and building services workers at Columbia) and Service Employees International Union (workers in the library), as well as Columbia's support staff, also members of Local 2110.

In the fall of that year, frustrated by the NLRB's stalling and the university's intransigence, GSEU adopted another tactic in their campaign for union recognition: the card count. Using the grassroots tactics available to them, the GSEU continued with its strategy of approaching TAs and RAs on an individual basis, asking them to sign union authorization cards. At the end of March 2004 these tactics appeared to bear fruit, as New York State Senate Minority Leader David Paterson confirmed that a solid majority of working graduate students desired union representation. Paterson then wrote to Columbia University President Lee Bollinger, urging him to have a third party count the cards and recognize GSEU.

The university remained silent. Receiving no response, GSEU members made the difficult decision to strike. On 19 April 2004, the graduate employees at Columbia became the first students at an Ivy League university to engage in an open-ended strike. After three weeks -- during which hundreds of undergraduates lent support and activists from across the city joined picket lines -- GSEU voted unanimously in favor of a "hiatus" in their strike. *[Following the NLRB's Brown decision, GSEU's petition was remanded back to the regional board, which then dismissed the case. The ballots from the election were then destroyed. GSEU remains undeterred--still organizing, still collecting union cards.]*



Ludlow Lives On (cont'd from cover)

ment was discovered on the morning of 7 May 2003. In the intervening months, activists, historians, and other friends of labor from around the country have attempted to turn the tragedy into an opportunity to educate the public about the Colorado coalfield wars, through presentations to community groups, community radio programs, articles in local magazines, newspapers, online publications, and poetry. [For an example of the last, see "This Is Not a Poem," by Angela Palermo, in this issue] Mike Romero, president of UMWA Local 9856 in Trinidad, reports that donations to support restoration work on the damaged statues have come in from all over the world. A big event is planned for the launching of an annual memorial in June 2005 to celebrate their return.

While those who maintain a connection to the industry and the region appear to have kept the memories and the meaning of events surrounding the Ludlow Massacre alive, their significance appears to be lost on the wider Colorado community. Local activist Gary Cox put it this way: "In all the talks I have given, most received [the Ludlow] story with sympathy and compassion, but I can count on my fingers the number who seemed to grasp the similarities to today's corporate behavior." Nothing drove those similarities between past and present home more forcefully than a presentation by a group of immigrant miners at this year's annual Ludlow memorial celebration.

The celebration began with the customary welcoming remarks and acknowledgements of local elected officials and union representatives. All the while there was a background murmuring -- disturbing to some, until they discovered that the source was a young woman translating the words of the speakers from English into Spanish for a group of young striking miners from the Coop Mine in Huntington, Utah.

The Coop Mine is owned and operated by the Kingston family, which, according to the *Salt Lake*

City Tribune, is one of the remaining polygamous clans in Utah. The 1,500 member clan controls an estimated \$150,000,000 in assets spread over six states, including the C.W. Mining Company, which operates the Coop Mine. According to miner Bill Estrada and his co-workers, when they walked off the job eleven months ago, immigrant miners there were receiving between \$5 and \$7 per hour, at a time when the going rate in the state was \$18. They were forced to work with unsafe equipment, suffered frequent injuries, and received no benefits. C.W. Mining fired the striking workers, and refused to rehire them when the strike ended three months later. In June 2004, the National Labor Relations Board found in favor of the miners. As Bill Estrada reported, "[We] find ourselves at a decisive moment. [We] have won the right to Union election, NLRB declared we were fired illegally. Now the company has been forced to give us our jobs back.... This is a big victory." But, he continued, "[We are] also facing an obstacle in this election, that is the company union of this mine which is run by the Kingston family.... now we have to pressure the NLRB so that they won't allow...any Kingston family members to be part of this election vote...." According to a recent article in *The Militant*, the company had submitted a list of eligible employees to the NLRB that included approximately 100 Kingston family members who are listed as full-time, part-time or seasonal help on the company's payroll. The decision of the NLRB is expected at the end of August.

It does seem ironic, as Paul Mendrick, secretary-treasurer of the Colorado AFL-CIO, suggested in his closing remarks, "that, some ninety years later, American workers are no freer to organize into unions than our predecessors." Mendrick went on to say that today's employers have substituted more subtle forms of fear and intimidation for "gatling guns and

armored vehicles" in their attempts to discourage organizing. Nevertheless, it just goes to prove that the events of the past are extremely relevant in the present.

LAWCHA has taken measures to promote the restoration of the Ludlow monument. In the Fall of 2003, association President Jim Green appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Labor History Landmarks (or "Ludlow Committee"), charged with seeking National Landmark Status for the restored monument and the site. Chaired by LAWCHA Board members Elizabeth Jameson and Zaragosa Vargas, the committee also includes, Jonathan Rees, Alan Derickson, Anthony Di Stefano and Camille Guerin-Gonzalez. Bob Butero, director the United Mine Workers Western District, and LAWCHA Board member Julie Greene serve as advisors.

Thus far, Betsy Jameson reports, "we've made contact with the appropriate personnel at the Denver Regional office of the Park Service, and they are helpful and supportive of our plan make the Ludlow site a national landmark. Jonathan represented us at the annual Ludlow memorial service in June. The new restored statue will be dedicated next summer, and we will plan to be a strong presence."

[For more on the desecration of the Ludlow memorial and the current restoration campaign, see James Green, "Crime Against Memory at Ludlow," in *Labor*, Vol. 1, no. 1.]

The LAWCHA Newsletter is published twice yearly and mailed to all paid-up members of the Association. Copy for the Spring issue is due on 15 February 2005 and can be sent to one of the co-editors:

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From The Grassroots

Mid-Atlantic

From New York City

Gail Malmgreen

New York Labor History Association members participated in the annual gathering to commemorate the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911. At noon on March 25, 2004, trade unionists, politicians, students, representatives of the NYC Fire Department and others gathered in the street in front of the Brown Building (site of the fire) on Washington Place, near Washington Square, to hear speakers address the history of the fire and urgent current issues related to worker health and safety.

On March 26th, the Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at NYU held a gala reception to mark Women's History Month. The event, featuring a panel of distinguished feminist historians, marked the opening for research of the Papers of Mary Gawthorpe, a British suffragette who emigrated to the U.S. in 1916 and became active in a variety of campaigns here, including a stint as an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. An exhibit of treasures from the collection was held there through May.

On May 4th, the NYLHA and the Workmen's Circle held a panel discussion on labor relations in baseball, entitled "Marvin Miller and the Revolution in Baseball." Participants included Miller, first executive director of the Major League Players Association, and sports historians Carl Prince, Brad Snyder, and Joseph Dorinson.

As always, NYLHA published its illustrated poster-calendar of

May/Labor History Month Events in late April. For information on how to get a copy of the calendar and other information about NYLHA, see our web site www.ilr.cornell.edu/nylha.

Mid-West

From Detroit

Beth Bates

Labor's continued activism is hard to miss while living in Detroit. First, there is the Michigan Labor Legacy Landmark. Dedicated in the summer of 2003, the 63-foot arch -- located in Hart Plaza, just across from Joe Louis's fist and a couple blocks away from the Renaissance Towers -- showcases the importance of labor to Detroit's history. The arch, a major work of public art called "Transcending," was shaped from 30 tons of steel and is surrounded by bronze reliefs detailing labor's contributions. Labor history, workers' occupations, and labor's vision for the future are captured in the stunning landmark, which is a gift to Detroit from the labor movement. Over one thousand rank-and-file union members contributed \$100 or more to help build the massive structure.

Building the arch was phase one. Phase two, now underway, involves erecting signs around the site conveying historical information and publishing educational materials to help

connect students and other visitors to Detroit's labor history.

Second, there is the extended celebration of Labor's Days, a week of events heralding labor solidarity, which began on September 5th with "Labor in the Pulpit" at the Central United Methodist Church. The keynote message, delivered by General Baker -- internationally known activist/scholar who organized the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement [DRUM] in 1968 -- addressed the "State of Labor" today. On Monday the Detroit Labor Day Parade marched through downtown Detroit. The week ended with a Laborfest on September 12th. Laborfest, which started in 1997, draws tens of thousands to Ford Field for exhibits, entertainment, and speakers celebrating labor's contributions to the city. This year the Laborfest demonstrated labor's preoccupation with the upcoming presidential election, with large banners and placards declaring the need to "Dump Bush: An Injury to One is



an Injury to All."

Third, the Mid-West Labor Library and Resource Center opens officially at the end of September. An important new site for labor activists and historians, the library is located on the third floor of the Central United Methodist Church at 23 Adams Street in downtown Detroit. General Baker is the director of the library. Besides directing and managing this new labor facility, Baker is carrying the challenge of New Unity Partnership [NUPs] to the local level by mobilizing the grassroots in Detroit for a major shake up of the AFL-CIO at its quadrennial convention next July.

Fom Urbana, Illinois *Tom Mackaman & Jason Kozlowski*

The Graduate Employee Organization finalized its first contract this summer with the University of Illinois after a twelve-year effort. Many labor history graduate students, past and present, are veterans of that struggle... In the community, graduate student Tom Mackaman is running for State Representative with the Socialist Equality Party.

From the Twin Cities *Peter Rachleff*

On Saturday, July 24, labor historians, LAWCHA members, artists, and union activists from several generations joined together to organize "One Day in July: A Street Festival for the Working Class" to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the 1934 Teamsters' strike. The event was made possible by endorsements and financial contributions from many local unions, while the local media -- from Minnesota Public Radio and the local Pacifica-affiliated station, and the alternative press, to the major daily newspapers and even the downtown business paper -- told the story

of strike over and over, spun by the event organizers ("The strike that made Minneapolis a union town"). The event itself had a youthful energy and aesthetic, as hip-hop, punk, metal, and folk bands played from 2 in the afternoon to 10 in the evening on an impromptu stage (thanks to volunteers from IATSE, the stagehands' union), interspersed with speakers (from the recent bus drivers' and University of Minnesota clericals' strikes, among others) and dramatic readings of original documents from the 1934 events. While people came and went all day, event organizers estimated the turnout at more than 1,000. Information booths offered attendees displays about the strike, books to buy, pamphlets and flyers on current labor campaigns, from organizing Borders Books and fighting Wal-Mart to supporting labor rights in Iraq and Venezuela.

The event organizers created a website to promote the event. See www.1934strike.org.

South

From Chapel Hill *Dave Brannigan*

It took a "fusion" alliance of a new sort to force University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to begin to reconsider its Reconstruction-era history. On the campus of the oldest public university in the U.S., the commemorative landscape amply reflects what Professor Thomas Holt called the substantive and rhetorical consequence of memory, in his

keynote address to the "Remembering Reconstruction at Carolina: A Community Conversation" symposium on 1-2 October 2004.

On this campus, the very fabric of the landscape demonstrates Holt's claim that "memory has a politics." And now, thanks to an alliance of graduate and undergraduate students, some faculty, community activists, and most notably, the groundworkers and housekeepers -- the lowest paid workers of the campus -- the politics of UNC's own institutional memory and history are being contested.

The catalyst for the community conversation was a petition and appeal to the university community from a graduate student in the history department Yonni Chapman. He drew the university's attention to the fact that UNC's most prestigious award for women -- the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Bell Award -- was named after a woman he claimed was a racist, one whose writings and activism were an integral part of the Democratic party's efforts to thwart Reconstruction and undermine the university's Reconstruction-era Republican administration. The petition received an unusually enthusiastic and wide



A Voice from the People!

spread reception. It was signed by over 400 hundred students, faculty, and staff. The petition and its call for a community dialogue was endorsed by the UNC-CH United Electrical Workers Local 150, the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union that has recently been forging stronger links with both students and faculty in this "right to work state," finding new allies as it seeks to have more of a say in university affairs.

The campus, renowned for its beautiful grounds and historic buildings, is often portrayed as a very liberal outpost of activism in the conservative south. The lowest paid workers who maintain the historic landscapes are determined to have a say in how that landscape of monuments and buildings portrays the university's contentious past. They say the conversation has only just begun.

Dave Brannigan, UNC-CH grounds worker and member of UE local 150, can be contacted at 919-542-2249.

West

From Seattle *James Gregory*

Labor historians and labor activists in Washington State benefit from the support of two organizations: The Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington and the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association with members in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. The annual conference of the PNLHA and the very active calendar of events and programs run through the Harry Bridges Center give labor historians a large public profile in the region. Center faculty members and staff regularly work with unions and community organizations, and help the

mainstream press interpret labor issues and labor history.

Academic unionism has made important strides this past year. The Graduate Student Employee Action Coalition-UAW negotiated its first contract after four years of very creative organizing. SEIU 925 and Washington Federation of State Employees 1488 (which between them represent much of the UW staff) also for the first time enjoy full collective bargaining rights as a result of historic legislation passed a year ago.

Other highlights of Harry Bridges Center activities include programs on "Weaving Resistance in Chiapas," the "Killer Coke Campaign," and a 2-day conference on "Labor-Community Coalitions." The Center also continues to devel-

op its collection of regional labor history research websites and promote their use in K-12 and college classrooms. This coming year "The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project" will join five other sites: "The WTO History Project," "The Seattle General Strike Project," "Communism in Washington State -- History and Memory Project," "The Unions and Workers of UW Project," and "The Labor Press Project." They may all be accessed at faculty.washington.edu/gregoryj/pnwlabor.

From The Bay Area *Don Watson*

The labor history community is happy that most of the funding for the legislature and the



Governor have restored the University of California Institute for Labor and Employment (ILE) after a long, tough, battle. [See "California Update -- Reports of ILE 'Termination' Greatly Exaggerated," in this issue]

The Bay Area Labor History Workshop (BALHW) opened its 25th season this fall. The first September session featured a discussion of the new Rutgers anthology: *American Labor and the Cold War*. This book is based on papers given at the Southwest Labor Studies Conference held in San Francisco in 1999. Two of the editors, Robert Cherny and William Issel, and two of the contributors, Ken Burt and Don Watson, opened the discussion.

In October, archivist Michael Griffith of the Labor Archives and Research Center (LARC) at San Francisco State University will introduce to researchers, for the first time, the 800-box collection donated by Sam Kagel, the premier labor arbitrator on the West Coast for over half a century. Brigid O'Farrell will follow in November on "Eleanor Roosevelt and Labor," and Robert Cherny will present in December on "Jack London's San Francisco."

Meanwhile, LARC has been assisting a hard-working committee to create a traveling exhibit entitled "Our Work Life: Three Generations of Bay Area Work and Workers." This exhibit is now traveling on five SamTrans commuter buses, running from Marin County to the San Francisco peninsula between September 6 and November 8. The murals are 11 inches high and 56 feet long. A SamTrans bus, with murals, came to the parking lot at ILWU Ship Clerks Local 34 to spark a celebration party on Labor Day.

Lastly, the Fund for Labor Culture & History will hold a first time all-day "Laborlore Conversation" at the Piledrivers Union Hall in Oakland on

October 2. This event is inspired by long-time labor folklorist Archie Green. People from across the country are coming. An evening banquet, hosted by Paul Buhle, will feature a talk by Steve Wade from Washington D.C. on "Looking Back at the New Deal's Vernacular Voice."

Canada

From Hamilton

Craig Heron

The Workers' Arts and Heritage Centre, based in Hamilton, Ontario, is steaming ahead with a major project on the history of the building trades in Canada.

In addition to uncovering visual material (including some great documentary movie footage) and the archival records of many of the major unions in construction, the project will involve extensive interviewing of retired workers in the various trades. The result will be a popular booklet, a traveling exhibit with hands-on learning opportunities, and an educational program for use in schools. Depending on the level of funding, a website or digital exhibit, DVD, or video may also be produced. It is hoped that the project will help to encourage further oral-history interviews, leading to more history projects in this neglect-

"I guess because I'm not a worker,
I don't have to grade these..."



Dan Bender

ed area of the labour movement.

The Centre can be reached through its Executive Director, Renee Wetselaar (reneew@web.net, or 905-522-3003 x. 23). Its website is www.wahc.museum.ca.

From Winnipeg **Franca Iacovetta**

I am delighted to report on the successful sessions held at the Canadian Historical Association meeting last June in Winnipeg that were the result of the first collaboration of LAWCHA and members of the Canadian Committee on Labour History. Thanks to Dan Bender's efforts, we organized two sessions, each attracting a large CHA audience. The first session, entitled "Adventurers, Workers, Women: Female Migrants, Immigrant Domestic and Constructions of Identities and Meanings," featured papers by Lisa Chilton (University of Prince Edward Island), who spoke on British imperial campaigns to encourage single women to Canada; Alexander Freund (University of Winnipeg), who spoke on post-1945 German domestic workers recruited on labour contracts for work in Canadian homes and institutions; and Susana Miranda (Ph.D candidate, York University), who spoke on Portuguese immigrant "cleaning ladies" in 1960s and 1970s Toronto. The large audience for this session was primarily female, suggesting, perhaps, that more work still needs to be done to attract more male labour historians to women's sessions.

The mixed-gender audience for the second session -- on "Sex, Gender and Struggle in Local, Global, and Transnational Contexts -- was chaired by Jennifer Stephen (Laurentian University) and drew both CHA and Socialist Studies members.

Besides my paper on transnationalizing women's activism and decentering the "WASP woman worker" in Canadian historiography, they heard papers by David Churchill (University of Manitoba) on "The Transnationalism of Homophile Activism in the Cold War: Beyond US Exceptionalism, Towards Internationalist History," and by Larry Hannant (University of Victoria and Camosun College) on the topic, "My God, Are They Sending Women? Three Canadian Women in the Spanish Civil War." We also all enjoyed watching a clip -- a powerful scene involving defiant peasant women -- from Bertolucci's *1900!*

In addition to these sessions, papers in Canadian labour and left history could be found throughout the program, including several given by graduate students. I am also delighted that LAWCHA Program Committee chairs Dan Bender and Nancy Gabin have contacted some CCLH members about another possible collaboration at next year's CHA. Finally, Julie Guard (University of Manitoba), Jim Naylor (Brandon University) and Nolan Reiley (University of Winnipeg) organized a very successful CCLH workshop at Winnipeg's Ukrainian Labour Temple. More than 100 people turned out and the day's events, which included a tour of Winnipeg's immigrant working-class north end, afternoon sessions featuring ethnic women activists, music, and a banquet, followed by a terrific after-dinner speech by David Montgomery.

From Toronto **David Offenhall**

After more than a year of organizing, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Local 3902 has secured bargaining rights for more than a

thousand sessional instructors at the University of Toronto. Akin to adjunct professors in the US, these instructors have laboured with no job security and minimal benefits for a number of years. Their numbers have expanded recently as undergraduate enrollments have climbed as a result of province wide expansion in higher education. CUPE 3902 represents Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants on UofT's three campuses.

The union's claim to represent these sessional instructors was unsuccessfully contested by the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA) which, although asserting jurisdiction over sessional instructors, has done very little to reach out to this growing section of the academic workforce. The Ontario Labour Relations Board rejected UTFA's argument that sessionals "have a strong community of interest" with full-time faculty and hence should be part of the same bargaining unit. Significantly, university administration accepted the board's decision. Mike Swayze, staff representative for CUPE 3902, said he was delighted with the outcome. "We won exactly what we wanted and we won it for the reasons that we advocated," he said. "The board agreed with us in full."

Local 3902 expects to hold an election for a bargaining committee this Autumn but issues for bargaining have not yet been determined. "We still have to consult with our new membership," said Swayze.

* * * * *

This Is Not a Poem

(9-11 August 2004)

By Angela Palermo

All appearances to the contrary
this is not a poem
this is an assault
or, more properly, a return of fire
this is a series of locutions
asking questions like
how far is it from Cincinnati
to Boulder and back again?
this is a union placard that reads
"class warfare is not over"
despite all the duplicitous pronouncements
of politicians and business leaders
this is a protest rally outside
Wild Oats headquarters up the road in Boulder
decrying the union busting tactics of
corporate hypocrites or, should I say, hip-
piecrites
this is a linking of arms with our
brother in struggle Tom Kappas who
was fired by Wild Oats management in
Cincinnati for taking the employee discount
on two half rotten bananas
this is a piece of investigative journalism
the sort rarely found in mainstream media these
days
that exposes the real reason for Kappas's firing
he was trying to unionize his store
was hooked up with the IWW
the Industrial Workers of the World
aka the Wobblies, the folks who a century ago
coined the slogan "one big union"
this is not a poem
it's a series of curses and rude hand gestures
venting some long held frustration
before the real work begins
it's my friend Lenny shouting through a mega-
phone
"fuck you Wild Oats and the horse you rode in
on
we don't want you or your rotten bananas"
but he knows this goes far beyond the hyp-
ocrites
peddling fair trade coffee all the while
fucking over their own employees
this is not a poem
not if poetry is the sort of thing
sanitized, anthologized in college classrooms
discussed in five paragraph essays by

middle class students who think the word
"union"
signifies a big building on campus with movies,
bowling and ATMs
no, this is not a poem
this is a nonviolent call to arms
a charge up the hill to freedom
a storming of the Bastille
Lady Liberty leading the people
a black flag and red star
homegrown, grassroots anarchism
a safety net and acts of solidarity
an Indian swami charming the corporate cobras
Mother Mary and a choir of not-so-cheery
cherubs singing the Magnificat
an ongoing revolution that will not rest until
all the oppressors are cast down from their
thrones
a worker's cable network, listserv and website
building a global movement that cannot be
defeated
this is not a poem
this is a plea to the laboring masses
to get off their asses
turn off the mind rot
blaring in the living room
and take to the streets (myself included)
this is a boycott and general strike
to bring down the thieving classes
corporate pirates beware, no more free passes
this is Dorothy Day saying "damn this rotten
system"
an impassioned restatement of Gandhi's
first principle "never give up"
and Joe Hill's last wish "don't mourn, organize"
this is not messianic rhetoric standing alone
but millions of messiahs standing together
and ending wage slavery forever
this is a bedraggled, yet wizened Lakota medi-
cine man
who thinks the Ghost Dance just might be start-
ing to work
this is a prayer for the return of the buffalo
and all the wild places destroyed by human
greed and arrogance
this is a prayer for justice and peace
chanted in all four sacred directions
this is not a poem

Angela Palermo lives in Denver and works at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She regularly reads her work at the Mercury Cafe and was invited to perform at the "slam poetry" event at Metropolitan State College of Denver held October 7th. Long a supporter of organized labor, she was part of the effort to unionize graduate students while attending the University of California, San Diego.

California Update

Reports of ILE "Termination" Greatly Exaggerated

Readers of our first issue will recall the piece by Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein detailing the move by the in-coming Schwarzenegger administration to eliminate the University of California's Institute for Labor and Employment (ILE).

The stakes were extraordinarily high. Established in 2000, the ILE had quickly made its presence felt in California, both as a source of labor studies research and as a forum for deliberation among scholars, policymakers, and labor activists. And, like all things California, this vital initiative was bound to have a broad impact around the nation. Conceived, in

the words of Boris and Lichtenstein, as "a think tank for the labor movement and for public officials who seek to advance social justice," the ILE "seemed to herald a new relationship between the trade union movement and university-based intellectuals."

What greater tribute to the promise of the fledgling institute than the concerted effort by business groups, Republican legislators, and Governor Schwarzenegger to kill it? Happily, their drive to zero out state funding for the ILE -- described in the essay by Boris and Lichtenstein -- came to naught. Confronted with a spirited campaign on the part of organ-

ized labor and its allies to save the institute from extinction, the governor backed down. When, after a bruising battle, the state budget for 2004-05 was signed in July, virtually the entire current provision for the ILE -- \$3.8 million -- was left intact.

The outcome was a heartening sign of the political clout and social vision of the labor movement in the Golden State. May it bolster the prospects for other such enterprises around the country.

[The ILE website can be found at www.ucop.edu/ile]

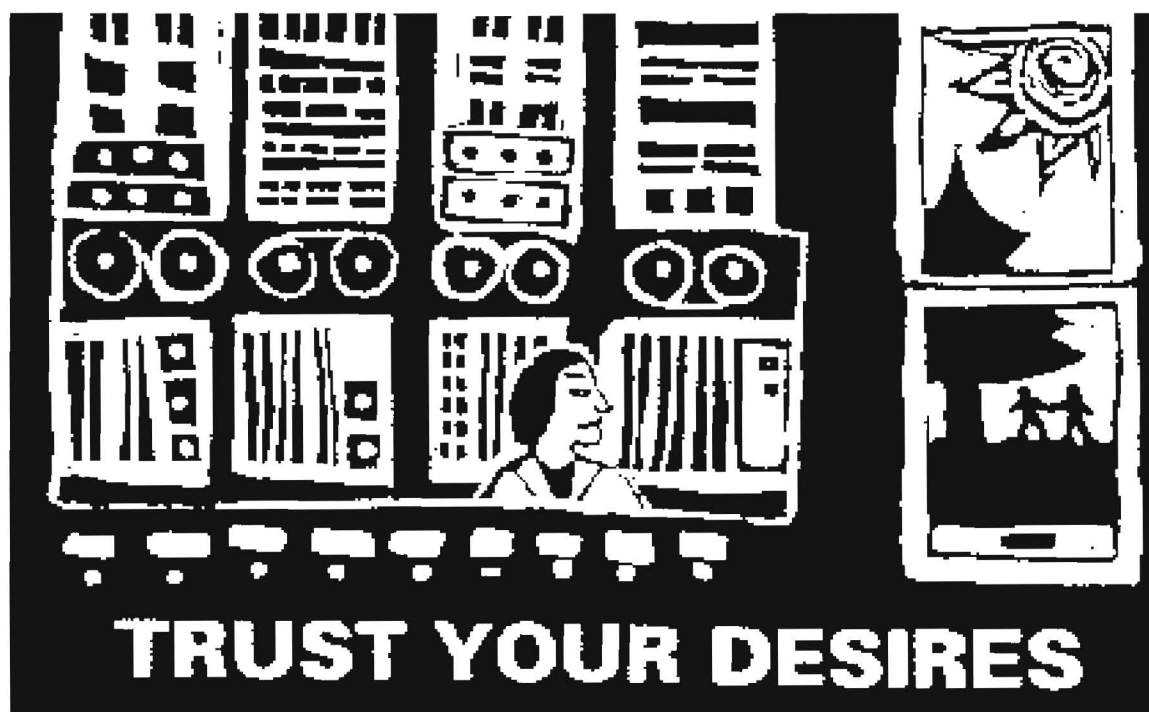
NLRB and Grad Student Organizing *(continued from cover)*

example of the difference between a Republican and a Democratic Administration in the White House. As an appointment to the Board opens every year, a new president can remake the board in a short time. A Bush reelection will certainly mean an even more antiunion Board. It would seem the 2004 Presidential election will have a clear impact on this and other labor related matters. A Bush reelection would mean a stacked deck.

It seems the time now is at hand to put aside the nostalgia and look at cold economics. Universities, especially large well-funded private ones, have long been corporate entities, who all-too-often hide behind the veil of academic tradition. They claim that teaching is training for graduate students and therefore they are not workers. They can not have it both ways. They can not function like corporations in some areas and be treated like the

altruistic colleges of yore in others. Private universities claim that unions will spoil the relationship between mentors and graduate students. But many of our nation's top PhD programs are at public universities with unionized graduate students and it doesn't seem to hurt them. This is not the 1950s anymore. TAs are workers and need unions to protect them!

The views expressed are Richard Greenwald's alone, and do not represent the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration, or the federal government.

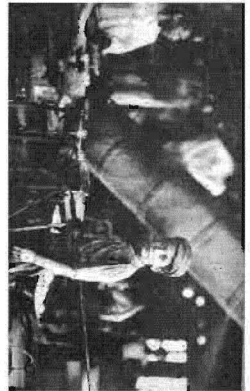


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We are open to the widest possible variety of approaches to the subject of labor and working class history ; through our organization we facilitate the free exchange of ideas and opinions.



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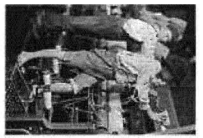
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