

Labor News Digest

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Rescuing Humanity

The scene is surreal. More than 6,000 people are missing in the evil attack. Pulverized concrete covers the rubble like volcanic ash. There is virtually no color, only gray. The smoldering ruins can only be compared to the center of hell. The facades of the upper floors of the World Trade Center stick into the ground like arrows. They soar high above rescue workers who labor tirelessly in search of survivors.

Police, fire fighters, and volunteers are formed into the lines making up bucket brigades. Among them are 10 volunteers from Local 12003 in Boston and *Steelabor* Editor Gerald Dickey.

A large piece of metal passes overhead, from front to back. Then comes a bucket of concrete, a pay phone, part of an air conditioner, some insulation. Bucket after bucket, mostly powdered gray material. Up front they fill the buckets and pass them to the rear. The buckets are dumped into a payloaders scoop and into a dump truck. When a truck is full, it goes to a Staten Island landfill where investigators use rakes and hoes looking for evidence and clues to identify the missing.

On television they call it Ground Zero. People who go in every day call it "the pit." The electricity is out and portable lights powered by gas generators illuminate the area at night. Smoke fills the air with an acrid odor of burnt metal. Everybody working in the pit wears a breathing mask for they would choke on the fumes.

Union Volunteers

John Meade was on the job at Boston Gas on the morning of September 11, 2001, when he heard about a plane crashing into the World Trade Center. Like millions of other Americans, he went to a TV and watched as a plane piloted by the terrorists hit the second tower. He went home that evening and felt that he had to do something to help.

The next day, Meade called in to report off from his job as an equipment operator. He got in his car and made the four-hour drive to New York City. Volunteering comes naturally to Meade. He is a union activist, a local union officer, and he has served as a USWA organizer.

When Meade arrived in New York, he reported to the volunteer station at Ground Zero. Like thousands of other trade unionists, he showed his ID, his union card, and went to work.

"Why did you come to New York?" somebody asked him. "It was the right thing to do," he said. "I just wanted to come here and help, just pitch in and do my part."

When you first approach the pit, you're nervous. You pay close attention to where you are and plan an exit point. After you work a while, passing buckets while the ironworkers are cutting steel beams that are lifted overhead, your anxiety fades and you just keep working. You forget where you are and just pass buckets. Late into the night you might look behind you where the facing of top floors of the building are standing, stuck into the ground. You think, "If it falls, it will kill all of us." But you just keep working. From the sky, rescue workers look like bees in a honeycomb working away.

Chris Bassett, Dave Shanahan, Paul Sulfaro, and John Crehan are also members of Local 12033. They joined Meade later in the week as volunteers in the bucket brigades.

"When you get right up to the pile," said Bassett, "there's the burned out building, the smell, etc...I carried a piece of the plane. People of the United States are coming together."

"There are so many people doing whatever needs to be done," Shanahan said. "Whenever there is a space, somebody fills it. Priests were going around, ministering to the people. Not only priests. They were from every denomination."

"You're in there, doing your hardest," said Sulfaro. "Then you hear a dog bark. Somebody calls out, then everybody moves back."

"My wife's a nurse," Crehan said. "She told me that I was going to be a changed man if I went there, and she's right."

Working Around the Clock

Engineers are working with the ironworkers, determining where to cut the steel beams for safe removal.

(Continued on page 7)

Web Sites Worth Watching

behindthelabel.org

An electronic magazine featuring articles on sweat-shop issues, sponsored by UNITE and an alliance of student organizations, religious and community activists.

BuyUnionNOW.com

A commercial e-retail site guaranteeing all products it offers are union and American-made. The site features clothing, sports equipment, household goods, and more.

youareworthmore.org

Sponsored by Twin Cities UFCW Locals 789 in Milwaukee and 653 in St. Paul, this page is an outreach to retail workers. Among other things, the site offers a free copy of Barbara Ehrenreich's book ("Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America") to the best e-mailed stories from retail workers about their experiences on the job.

Unionlabel.org

The Union Label & Services Trades official web site, featuring boycott information, union label news, and related information.

**"God
Bless
America"**

Forming a Human Rights Committee Helps Locals Create Community Alliances

The PACE International Union model constitution and bylaws require each local to have a legislative and political education committee as well as an educational committee. It also encourages local unions to create other standing committees to aid their membership.

All PACE local unions should give serious consideration to developing a human rights committee.

Human rights issues involve everyone, and include the right to:

- Vote;
- Organize;
- Be free from discrimination on account of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or disability in employment, public accommodations, or public education;
- Enjoy equal protection of the law;
- Be free from involuntary servitude; and
- Receive due process of the law.

The words of John J. Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, speak to the issue of human rights for all working people in the U.S. and around the world: "When working people join together and reach beyond the barriers of color, gender, and culture, they can shake and remake the world. We will build a movement so strong, so inclusive, so energetic that we will raise the wages, lift the spirits, and strengthen the solidarity of every working man and woman."

Human Rights Committee: A Great Organizing Tool

A human rights committee can be a great organizing tool. Union members will be proud to have a union that fights for workplace standards where all workers are treated with dignity and respect.

The good work of the union and its human rights committee spreads by word of mouth to the community, making it easier to find help with the local's organizing activities or struggles with the employer during strikes, lockouts, or threatened plant closures.

Forming A Local Human Rights Committee

In forming a human rights committee, the local needs to make many decisions. In most cases, the local's bylaws will govern the committee in areas like:

- Whether the members and the chair are to be elected or appointed.
- How to ensure the committee reflects the diversity of the membership, including sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, and disability.
- How to include both officers and rank-and-file members.
- Who the committee should report to.
- Whether the committee should meet on a regular basis and have a budget.
- How the committee interacts with other local union committees.

Actions A Human Rights Committee Can Take

- Conduct educational programs and provide materials on human right issues.
- Examine union and employer practices and policies for evidence of discrimination.
- Encourage women, people of color, disabled workers, and other groups to become more active within the union and provide leadership training for interested members.

These are just a few of the actions a local human rights committee can perform. But whatever actions or programs the committee develops, they will help build local union solidarity and put real meaning in the phrase that *an injury to one is an injury to all*.

PACE International Union, P.O. Box 1475, Nashville, TN 37202.

Union Label & Services Trades Department Don't Buy List

New York Sports Cap Maker "New Era"

New Era Cap Company, the preeminent manufacturer of sports caps in the United States, has been added to the AFL-CIO Boycott list. New Era manufacturers on-field baseball caps under an exclusive licensing agreement with Major League Baseball. The company enjoys similar licenses to produce sports caps for scores of major colleges and universities, the Professional Golfers Association, the National Hockey League, and the National Basketball Association.

New Era caps are sold in sporting goods stores and hat specialty shops around the country. On college campuses, the hats are sold in student union bookstores and campus outlets as well. More than 300 employees of New Era's Derby, New York, facility went on strike in July after more than six months of fruitless negotiations for a new contract. The workers are represented by the Communication Workers of America, Local 14177 in Buffalo, N.Y. The strike was sparked when New Era imposed wage cuts of more than \$5 an hour across-the-board. New Era's workers have not had a pay raise for over three years. The company has also rejected union calls for improvement in health care coverage. New Era employees pay between \$245 and \$329 per month for health care premiums.

The relationship between New Era and CWA has been strained since the union won representation rights for the Derby plant in 1997. The union has charged New Era with harassing union activists, making punitive work assignments to outspoken union supporters, diverting union work to plants in Alabama and overseas in Asia and South America.

The union launched a campaign earlier this year to publicize New Era's union busting tactics with a series of fly-overs at baseball Spring training games and golf tournaments. Just before the All-Star game, CWA members handbilled baseball fans at six major league parks with facts about the dispute.

New Era workers have received support from unions in the upstate New York region, as well as the Major League Players Association, Jobs With Justice, the Coalition for Economic Justice, United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), and the National Labor Coalition.

"The Music Man" Tour

The AFL-CIO has added Big League Theatricals and its upcoming national tour of "The Music Man" to the AFL-CIO National Boycott list at the request of the Actor's Equity Association.

Scheduled to play for some 40 weeks throughout the United States continuing well into 2002, The Music Man road company is masquerading as an Equity production of the same musical, which has run on Broadway with an Equity Contract. The road company, however, has refused to negotiate an agreement with Actors' Equity. "To date, efforts to negotiate a fair and equitable contract with Big League Theatricals have been rebuffed," reports Alan Eisenberg, executive director of Actor's Equity.

Actors' Equity will protest at theaters housing the show in several key cities on the tour with assistance from the AFL-CIO and affiliate organizations in those areas. The show is scheduled in Des Moines, moving to Cleveland, Hartford, Hershey, PA; Baltimore, Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa, Orlando, Schenectady, NY; Columbus, OH; Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Greensboro, NC; Palm Beach, FL; Costa Mesa, CA; Atlanta, Seattle, Cincinnati and San Antonio, TX.

Actor's Equity is coordinating with the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), the American Federation of Television and Radio Artist (AFTRA), the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), and the American Federation of Musicians (AFM).

Union Label & Service Trades Department, 815 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20006.

**"If we all stand in solidarity, no force can thwart
the dreams and desires of a union with
members as great as ours."**

Iron Workers Local 798 Build Giant Steel Mill

Steel City Erection and Crane Rental from Bessemer and Mobile, Alabama, and Iron Workers Local Union 798 of Mobile, Alabama, are nearing the completion of the Ipsco, Alabama, giant new steel mill being built in Axis, Alabama. Steel City is the major contractor working under a Project Labor Agreement with Kvaerner Metals, Pennsylvania Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA.

During the course of the project, Steel City was responsible for the following:

- Steel Erection - 12,800 tons.
- Miscellaneous - 1,500 tons.
- Installation of furnace equipment, which includes setting of all machinery.
- Installation of caster equipment.
- Handling 17,000 tons of equipment: rolling mill, cooling bed, shear leveler, and shipping building equipment.
- Erecting 13 overhead cranes with up to 300 tons capacity.
- Rigging and unloading two 356-ton mill stands.
- 1,000 linear feet heavy wall duct.
- 500,000 square feet of roof decking.
- 600,000 square feet siding.
- All power rigging.

At peak performance, Steel City employed 380 Ironworkers with payroll hours exceeding 25,000 per week. This job was completed on time and under budget because of the highly skilled Ironworkers of Local 798.

Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions

Edited by Archon Fung, Tessa Hebb, and Joel Rogers

Cornell University Press 2001--238 pages

U.S. pension funds are now worth more than \$7 trillion, and many people believe that an important task for the labor movement is to harness their share of this capital and develop strategies that will help, rather than hurt, workers and unions.

Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions challenges money managers and today's labor movement by asking how workers' hard-earned savings can be put to use in socially and economically progressive ways. Responsible management of pensions will create greater growth and prosperity in America, and the authors of *Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions* show that the long-term interests of pension plan beneficiaries are well served through a "worker-owned" view of the economy.

Short-sighted Short-Term Gains

A short-term mentality is gripping financial markets and workers' own pension funds are fueling the investment manias that undermine their very jobs. *Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions* takes up the challenge posed by today's money management, providing thought-provoking insights on the potential impact of labor controlling its own capital.

Workers are looking beyond their workplaces and beyond the defensive mind-sets imposed by global capitalism and right-wing zealots. They are putting their money to use themselves, with a view to the long term; they want to know whether today's investments will mean jobs in the future for their children.

"We asked money managers what they were doing with our pension funds and our assets," said USWA President Leo Gerard, the driving force in the publication of this book. "Why do their decisions have such negative repercussions for the beneficiaries: working people? As it turns out, this question has become an increasingly important dividing line in terms of how labor's capital is managed." This book provides the hard research necessary to take on today's conventional thinking and challenges pension fund managers' narrow shareholder theory of value. Funded by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, this collection of essays demonstrates not only how current market practice undermines investment and innovation in the economy but also how labor is overcoming institutional barriers to take more control of its money. By developing its own capital strategies, labor is choosing to engage capital markets rather than simply to leave them to the barons of finance.

Short-circuiting Long-Term Pain

As workers' financial assets swell, so too has the "collateral damage" of flawed investment assumptions and practices. Collateral damage by pension funds in the hands of Wall Street money managers includes the flood of "hot money" into East Asia's "Tiger" economies. Pension fund investments in overseas equities have doubled since 1993, contributing to destabilizing international money flows.

During this same period corporate mergers and acquisitions quadrupled, growing from \$500 billion to nearly \$2 trillion, leading to the hollowing-out of large and small companies alike. Pension fund financing fueled that trend.

However, for those concerned about labor's capital strategies there is good news. Organized labor in the U.S. and Canada has made dramatic headway in the stewardship of workers' capital for productive, long-term investment in domestic prosperity.

Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pension shows that the long-term interests of pension plan beneficiaries are well served through a "worker-owners" view of the economy. This view recognizes that collateral benefits and market-based rates of return are not mutually exclusive. Increasingly, unions and their advisors are recommending that workers' pension funds commit to greater investment in the "real" economy. Such portfolio decisions enhance diversification, support economically targeted investments, promote good jobs, and foster a wider distribution of economic gains.

Democratizing Investment

With leadership from the Office of Investment and the new Center for Working Capital, the AFL-CIO has moved to defend the interests of worker-owners through shareholder campaigns, trustee education, and advocacy.

Socially responsible investing is another powerful tool in control of workers' financial assets. These funds demonstrate that "doing well" and "doing good" are not mutually exclusive in the investment world.

International models of labor's control of capital are explored through Canadian Labor Sponsored Investment Funds. These labor vehicles now account for almost 50 percent of the new available venture capital in Canada and offer important new models for worker-stakeholder education.

Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions serves as a challenge to today's labor movement. How can workers' deferred wages be used to create greater long-term growth and prosperity in America? What are the real long-term interests of plan beneficiaries and how are they best served?

Whose money is it anyway? In this book a group of America's leading experts present a bold study of how the hard-earned savings of ordinary people can be put to use in socially and economically progressive ways. This book provides a genuine first step toward democratizing investment.

United Steelworkers of America, Five Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

Ask a Working Woman Survey

Make sure your voice is heard by filling out this *Ask a Working Woman Survey*, sponsored by the Working Women's Department of the AFL-CIO.

1. If you could make changes on the job, what would be your highest priorities? If you are not working now, please tell us about your most recent job.

Check three.

- _____ Help with child care and after-school care
- _____ Help caring for aging or sick parent/relative
- _____ Better pay, including equal pay, higher pay, and promotions
- _____ More control over work hours (shift work, overtime, truly flexible schedules)
- _____ More respect on the job
- _____ A workplace free of safety and health hazards and violence
- _____ Pension and retirement security
- _____ More affordable health insurance and prescription drugs
- _____ Fair pay and benefits for part-time, temporary, and contract workers
- _____ Job security
- _____ Stronger programs to end discrimination and sexual harassment
- _____ Opportunities for further education and job training
- _____ Paid leave for family and medical needs
- _____ Better procedures to challenge unfair treatment on the job

2. Indicate your top TWO choices for laws that would most improve your life as a working woman.

- _____ Stronger equal pay/pay equity laws
- _____ Laws to improve the quality and affordability of child care and after-school care
- _____ Laws to improve the quality and affordability of health care
- _____ Laws to strengthen pensions and Social Security to make retirement more secure
- _____ Laws to expand family and medical leave and provide for paid leave
- _____ Laws to ensure workers who are in part-time, temporary, or contract jobs are treated fairly when it comes to pay and benefits
- _____ Strong affirmative action laws to provide more opportunities for all women
- _____ Stronger laws to challenge unfair treatment on the job
- _____ Other (please specify) _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Thinking about your job, what are the biggest worries you have about the future?

4. The economies of all countries are now more connected to each other than ever before, which means that wealth or poverty in one region might affect wages and job security for working people. How much do you expect the new global economy personally will affect you and your family in the next couple of years?

- _____ A lot
- _____ Some
- _____ A little
- _____ Not at all

5. Which statement comes closest to your own view about workplace organizations?

_____ Employees should have the right to decide whether to form an organization or union that addresses workplace issues and employers should not interfere in this employee decision.

_____ Employers should have a role in helping employees decide whether to form an organization or union that addresses workplace issues and should be able to prevent employees from forming a workplace organization union.

Here are just a few questions about you:

6. What is your age? _____

7. Do you work:

- _____ Part-time
- _____ Full-time

8. When do you usually work? Check all that apply.

- _____ Daytime, Monday to Friday
- _____ Evenings
- _____ Weekends

9. Do you have children younger than 18?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No
- _____ If yes, how many? _____

Ask a Working Woman Survey

10. Marital status:

- Married
- Unmarried with partner
- Single, widowed, or divorced

11. If you are married or living with a partner, does your spouse or partner:

- Mostly work the same hours/shifts you do
- Mostly work a different schedule
- Not work at all

12. What is your household yearly income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$25,000
- \$25,000-\$40,000
- \$40,000-\$60,000
- \$60,000-\$75,000
- More than \$75,000

13. What is your race/ethnicity?

- White/Caucasian
- African American
- Hispanic or Latina
- Asian Pacific American/East Asian
- Native American
- Other

14. Are you a member of a union?

- Yes
- No

Working Woman Magnet

If you would like the results of the survey, due out in Spring 2002, and a free Working Woman refrigerator magnet, please let us know how to reach you.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Internal use only:

CODE FOR UNION/ORGANIZATION

DISTRIBUTION SURVEY: IEGO

All survey responses are kept completely confidential

Fold survey into thirds, tape, then place stamp here

Working Women's Department, AFL-CIO
816 16th St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Rescuing Humanity

(Continued from page 1)

They are doing some of the most dangerous work. "Be careful," said Robert Blake, an Ironworker with Local 580. "It looks like another one of those buildings may be ready to fall." He had worked a 16-hour shift the night before. Dave Maynard is working with him. He was an apprentice in 1970 and worked on floors 75 through 80 when it was built. Now he is using a cutting torch to dismantle the scrap that remains of the beams.

A large machine running on steel treads works nearby. It looks like a mechanical dinosaur with hydraulic jaws, chewing through the metal and spewing the debris into waiting dump trucks.

Cars were crushed by the fallen buildings, smashed to a pile of scrap down to the height of their tires that appear to have remained inflated. They are loaded onto trucks and hauled away.

When it's time to take a break, some volunteers go and get a bite to eat. The Salvation Army has a chow line set up, serving hot meals. A young soldier sits on a pile of lumber eating a stuffed pepper and vegetables.

"I'd rather be in Afganistan," the National Guardsman said. "That's the feeling of a lot of us here." He is part of a 450-man Engineering Battalion from Westchester, New York. They have been working 15-hour shifts. He is on leave from his job at Verizon.

Generous Americans

Maj. Michael Sharp of the Salvation Army recalls the first night at the scene. "All the police officers and fire fighters were looking at the casualties to see if any of their buddies were coming out," he said. He has more than 1,200 volunteers helping with the relief effort. "People have been very generous but many are frustrated because they want to be working in 'the zone,'" Sharp said. "But you don't have to be in the zone to be doing something important."

Piles and piles of supplies were donated to the rescue efforts. Bottled water sits on wooden pallets along with food, work gloves, boots, clothing, and a wide variety of items that are available to those who might need them.

A U.S. Navy vessel is anchored nearby with 2,000 beds. It has plenty of food, drink, and showers available for out-of-town workers who have no place to stay. Volunteers Daedra Kaehler and Vibeke Hirsch post fliers telling people about the Navy boat. "It is empty," they explain. "Nobody knows it's there."

A veterinary MASH unit is located a few blocks away. It gives the K-9s showers, treats their pads, and in some cases, gives them IVs. A veterinarian explained that dogs can be overworked and become dehydrated, working in the heat with a lack of water. There were about a dozen veterinary people available to care for the dogs.

German Alvarez is a member of Labors' Local 78, working the 7 pm to 7 am shift. He is from Colombia and he has lived in Queens for 10 years. A few days later, he is assigned to the asbestos clean-up crew. He was working in one of the adjacent buildings that was evacuated four times. The building has no power and each time they hurried down the stairs in the darkness. They returned to clean up all the dust and dirt in the area. "Nobody knows what's in the dirt," Alvarez said. "What we see on TV is one thing," he said. "What's inside is something else."

About 20 people were filling out job applications to join the Laborers. Most were Latinos. Some were not dressed in work clothes. "They have no idea of what they are getting in to," Alvarez said. "We have to wear the white paper suits on the job." Their entire bodies are covered, keeping out asbestos fibers as well as keeping in body heat that results in constant perspiration.

Nearby in the City

All around New York, people gather in groups to grieve, pray, and come together in a community. One special place is Union Square, a green space in the midst of the city. People began meeting there soon after the terrorists struck. It was the public park closest to the scene, located just beyond police lines. They gather to seek lost family members and friends. Pictures of lost loved ones adorn makeshift walls around the park. They ask anyone with information about their loved ones to call the numbers listed. Others post messages of hope and offer prayers. Union Square is a living memorial. People arrive with flowers. At night they come with candles. They create shrines with photos and messages amid the soft glow of candle-light. Tributes to the police, fire fighters, and volunteers are all around. Walkaways are filled with hundreds of people. A sign calling for "Death to all Arabs" has a poster next to it reading "An eye for an eye will leave us all blind."

Some musicians play homemade drums. A group with a guitar forms a circle, sitting in the grass. People gather around. The songs are selected by anyone who starts singing. They sing some favorite Beatles tunes, "Eight Days a Week" and "All You Need is Love." The guitar follows along. An environmentalist carries a flag displaying Mother Earth. A woman carries a sign saying, "We Shall Overcome." The songs continue, "I Love New York" and "Amazing Grace."

There were signs calling for peace and love. One message stood out from the rest. It blamed America's previous actions for the violence committed by the terrorists. But it was not ripped from the wall. That it was allowed to stand is a tribute to the tolerance of the American people. Rather than ripping it to shreds, others placed messages adjacent to it, noting that only a fool would make such a statement. We are facing the greatest crisis of our generation and Democracy is alive and well. It is the backbone of our nation. It is what we are fighting for, and it is why we will win.

