

Blue Collar

Blues

*A Labor Perspective from the
Practitioner's Point of View*

Global View 2005

This paper arises from input from 30 labor leaders, union organizers and union officers attending the Harvard University Trade Union Program. The authors represent 30 organizations from 8 countries, including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and both public and private sector unions of the United States. The views expressed in this paper solely reflect the authors' points of view.

Reflections of the Harvard Trade Union Program Class of 2005

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Throughout the course of history most living creatures have come to realize at one time or another that they can usually find safety and strength in groups that share common interests, desires and goals. Those that choose to remain outside the “group” or who are excluded from the group are much more vulnerable to attack or exploitation.

Working men and women of the labor movement today find themselves facing many of the same threats that their ancestors did over the past two centuries.

“Men and women who are active in the labor movement today face unprecedented change and profound challenges in providing leadership and advocacy for working people. Dramatic changes in the world economy and the nature, size and composition of the workplace demand new approaches to organizing, bargaining and union administration. Since 1942 the Harvard Trade Union Program has prepared union activists to meet the challenge of dynamic leadership within their unions and society. Today the program helps union leaders develop managerial and organizational skills, keener analytical and problem solving techniques as well as discover ways to deepen public understanding of the value and importance of labor unions.”

So reads the 2005 Harvard Trade Union Program (HTUP) Mission statement.

Each year a different group of 30+ labor activists from around the globe gather together on the campus of the prestigious Harvard University for an intense six-week residential experience known as the Harvard Trade Union Program (HTUP). This carefully structured program is coordinated through the thoughtful and skillful offices of the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is typically held during the months of January and February.

The driving force behind this well respected and challenging program is its Executive Director Dr. Elaine Bernard. The program itself is the product of the hard work and dedication of an all-star interdisciplinary team of distinguished faculty from Harvard Law School, Harvard’s Economics Department, Harvard’s Graduate School of Business, Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, Kennedy School of Government, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Massachusetts, Northeastern University, and Boston University.

The superior quality and diversity of the content of the program’s sessions have compelled HTUP Class participants to prepare a paper in order to offer insight to others, both labor groups and academics, offering a snapshot of the leading trends affecting the labor movement throughout the world...from the perspective of the practitioner.

The HTUP Class of 2005 is the program’s 94th class. The program has been in existence since 1942. In the earlier years there were multiple classes held each year. In

recent history there has been established a single six-week session. The grateful members of the HTUP Class of 2005, who are labor movement practitioners, wish to relate their points of view regarding the HTUP program and how labor activism currently works in their corner of the world. To that end we offer this paper.

Our journey through this program began simply enough with an orientation dinner where the current participants meet HTUP alumni, HTUP faculty planners and classmates. Each participant, whether they would admit it or not, was anxious and a bit apprehensive regarding what the program had to offer during the following six weeks.

The opening event was followed by a detailed orientation by the Program's Executive Director at which time the participants introduced themselves, identified where they were from and what they expected to get out of the program. At that time the entire class realized just how diverse its members were.

- One each from: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Japan, England and Haiti;
- Five from Australia;
- Twenty one from various places within the United States and Puerto Rico.

There were 24 men and 6 women scattered among unions that represented Private and Public Sector employees in occupations ranging from operating engineers and other trades to teachers, transport workers to firefighters and flight attendants as well as everything in between. This group was truly a cross section of unions, cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds, which added to the tremendous experience.

The class was then immediately immersed into the challenging but manageable curriculum. And what a curriculum it turned out to be. The HTUP faculty, in the collective opinion of the program's participants was truly a stellar line-up of the best academic minds in the area of labor history and strategy that exists anywhere. The participants were blown away by talks given by many truly famous authors and thinkers in today's society.

The entire program is aimed at priming the pump of ideas of mid-career trade unionists in order to explore today's key labor movement issues. There are approximately six major areas of concentration that were offered throughout the program. These areas included:

- Strategic planning for unions
- Leadership and organizational change
- Union grievance and administration
- Lessons from labor history
- Dispute resolution and arbitration practices and procedures

In order to provide the widest variety of information there were various seminars, forums and case studies offered in order to provide the participants with the ability to learn about new methods of resolving problems within their respective membership while at the same time challenging the participants to think outside of their traditional boxes.

Seminars and speakers, regarding topics such as those listed below, made the class realize that while we may have been individuals who entered the class we are united in the many various and sundry threats that are being levied against the workforce today.

- Current labor law
- Labor in today's global economy
- New tactics for union organizing
- The importance of union density
- The concept of leverage and how to achieve it for labor
- Internal and external environments of labor and management
- Public image and relations
- Labor relations concepts (public and private sector)
- Employee ownership as a union strategy
- Advancements in union technology
- Human rights in and outside of labor

The entire HTUP Class of 2005 sincerely appreciated the frank discussions that occurred inside as well as outside the classroom. While the required readings were challenging, they were pertinent and necessary to understand from whence we came, where we are today, and where we are going as individuals and as a group of trade unionists.

While the program's speakers and instructors were awesomely informative and inspirational, so were the fellow members of the class. Executive Director Bernard worked into each week's curriculum an opportunity for program participants to relate to their fellow classmates a glimpse or snapshot of how the trade union movement is getting on in their respective areas of responsibility. This exercise was invaluable to the class. Many successful ideas that were reported by representatives of one union were quickly written down by other program participants in order to be taken and tried at home.

The HTUP Class of 2005 was compelled to memorialize the following snapshot of the current labor movement occurring around the world as reported to the class from an enlightened practitioner's point of view.

It is the unanimous view of the class participants that there are many global factors that have intersected the trade union movement and that these events will change the face of unionized labor in the weeks, months and years ahead. This paper is offered only as a time capsule from a labor perspective to illustrate what is currently happening in hopes that future generations can utilize this information to measure their perspective.

It is not the intent of this paper to answer the complexities of why change is occurring but rather to offer an insight to the current dynamic of what is happening from the unique view of the practitioner.

One of the greatest strengths of the HTUP was the diversity of viewpoints and manner in which the lecture information was presented. The regular members of the program's faculty, the guest speakers as well as the program's participants all presented their views in a totally non-threatening manner. The information provided in the classroom came from people, both academics and practitioners, who brought varying perspectives to the debate. The course was conducted in such a way as to provide challenging views to all the participants so they might take the new information away and make what they will from it. It was up to each individual participant to determine what was important to them and their respective labor organization.

We invite and challenge future HTUP Classes to report their perspectives in the same manner.

Respectfully and humbly submitted by the HTUP class of 2005.

The Australian Story

by Natalie Bradbury, Mark Crosdale, Chris Ketter, Steve Turner, Darryl Watkins

In 1983 the Hawke Labor government was elected into office. This government entered into an Accord with the union movement. This accord promised the delivery of an increase in the social wage for support for a wages control program. This accord, and the changes arising from it, led to significant economic reform.

One major change that came from this was the amalgamation process within the union movement. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) began a process where smaller unions were encouraged to merge to form larger unions. Mergers were encouraged through financial incentives to smaller unions agreeing to amalgamate and also facilitated by imposing restrictions which meant that very small unions would lose registration unless they agreed to merge. This process had both support and opposition, but the broad strategy was endorsed by the ACTU Congress. This process, over time, has meant that the approximately 300 unions in Australia were reduced to about 50. There are examples of where this was very successful and a complete disaster. Another change that was pushed by the ACTU was a move from industry based bargaining to enterprise bargaining. This approach is now being pushed by the conservative government to weaken unions.

The Australian industrial legal system operates within both the Federal and State jurisdictions. Both systems allow for a legal forum/court where disputes can be heard, conciliated and arbitrated. These bodies can also make and/or register awards and agreements covering workers salaries and conditions. They allow for the registration and govern the rules for employer and employee (union) representative bodies. Unions can be registered in both the state and federal jurisdictions. Federally registered unions can affiliate to the ACTU. State registered unions often form federal unions or affiliate with federally registered unions so they can affiliate with the ACTU. State Trades and Labor Councils also provide a representative forum for unions at the state level.

In 2004 the Federal Liberal-National Coalition (conservative) government won a new term of government. Of great concern to the Australian union movement, the conservative government has been returned with increased control. The Australian federal government is made up of two houses: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The government now controls both houses and this means it can pass any legislation it chooses. It has already indicated that industrial relations reform is high on its agenda. Having heard what the American situation is like, and the difficulty unions face with restrictive legislation, and that employers can use this to restrict union activity and to delay collective bargaining, the Australian union participants can see the type of law reform that might be thrust upon them and the difficult task they face in opposing this. The current system protects unions' rights to organize and collectively bargain. It is highly likely this government will move to restrict this. Remember, it is this government that went after the Maritime Union of Australia illegally. Now they can move legislation to make such actions legal.

Unions registered within a state system operate within that system. The state laws apply to its operations and bargaining. This gives state unions protection against any reform that the federal government might introduce. However, the government has already indicated it might legislate to take over control of industrial relations in those states. The Queensland and New South Wales governments have indicated they will fight this in the courts. They oppose the removal of the states rights to control their own jurisdictions. This legislative change will be a big battle in Australia over the next few years.

Union coverage in Australia originally was more craft based but with amalgamations and the registration of newer unions they are becoming industry based or cover wider areas. Within one industry there may be several unions covering different classifications of that single employer. The level of unionization is now around 25%, 20% in the private sector and up to 50% in the public sector, however, some areas are still heavily unionized at near 100%. The level of unionization has been declining for many years but the ACTU and state labor councils have been working with unions to address this and this is now showing results with the decline slowing if not stopped.

There are some marked differences between the issues facing USA and Australian unions but also many similar issues. The differences are things that the unions in Australia must be on the watch for and prepared to fight if should it come. The biggest of such issues is the potential restrictions on access to workplaces and the use of union busting firms to turn employees against unions.

One of the biggest issues facing Australian unions is the use of casual labour and labour-hire firms (temp agencies) to take on the jobs of permanent staff. This is so wide spread in New South Wales that the Labor Council, (now called Unions NSW) working with several unions, has lodged a case in the state industrial commission to limit the use of such staff and to place conditions on the use of them. The case was lodged against the NSW government and the main employers as a test case on this issue.

A further difference is the use of part-time staff. This is increasing in many industries including the public sector and shop employers. Whilst this is being opposed in some industries it is being accepted in others as those industries see it as an affirmative action measure. In 1970 part time work made up 11% of the workforce. It had increased to almost 28% by 2001.

The pension system is very different in Australia. As part of the economic reform in the 90's the government passed legislation that made employers contribute 9% of an employees' wage to a pension (superannuation) fund. That is, the employee is paid their wage, and the employer pays a further 9% into a pension scheme. These funds are established sometimes by the employer and sometimes by the union and tend to be different for each industry. This was a great benefit to workers and gives a guaranteed retirement payment. However, there is much evidence that this 9% will not be sufficient. Further, it is creating a pressure on the social security system and allowing the government to change this so that this will no longer provide pensions upon retirement. It has also created a situation where in the public sector, for example, the employer has been able to argue that it shouldn't pay more than what all other employers pay. Therefore, in NSW, for example, the government moved from a defined benefit scheme to a defined contribution scheme in the late 80's and now to this 9% scheme. Workers in the same job therefore, are getting different payments for their work. In one of the older schemes the government is paying 15% of an employee's wage into superannuation whilst a worker in the new scheme

only gets 9%. This change to retirement funds and the effect it could have on social security is an issue that the Australia unions must look at having seen the Arnie and George W. agendas here.

Canada

by Ron Middel

In Canada, both the federal government and the provincial government in Ontario have liberal governments. Ontario had a Conservative government until approximately one year ago, when it elected a Liberal government. Police Associations, such as the Ontario Provincial Police Association (OPPA), bode very well under the past Conservative government as public safety, especially policing, was a priority for them.

History has shown that governments that are good for labour are not always necessarily good for police and public security and conversely governments that benefit police and public security are generally not cherished by labour in general.

Although the police enjoyed the past relationship with the Conservatives, the majority of public sector labour did not, and the newly elected Liberal government was essentially elected because of its platforms on health care and education. In fact public security was not even mentioned and does not appear to be priority on their agenda.

It is the critical objective of police labour to get put back on the current government's radar screen and persuade the Liberals that police agencies in Ontario must be adequately staffed and appropriately funded.

The OPPA's latest contract is arguably one of the best in its history. It was negotiated with the past Conservative government and expires at the end of 2005. Collective bargaining with the current Liberal government, who does not enjoy the same relationship with police labour, will prove to be very interesting. Other public sector unions, who this Liberal government, at least on the surface, seems to desire to work with, will also be entering into collective bargaining and have high expectations.

If this is the case, then it will be interesting to observe how labour deals with this divide in the coming year(s).

Denmark

by Karsten Ditlevsen

Denmark still has among the highest union density of organized workers in the world. About 80 % of a workforce of about 2.7 million people is organized. A little less in the private sector, a little more in the public, that comprise of one third of the total workforce. Actually more than half of the total Danish population is a member of a trade union.

But Denmark is not escaping the global tendency against unions. Numbers are declining and today we see that the Danish trade unions have severe difficulties to organize

in new sectors of the economy as high tech, among young low paid workers as, for example, janitors and supermarket employees and among immigrant workers.

So almost all national unions faces declining number of members – if we do not deal with the effects of mergers – but few are prepared to and capable of organizing. With the high density of many unions, their locals did not put any priority in organizing and the ability to organize was therefore not maintained.

Another problem is that a lot of trade union leaders and staff recognize the need for organizing from a problematic position of bureaucratic self interest: lower density means lower dues means fewer employees in the union – as well of lower service. The unorganized worker cannot, however, be approached from that position, but from the position of defending standard of living, reasonable working hours etc. that are undermined by low density.

It is a paradox that American trade union activists, coming from a very low-density environment, actually have a lot of experience concerning organizing that activists from a high-density country such as Denmark could learn from.

At the same time as Danish unions must revive organizing skills, they need to revitalize as democratic unions with active locals, that can support shop stewards and help building shop stewards committees at the workplaces. As these will often include members from different unions, it underlines the need of cooperation and coordination among unions and locals.

The Danish trade union movement has gone through a series of mergers in the last 15 years. In 1990 the biggest Danish federation of unions (LO) with 1.5 million members had more than 30 national affiliates. By 2005 the number is reduced to 19. This followed a similar and even stronger centralization of the employer's organizations. As most Danish contracts are national ones bargained by the national union – which can be supplemented by local contracts bargained in the separate workplace by shop stewards – these mergers were quite reasonable and necessary.

At the same time, however, the outcome of the mergers has also meant a weakening of the LO and the labor movement as a political force. Tasks and competence has been removed from the level of the federation to the national unions. As the biggest 4-5 of the national unions are all general unions, there is a tendency that they see themselves and act as competing federations instead of components of the same workers movement.

Globalization is as big a challenge in Denmark as it is in the rest of the so-called developed world. In the last years, European trade unions have been forced to agree on contracts of big concessions – perhaps most notably among the German metalworkers in IG Metall, 10 years ago the biggest and strongest independent union in the world. This situation underlines the big need for broader international cooperation among trade unions and workers employed in the same corporations. A cooperation that is not narrowed to meetings attended by the upper layers of the national unions.

Recently a Danish slaughterhouse corporation forced the workers in one of its many Danish plants to accept a 15% wage decrease to avoid the plant being deployed to Poland. In return, the corporation promised not to move for one year! Seeing this as a violation of the national contract, workers in all Danish slaughterhouses walked out. The local

agreement was cancelled and the very next day the corporation declared that the plant would be closed. Accepting lower wages for jobs, however, is not the road forward. Concerning the slaughterhouses in Denmark part of the labor movement has recommended the establishment of a public, or semipublic, company specializing in organic meat products using the closed facilities.

The recent enlargement of the European Community from 15 to 25 member states increased dramatically the wage gap inside the EU. In nationalist circles as well in the trade unions this caused a certain fear, that Denmark and other high wage countries would be overflowed by low wage workers from the new member states. Most of the old EU countries dealt with this by imposing transitory measures limiting the free movement of labor. Denmark did not.

Instead, the trade unions have insisted that foreign workers must work according to the standards lined out in the national Danish contracts. Especially the unions in construction have done this with remarkable success confronting contractors using low paid foreign workers. The contractors try to escape the conditions of the contract by employing foreigners as self-employed “one man firms”. This is a tendency that could easily expand to sectors outside construction, but until now the unions have been effective in limiting the use of “one man firms”.

Belgium

by Isabelle Ferreras

Among the different countries represented in the HTUP class this year, Belgium’s situation is most comparable to Denmark. From Belgium we do not have the voice of a senior labor leader though, but the voice of a researcher. Here follows a broad, quick picture of the future of the labor movement in Belgium.

Belgium is a small (some would even say tiny!) 10 million people country that sits in Western Europe. It is comprised of three main regions: the Northern Dutch-speaking part, the Southern French-speaking part, and the bilingual Brussels region. As all advanced industrial societies, it is now a service economy (meaning that more than 75% of its GDP and employment are generated in the service sectors of the economy). Belgium is characterized by a very strong Welfare State progressively built after World War II, and administrated mostly at the federal level. Its capitalist economy is regulated by the State that enforces collective bargaining between unions and employers’ organizations from the level of the firm to the level of the whole economy. Unemployment, health and pension benefits are not linked to the employers (firms) to which workers have been attached along their career, but are administrated by the State, or – in the case of unemployment benefits, through labor unions. Partly as a result of this position, more than 1 out of 2 workers are unionized (between 55 and 65% of the workforce). Lastly, Belgium faces a serious unemployment problem, as the Southern region of the country has still not efficiently restructured itself since the loss in the 1970s and 80s of its coal mining and steel manufacturing industrial basis. The overall unemployment figure is between 8 and 10% (Eurostat) of the active population, accounting for a figure that rises to as much as 18.4% (according to ILB figures) in Brussels.

The unique, institutional role granted to organized labor has enabled unions to become, and remain, key players in Belgium's politics and economy. Belgium enjoys the highest rate of unionization only after the Scandinavian countries. But since the 1970s and 1980s, the arrival of women on the job market, the rise of flexibility, inside (schedules, job definitions, etc.) and outside (part-time, outsourcing, off shoring) the workplace combined with a growing income gap inside the working and middle classes have destabilized the equilibrium of the past, putting at risk the social cohesion of the country, and the sense of unity of what used to be a strong labor movement – yet white and male dominated. Other factors coalesce to make life more difficult for organized labor; an increasingly anti-union neo-liberal ideological environment that is driven by a strong Capital which enjoys the support of the European Union institutions and political elites, the pressures coming from the economic globalization and capital mobility, and generally speaking, an old labor culture that has not felt the need to adapt to today's new challenges (as organized labor has been so protected institutionally).

As a consequence of these trends, the privileged position enjoyed by labor in Belgian society, which used to be characterized by a union-friendly culture (especially so in view of countries like the US), is nowadays challenged at best, at risk at worst. As a consequence, organized labor is finding itself increasingly incapable to fight against the retrenchment of social protection and public spending that have been taking place for the last couple of decades finding itself not more capable, as well as to bring forward the fight for more democratic workplaces. The still high rate of union density offers no relief. Indeed, as every union leader knows, having a lot of affiliates does not mean that, as a union, you can count on a truly mobilized, educated labor base. On the contrary, Belgian unions are often viewed as defending “insiders,” and have had a hard time to renew their activist basis. More recent, fast-growing movements as the fair-trade movement, and what is called in Europe the “alter-globalization” movement, are strong in Belgium and more attractive to the youth, but they remain apart from what is commonly viewed as an old-fashioned, “apparatchiks” or corporatist labor movement.

The future of the labor movement in Belgium will likely be determined by its capacity to rethink itself outside of the frontiers of its “cozy,” traditionally, institutionally protected role, and this, in alliance with these new activist movements. Only altogether this movement might be capable to define and push for the creation of a new politics of democratic solidarity, both inside the European Union as well as outside it – with the other regions of the world. And, as a consequence, this will enable organized labor to fulfill again meaningfully its institutional role at the bargaining table, having regained real power through mobilization and support among workers and citizens.

England

by Paul Nowak

Slowly but surely British trade unions are on the way back. Union membership and density have steadied, and there are growing signs that unions are beginning to extend their influence in the workplace and beyond.

While this recent renaissance has undoubtedly been supported by the Government's employment law reforms - particularly the right to statutory recognition – as well as a relatively tight job market and substantial increases in public sector employment - the real

key to this success is the work that unions are doing to help themselves. An increased commitment to organizing – one that can be measured in terms of resources not just rhetoric – means that unions are beginning to make headway in the crucial task of organizing the unorganized.

One very real expression of this commitment to organizing is the continued success of the TUC's Organizing Academy. Over the last six years the TUC, and a range of sponsoring unions, has recruited and trained around 200, mainly young, organizers through the Organizing Academy. These organizers have in turn played a critical role in leading and developing organizing campaigns, not only in traditional areas of union strength, but also in those jobs and industries that unions have traditionally found hard to reach. A new partnership agreement between the TUC and Newcastle College will extend this training and support to existing union officers and staff throughout 2005.

But although much good work has been done by both the TUC and individual unions, it is clear that there is little room for complacency. While union membership has stabilised in recent years, union density has failed to rise against the back-drop of ever increasing numbers of people at work. Unions are still concentrated disproportionately in under pressure parts of the private sector such as manufacturing, or traditional strongholds in the public sector; young people remain on the fringes of the trade union movement; and unions could still do more to face up to the needs of members and potential members working on casual contracts.

The pace and scale of unions growth is also a real concern – at the current rate of growth UK unions will take some 240 years to get membership levels back to where they were in 1979. Stepping up the pace of growth will require real resources and real commitment. Central to building on our recent success is the need to take the organizing message into every part of the British trade union movement; engaging workplace reps and activists in the drive to organize UK plc.

And of course unions in the UK or elsewhere do not operate in a vacuum – other factors such as the attitudes and actions of employers and governments are also important.

Since its election in 1997 the Labour Government has undoubtedly delivered a more positive framework for union organizing than that which existed throughout the 1980s and 1990s. But, while British unions will be working hard to secure a third term for Labour in the expected 2005 election, they will be working equally hard to ensure that this government delivers for working people and unions alike. The recent 'Warwick Agreement,' which identified areas of joint concern and delivery for both unions and government, will hopefully underpin the governments' commitment to help modern unions grow.

Ultimately union growth is not an end in itself. Instead, rising membership, backed by effective workplace organization and increased union influence, is about ensuring that unions can deliver more effectively in the workplace and beyond. Few people join unions for the sheer heck of it – and, as all the evidence shows, certainly not for cheap home insurance, a holiday club or union freebie. On the contrary, people join because they feel and they hope, that the union can actually win real improvements for them and their family. Better pay, family friendly hours, less stress and more skills – these are some of the improvements people want from work.

Weak, poorly organized unions can't deliver that change – strong, confident growing unions can. That's why programs such as the HTUP are so important; helping to equip union leaders, officers and staff to build the unions our members and potential members need and deserve.

JAPAN

by Shogo Kawamoto

Japan has become an “aging” society. The median age of the Japanese worker has risen sharply in recent decades. Workers fear that their wages are cut sharply as they approach their 55th birthday and will continue to drop as they get older. The conventional thinking was that older workers are much less productive than younger workers. However, many businesses are now rethinking this strategy as the workforce diminishes. Currently, deaths outnumber births, so the trend is not likely to change in the near future.

Women in Japan feel increasing pressures to leave the workforce and have children. This tends to remove them from the workforce and full time employment. When they return to work in future years they are often relegated to mostly part time employment. The disadvantage of child rearing adversely impacts women's ability to regain their full time employment status later in life. This has a tendency to compound the worker shortage.

Many white-collar workers are forced to work unpaid overtime. This not only affects their hours and pay, it also interferes with improving the working conditions of the part time workers.

The institutions of employment in Japan are switching to the Western employment style via globalization.

There are many other problems affecting Japan today that call for immediate and broad administrative and structural reform of society. Until then workers, and the public at large, will continue to utilize conventional styles to affect change.

Also in Japan there are significant social problems that require Labor unions to propose and support many social reforms. Labor unions try to do administrative reform and changes to structural reform of our overall society as well.

Puerto Rico

by Ellie Ortiz Lopez

The commonwealth of Puerto Rico has 140,000 union workers in 32 unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. This represents a growth from 5% union density in the workforce in 1995 to 13% today. This corresponds to the union density within the rest of the United States. Council 95 – SP4 – AFSCME, represents 18,000 members of the public sector within 10 agencies.

The main reason for this change is due to the collective bargaining law for public sector employees that was signed in 1998.

The biggest issue facing Puerto Rico today is the fight for statehood v. the status quo or an independent nation. Nearly 50% of the population favors statehood. A referendum is scheduled for a vote possibly as early as this year.

Whatever the outcome it will have a profound effect on the economy and people of Puerto Rico fundamentally changing their ability to live, work and retire in dignity with not only a work place voice, but also with a constitutional vote.

The United States Labor Movement

Moving, But in What Direction?

by Joe Kerr

***“Everyone has the right to form and join Trade Unions
for the protection of his interests.”***

National Labor Relations Act

Most members of academia and labor leaders agree that America’s labor movement is in a state of crisis. Union density, as a measurement of union membership, continues to erode across the broad spectrum of industry. Union membership extends to less than 13% of the United States workforce. This reduction in membership causes unions to be far less effective at creating positive change in the workplace and in political campaigns at both the local and national level. The United States Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics has just released their latest report, *Union Members In 2004*. This report confirms the decline in union membership, detailing the following information:

- In 2004, 12.5% of wage and salary workers were union members, down from 12.9% in 2003 and 20.1% in 1983
- 36% of government workers were represented by unions
- Two occupational groups – education and protective services (police and firefighters) - had the highest unionization rates at 37%
- Men were more likely to be union members than women
- Blacks were more likely to be union members than Whites, Asians or Hispanics
- The public sector had a union membership rate four times that of the private sector
- 1.6 million wage and salary workers were represented by a union while choosing not to be union members themselves
- Four states reported union membership rates below 5%
- Union members had median weekly earnings \$169 higher than workers without union representation (\$781 versus \$612)

Over 40% of non-union workers in the U.S. say they want union representation. So why is union membership declining if so many workers say they want to join unions? Union workers clearly make more money and enjoy greater benefits and job protections than unorganized or non-union employees. Obviously, unions have a tremendous value to offer

this generation of workers in today's global, multinational and ultra fast-paced electronic economy.

So, will the labor movement be revitalized by simply increasing membership, or does the nature of the labor movement need to fundamentally change in order to appeal to a broader portion of the labor force? While the concept of increased membership is, in its most simplistic context important, it does not answer the question of how to get new members, or how to mobilize their efforts in a unified and effective manner.

In order to affect change within each industry and across all sectors of labor, it is imperative that unions become an effective force in American politics. To that end, it appears that an overall restructuring of the union movement as a whole is required. The old way hasn't worked for a very long time. Corporate interests are continually defeating the worker and his/her interests, and when labor loses an election, another worker loses his job and his share of the American dream. Jobs are leaving the country and new members are not joining unions in the same numbers they once did. It is definitely time for a change. These issues must be addressed prior to any collective effort being put forth by our union leaders, locals and members. More importantly, the union leaders themselves must all buy in to these principles in order to commit long term resources to this endeavor. Otherwise, it will be business as usual for organized labor and simply a matter of time before unions will eventually go the way of the dinosaur, leaving the American worker at the mercy of his employer and his future perilously in doubt.

Interestingly, during the Presidential election of 2004, millions of union members cast their votes with the anti-labor, conservative right. This divisiveness has the effect of diminishing membership efforts with the concomitant loss of union effectiveness during political campaigns. It would appear that the values, ideals and principles of many union members are more in line with societal issues and gun rights than labor issues and workplace protections. Union members may want the policies and protections that unions offer, but they often fail to endorse the politicians who further those workplace protections. The current generation of workers will go to work at a low-paying job, without benefits or workplace protections, with the hope of winning the lottery at the end of their career. They believe that they will not get sick or injured; they will never grow old, and will never be plagued with the abuse and mayhem that affects many workers in the anti-labor, anti-employee regions and industries of the United States. It is truly a vicious cycle that has unions and their members racing to the bottom.

The call of the global economy is far too appealing to today's generation of employees as well as employers. As the world shrinks, investment capital has been able to effectively spread its anti-labor influence and sentiment. Industry has become internationally connected and can affect global change immediately. Labor unions, even though they are called Internationals, are not nearly as connected as these multi-national industrial giants, and therefore cannot react to change at the same pace. Unions have failed to establish any viable marketing strategy in schools or workplaces that can oppose this profound trend. As a result of this disparity, the rich get richer, with executive salary growth outpacing that of their workers, by a staggering amount each year. Those executives that may be investigated for unethical business practices that ultimately have a deleterious impact on a worker's pay, benefits or retirement, are the same corporate elitists that often intimidate employees with the threat of outsourcing jobs in order to ensure the continuation of their own exorbitant salaries and benefits.

Business as usual clearly does not appear to be working for the American worker and American labor union in this multi-national environment. However, when workers attempt to organize their workplace, most are met with open hostility and even termination from their employer. Employer harassment, intimidation and abuse are at an all time high. Twenty-five percent of employers openly admit that they fire workers who try to bring the union to the workplace. A growing cottage industry has developed to promote these union-busting techniques. Employers are taught how to defeat union organizing at their work site through web sites, videos, manuals and hands-on training.

All of this anti-union action is supported by corporate sponsored neo-conservatives (including our current President) who encourage this anti-labor sentiment, while reducing the ability of workers to protest or to exercise their Constitutionally protected rights. These are the same neo-conservatives who are threatening to limit social security benefits for tomorrow's retiring worker and eliminate the defined benefit retirement system for both public and private sector employees.

It is not a coincidence that the rise of the Young Urban Professional (Yuppie) coincided with President Reagan's destruction of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Union (PATCO) in the early 1980's. If today's Generation X workers fail to see the relevancy of labor unions, then perhaps it is time that we adopt strategies that appeal to their vision. Today's worker sees himself as more intelligent and empowered than his father's generation of blue-collar worker. They believe that they will promote from the mailroom to the boardroom in the same year. Their ideas are not that of Samuel Gompers or John Sweeney, but those of the Walton heirs and Bill Gates, and every other thirty-something millionaire that got lucky during the boom years at the end of the last century. They watched the "dot.coms" but paid little attention to the "dot.bombs". They care little about what the labor movement has done for America and have no clue as to what unions can do for Americans. Their idea of today's union is what they get from Fox News, Rush Limbaugh or even their ultra-conservative house of worship.

The current crisis in the House of Labor will require the coordinated efforts of both academia and labor leaders. It is not a stretch to opine that the status of Democracy in the United States closely parallels that of the status of labor unions. Based upon that premise, Democracy will suffer the same fate as labor. If unions fail to address these issues, the United States is destined to count more "red" states in the future. Union education and member identification is every bit as important as union organizing. We also have to realize that while union density matters and union size is important, it often does not correlate with union effectiveness. It is crucial that unions do a better job of educating their current members, as well as the public at large. The values of organized labor, including workplace health and safety protections, need constant emphasis. Unions need to increase their membership while simultaneously educating their members about the value of issue-based politics. Unions believe that the least of us deserves a modicum of respect at the workplace; to live, work and retire in dignity. After all, that's what unions do and that's what binds us together. No matter what strategy we get behind, we can all agree on that one premise.

AFSCME

by Don Kelly, Ellie Ortiz Lopez, Carter Woodruff

The popular U.S. network television show *Family Feud* posed an interesting question:
What would give them the greatest sense of job security?

Out of the one hundred people surveyed, the top three answers were...

- 1) If they owned the company
- 2) If they were rich
- 3) If they were in a union**

Even a television show like the one identified above tells us that many people are aware of the security that a union provides them.

The security of union representation in the private sector has fallen severely over the past forty years, while union density in the public sector has steadily increased during that same forty-year period. Currently, in affiliates of U.S. international public sector unions like the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Educational Association (NEA), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) have met goals for organizing new members, but have no net gain to show because of forced retirements and layoffs. State governments are under-funded due to misappropriation of money from the Bush administration.

The three HTUP participants representing AFSCME came from the states of Iowa and New York as well as from the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico.

These individuals represented employees who work in a wide variety of occupations that make up the governmental workforce including clerical, administrative, blue collar, educational and institutional workers.

Similar to our brothers and sisters in the private sector, public sector employees face significant challenges as the HTUP Class of 2005 progressed. There are the constant attacks in state legislatures all across the United States.

- 1.) There are multiple attempts every year to change bargaining laws or to under fund Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) boards.

One of the greatest challenges facing unions today (2005) is building long-term Community organizations.

As A. Philip Randolph once said:

“The essence of trade unionism is social uplift. The labor movement has been the haven for the dispossessed, the despised the neglected, the down trodden, the poor”.

- 2.) Public Sector employees are the targets of the taxpayer backlash when in reality the salaries and benefits granted to these hard working employees are not the root cause of governmental overspending. As a result collective bargaining,

where there is legal authority to do so, along with maintaining appropriate staffing levels is becoming extremely difficult.

- 3.) Across the U.S.A. states and their respective local governmental units are all slashing funding that supports the public sector workforce. These funds are being redirected away from programs that local taxpayers appreciate and need in order for these governmental entities to fund programs that are mandated by the federal government where federal funding is inadequate or nonexistent. The result is fewer public sector employees to perform the public duties that taxpayers have come to expect. These duties include, but are not limited to: the staffing of public hospitals and health clinics; road and equipment maintenance; processing of applications, snowplowing of roads in winter, miscellaneous education and educational support services, sewage treatment and water filtration services. Reductions in staffing levels present especially difficult environment for the remaining public sector employees to work in.
- 4.) The right to organize and be represented by a union for the purpose of collective bargaining and representation is also under fire. With the stroke of a pen, two states, Indiana and Missouri, have eliminated public employee collective bargaining rights affecting an estimated 50,000 public sector employees. This change occurred in January 2005 when newly elected conservative Republican Governors of these states rescinded existing Executive Orders that had, up until then, permitted the public sector workforce to collectively bargain for their terms and conditions of employment.
- 5.) The merit and fitness provisions which, on a limited basis, protects against the use of political appointments (the spoils system) in the public sector is also under attack. The Civil Service Laws in many states are currently being reviewed with an eye towards amending them to permit unfettered use of political appointment of supporters, friends and relatives.
- 6.) Employees in the public sector are being affected by advances in technology like those being faced by our private sector brothers and sisters. Advances in computerization and mechanical technology affect a wide range of public sector occupations. Technological advances are intended to improve efficiency or to make jobs easier. The truth is that many jobs are being lost due to these advances.

Public Sector Unions have worked with employers in order to create training programs for those who would be displaced to enable the employees to adjust to the technological changes or to qualify for other jobs with the same employer.

- 7.) A significant threat being faced by public sector employees is that of privatization of public sector services such as:

Correctional services, firefighting, equipment and building maintenance, food service, transportation, customer-service call-centers (DMV, Social Services, etc.), hospitals, nursing homes, child care services, trash hauling, etc.

The public sector unions argue that public employees are still the most qualified and efficient individuals who can perform the tasks. Public sector unions also

argue that when services are privatized, most of the taxpayer money that pays for the services goes out of their communities, their states and even the country itself.

- 8.) Conservative government groups are also scrutinizing fringe benefit packages negotiated for these employees. Specifically in the crosshairs are the defined benefit retirement accounts. Health insurance and prescription drug coverage is also under close review.

On a more positive note, increasing numbers of public sector employees are realizing the value and security that public sector labor unions have to offer.

If the labor movement isn't a reflection of the working class, organizing a strong base, pushing for labor history to become part of curriculum, in our opinion, we will have failed! We have to do this in order to change labor laws in a favorable manner for workers. We must continue to seek legislation that protects the state and local civil service structures as well as the compensation and benefit packages that have been negotiated.

Recent public opinion surveys show that upwards of forty million people have said they'd join a labor union if they were given the opportunity; many of those are in the public sector. Even people in a television game show will tell you that unions provide job security.

Let's organize these people for power!

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

by Barbara Palazzo

Big changes are looming in the US labor movement. The AFL-CIO is being scrutinized by member internationals demanding major change to ensure the movements' very existence at a time when every aspect of the working class is being challenged and union density is falling at an alarming speed. Even in this hostile environment public sector organizing is alive and somewhat well. One AFL-CIO affiliate continues to be a success story in the current atmosphere. The AFT *A Union of Professionals* (American Federation of Teachers) represents 1.3 million members, the majority of whom are in the public sector.

First it is necessary to debunk the common misconception that it is easy to organize in the public sector and that this accounts for the endurance and growth of unions like the AFT in a time of incredible annihilation of employee rights. Campaigns in the public arena have always been an uphill battle and are getting more difficult. Some resemble private sector campaigns with prevalent union busting and work site access issues. In addition many states where there are active organizing campaigns are in either 'right to work' states or states that have no collective bargaining laws for public employees. In these states there is no public employee entity such as a Public Employee Relations Board to provide guidelines or protections during the process or after. Even an ineffective public employees' board can be better than none. For example, without an administrative board there is no guarantee that even if you organize 100% of the employees into the union in a given school district that the school district will recognize the employee group as the exclusive representative or ever consider a 'meet and confer' or bargaining situation. It is discretionary on their part and is rare that they will grant any basic workers rights without extreme public pressure. The AFL-CIO 'Voice at Work' model with a community outreach dimension is essential to achieve the smallest of victories. In some cases it becomes

painfully apparent that gains will be virtually unattainable in the near future. All that said we have been successful in difficult states like Texas and Colorado as well as other parts of the southwest. Worker oppression is so rampant in these places that the union is the employees' last hope. Through employer fear and intimidation, they have been resigned to unacceptable conditions and welcome the empowerment the union provides.

Amalgamated Transit Union

by Bob Baker

Just like everyone else in the labor movement under the second term of the George W. Bush Administration, we are expecting to be hit very hard when the TEA 21 reauthorization bill is considered this spring. These are difficult times for working people, especially those in the transit industry. Public transportation rider ship – which had reached record levels in 2000 – is now way down. And while many transit systems spend considerable time trying to figure out how to attract more riders, there is no substitute for a strong economy. The Bush tax cuts, which benefited only the richest 1% of Americans, have failed to create jobs. There are far fewer people working today than there were four years ago, and if you do not have a job, you will not be boarding the bus or the train on an everyday basis.

People also have less disposable income, so they spend less. That impacts the collection of state and local sales taxes, which many transit systems rely upon, especially since the federal government phased out operating assistance a few years ago. Health care costs are also squeezing the budgets of even the most efficient transit agencies.

The problem with our situation is that when unemployment is so high and many people are looking for work and the economy is at its lowest point in a quarter of a century, people are going to be relying on transit more than ever to find a job. In fact, the demand for affordable transportation – especially for inner city residents desperately seeking employment – has never been higher. Everyone will be looking for jobs, and riding buses and subways are the only way many of the citizens in the inner city can get around.

This is also a time when the infrastructure of the United States is falling apart right before our eyes. The roadways are a total mess with bridges and interstates needing repairs more than ever and the airlines and Amtrak literally folding for the lack of rider ship, because the average American is afraid to get on a plane or a train with no real security measures in place.

What is the President's answer? Cut the funding in the transportation bill. The United States Senate passed a bill out of the budget conference before the National Election in the United States last year. The bill called for \$318 billion in highway and transit funding. The President has said that he would not sign a bill that had more than \$284 billion in it. And, Bush's FY 2005 budget would zero out federal funding for Amtrak. If Congress follows his lead, millions of passengers will be stranded, and thousands of rail employees will be laid off.

The ironic thing about these funding cuts is that for every billion dollars that is cut from the budget, 45,500 jobs are lost in the transportation industry. This will mean almost a million jobs lost in our industry over the next few years. These are jobs represented by a

lot of different labor unions, including the Amalgamated Transit Union, Teamsters, Transport Workers Union, United Transportation Union, AFSCME, Building Trades, and many more. We can not stand still and let this happen and I know that when Labor is attacked at its hardest, we will come out fighting!!

Stay tuned over the next few months to see what happens, but without a doubt the battle lines are being drawn and if Organized Labor doesn't get our act together and look for new ways of approaching things around us and using new and innovative strategies, we will suffer deeply.

In Canada, our members in Ontario are emerging from a decade of provincial "downloading" of urban and transit costs onto the cities. "Downloading" was the euphemism used by the ruling Progressive Conservative party to describe the process of ending government subsidy of urban programs. Most affected was the Toronto Transit Commission which was forced to forestall needed maintenance and expansion, and reduce labor costs. The result was that the province's transit subsidy was downloaded right onto our members - who paid the price for the provincial government's neglect of its cities.

A new concept, however, has dominated the public discourse on this issue over the last year. Canadian municipalities have had enough, and are looking for a "New Deal" for their cities. Toward that end the new Liberal McGuinty government in Ontario has invested a total of \$185.8 million for 2005 to help keep the TTC moving. For the next three years the province will dedicate an increasing amount of its gas tax (1 - 2 cents/litre) to transit. This, it is hoped, will become the stable "dedicated" source of funding Canadian Transit has been wanting for years.

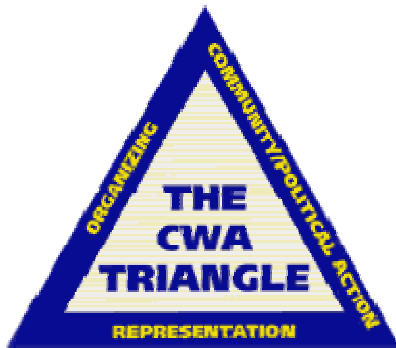
Contract negotiations between our Toronto local (one of our largest) and the TTC are set to begin soon. The result of those negotiations will determine the fortunes of our members in this "New Deal" era. Additionally, Ottawa was expected to propose, February 23, that a portion of the federal gas tax will be dedicated to Canadian transit as part of the federal budget. It is expected that Parliament will go along with the new funding upon which so many Canadian transit workers and riders will depend.

Communications Workers of America

by Vicki Di Paolo

CWA, America's largest communications and media union, represents over 700,000 men and women in both private and public sectors. CWA members are employed in telecommunications, broadcasting, cable TV, journalism, publishing, electronics and general manufacturing, as well as airline customer service, government service, health care, education and other fields. The union includes some 1,200 chartered local unions across the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. Members live in approximately 10,000 communities, making CWA one of the most geographically diverse unions.

CWA holds over 2,000 collective bargaining agreements spelling out wages, benefits, working conditions and employment security provisions for its members. Many CWA contracts call for innovative training and education programs and child and family care provisions that are considered pace-setters for organized labor in the modern workplace.



The triangle symbolizes the three major programs of the union: representation, organizing, and community/political action. None can stand alone. If the triangle is broken on any side, sooner or later it will be broken on every side. CWA's founding president, Joseph Beirne, called this the "triple threat."

BARGAINING/REPRESENTATION

A good example of bargaining and representation of members was demonstrated in 2004 when agreement for a new contract was reached with SBC. Following a four day strike by 100,000 telephone company workers across the nation a 5-year agreement was reached with SBC that achieved the union's major objectives of strengthening employment security, including new access to jobs in the growth areas, protecting health security for both active employees and retirees, and improving wages and pensions.

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

The pact gives union workers access to the jobs of the future at SBC in areas such as FTTP (Fiber to the Premise), Voice over Internet Protocol, Wireless Internet, video services and business data services. CWA and SBC agreed to work together to bring back tech support jobs from overseas when the current outsourcing agreement with Accenture expires.

HEALTH CARE

The agreement provides that health care benefits continue to be fully paid by SBC, although there are some increases in co-payments for medical services and prescription drugs. To help offset these higher costs, active employees will receive cash bonuses of \$1,000 and retirees, who are now under a different plan from active workers, will receive \$2,500.

WAGES AND PENSIONS

The parties agreed to across-the-board base wage increases totaling 12 percent, compounded, plus an additional 1 percent lump sum in the first year and cost-of-living-adjustments in the fourth and fifth years.

Pensions will increase 13 percent over the contract term, and the cash balance pension plan for SBC East (SNET) employees is substantially improved.

POLITICAL/COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Newspapers: A major issue for those in our media units has been the FCC sought to radically weaken the federal rules governing media concentration by permitting media companies to further consolidate their holdings. Thanks to democratic members of the FCC board forums were held which brought attention to the proposed changes. A strong response from the public which demanded a halt to the proposed changes was effective in slowing the process. But, the battle continues and we continue to work with members of Congress who are determined to preserve the availability and diversity of news and information, and to fight against an industry plan for media ownership that would permit the majority of the nation's news resources to be controlled by just a few corporations.

FIRST LOS ANGELES COUNTY FEDERATION OF LABOR CONGRESS

CWA Local 9400 President Micheal Hartigan joined others in support of a new \$1,000,000 Defense Fund to be maintained by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The new defense fund, adopted unanimously at the first Congress of the Los Angeles Federation of Labor on September 30, will help level the playing field with the multi-national corporations. With this fund, labor will be able to launch media campaigns to explain our positions and our goals to help raise the living standards of all working families

The need for such a defense fund was made apparent by the financial alliance made by several grocery companies during the recent strike and lockout affecting the UFCW. The companies pooled their resources in an effort to break the union through an active publicity campaign and an extended lockout of employees.

The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor also passed a resolution at this meeting to support a Community College Initiative in Los Angeles County. The purpose of the initiative is to make attending community college less costly for the students, many of whom spend more than \$1,000 a year on books alone.

Our Governor, A. Schwarzenegger, promised during his election campaign that tuition costs for students would increase no more than 10%. So far the increase has been 30%, with the threat of more increases on the horizon. Students from many of the community colleges in the area came to this meeting to explain their need for just such an initiative, which proposes to provide each student with up to \$1,000 per year for the books and tools needed for their education. Our goal is to put this on the 2006 primary ballot.

Closing thoughts...

Our nation is divided; not just on war issues but on social and economic issues as well. Labor is struggling, not just with employers trying to enrich their bottom line, but with anti-union governmental regulations, an almost mute National Labor Relations Board and the growing effects of the "New Global Economy".

The new government reporting regulations for labor unions are remarkably complicated and intrusive. The business world would never stand for such requirements, branding them as "job killers" and "anti-business". We realize that they are just that, anti-union and an attempt to drive up costs for labor organizations.

The National Labor Relations Board has been sitting on its hands instead of ruling on important cases. One such case is that of the workers of the Chinese Daily News, who voted for union representation almost four years ago. The case has been sitting waiting to

be ruled on by the NLRB for years...but nothing.

The “global economy” has brought us the problems we foresaw; the loss of jobs through outsourcing and the downward pressure on wages and benefits for those Americans still employed. The bottom line for the corporate leaders is getting fatter and fatter, with record profits being made. The American worker, however, is being left behind, with his/her purchasing power decreasing daily.

Gloom and Doom? Time to go home and hide? No. Not by a long shot. What do we see? Opportunity. We have been given a golden opportunity to strengthen our unity, the unity we found during this last election. We have been given an opportunity to use and broaden our friendship with community organizations, a friendship created by the understanding of the issues of workers. Even the election of G. W. Bush has given us an opportunity to show the country the failures of his economic policies. As the public sees the continued incredible growth of wealth held by the top 1% while the rest of the country suffers from real wage reduction and job loss we can expect even more public support.

Labor has not been beaten. Setbacks, certainly, but we have been learning from each battle we have fought. We in the labor movement know that we are up against a powerful force...MONEY.

But, we have the most powerful weapon of all in our arsenal. The power of people. People doing what they believe is right, not for just a few, but what is right for all.

Let’s take the knowledge we have gained at the Harvard Trade Union Program, not with dismay over the injustices that have been dealt the American worker, but with the commitment, hope and energy to use our new opportunities to make sure that American working families have a secure and promising future.

The Labor Movement through Eyes of Fire Fighters

by Bryan Jeffries

It is winter of 2005 and the United States Department of Labor has just released its report on union density, which revealed yet another decline. The re-election of George Bush has sealed the package of anti-worker governance for the next 4 years. Recent National Relations Board decisions, attacks on our pension systems in California, and paycheck protection legislation in conservative states such as Arizona, are all evidence of this. The Democratic Party is looking to re-invent itself and just elected a new Chairman to the DNC in Howard Dean. The AFL-CIO is left to contemplate how to support American workers, as its political influence and significance has waned with our density. AFL-CIO President, John Sweeney has asked union leaders for “white papers” for input into the future of the labor movement. All the while, SEIU has threatened a pullout of its 1.8 million members if change and a new direction are not engaged.

What a remarkable time to be with 30 union executives from around the world to come together in the epicenter of education, politics, and labor history, Harvard University. Our class is both a learning environment, as well as a think tank. We are blending experience with academia, the past with the future, and tradition with progress. All of this

to return home more enlightened so we can provide the highest level of service to our members, while considering ways to improve and serve more of today's workers.

Over the past few decades, the International Association of Fire Fighters has consistently increased density as well as effectiveness in both member service and political representation. Our general President, Harold Schaitberger, has become known as one of the "top dogs" in Washington. The IAFF now represents approximately 85 percent of all career Fire Fighters on the North American Continent. Our success has continued to blossom, while world-wide union density has been in decline. All of this said; we would be foolish to take this success for granted. We will constantly address our threats and capitalize on our opportunities. In a career that so strongly honors tradition; we will continue to do so, while we remain nimble and adaptable to our environments, so to ensure continued success.

Any labor leader would agree that current labor laws in the United States are severely lacking in worker protections. This coupled with purposefully strained budgets and conservative political appointments in the departments, which are to enforce current laws, leaves workers at a significant disadvantage. The likelihood of this environment changing in the near future is extremely unlikely, so we should proceed as such.

People often ask how on earth we can be effective when we have principally given up our ability to strike. People are also often curious as to how our effectiveness can be fairly consistent throughout the land whether we are in the labor-friendly environment of Canada and the northeast U.S, or in the highly conservative right-to-work states of the south. Some of the answers lie in the following text, which I hope will serve others, as we all work to turn the labor movement around during this critical juncture in our history. While this work is focused in North America, there are very valuable lessons for the areas of the world, where the labor movement carries higher density and effectiveness. Globalization, deregulation, corporate-conservative ownership of the media, a current weak American economy, and a world workforce that is becoming disseminated through technology and design are all factors that will affect the labor movement throughout the world.

The following are some of the factors that have kept Fire Fighters united and successful:

- **As Fire Fighters we are very involved in our communities.** Our members are football and little league coaches, we serve on school boards, we are members of our homeowners association boards, we run for city council and state legislatures. In all of these roles our members ensure that they portray the image that we are truly about community good and social justice, not just about ourselves.
- **All of our locals have strong charity organizations and/or participate in other local charities.** Throughout the year, we often do a variety of fundraisers to give back to the communities that are both our customers and employers.
- **We believe in strong member services.** When we refer to member services these are the personal services we provide, which boils down to how we take care of one another. Many friends and families of our members have rethought their anti-union sentiment when they see a gang of our members show up at a sick member's house to mow their lawn, bring them meals, take their kids to school, and give them money from our relief funds. The level to which any employee association can take this type of service is almost limitless and will have a stronger and more lasting effect on their members, their families, and friends, than any cost of living allowance, or union discount you get them.

- **We truly believe in positive labor/management relations and a team approach to tackling challenges.** In most of our most successful locals, the key to success has occurred when fire department executives and union executives work together with the members of the departments to capitalize on everyone's talents and objectives to produce a good package. Industrial democracy is not always easy, but it has been proven that multiple heads are better than one. We simply will not accept autocratic arenas many of us began our fire service careers in, where spy versus spy, contentious labor/management relations result in some of the goofiest, ego ridden policies and outcomes known to man.
- **We are very political.** We focus a great deal of our efforts to educate our members how to be effective politically. Our members get involved with campaigns at the task, tactical, and strategic levels to ensure our protections and enhancements are successful. If we work in politically disadvantageous environments, we change them pure and simple. There is not a community around that cannot change if a union applies creative solutions instead of canned approaches.
- **We are bi-partisan.** This is one of the key points President Schaitberger makes in his "white paper" to the AFL-CIO. We find politicians on both sides of the aisle that share our concerns and we partner with those that support Fire Fighters regardless of party affiliation. Samuel Gompers believed that labor should never be tied to one party and we continue with this very important vision.
- **We believe in collective bargaining.** Collective bargaining is a cornerstone to democracy, and it has created the workplace protections contract most workers in advanced nations currently enjoy. However, we have invented alternatives to pure collective bargaining where gaining collective bargaining is not politically feasible. Unions can be very successful with "meet and confer" or "meet and discuss" alternatives, which are interest-based, and ease some of the concerns of our detractors. While some unions write off right-to-work states, we have experienced some of our greatest successes in these areas.
- **Our locals are autonomous.** The IAFF provides direction, education, and support; however, local leaders are free to provide unique leadership that is effective in their environment.
- **We protect our image with a passion.** Our relationship with our communities is always one action from being scarred. Every day we ensure to go above and beyond for our customers.
- **We are very adaptable.** Fires in the United States have declined, yet we have positioned our demand for service to increase. Fire Fighters have branched into emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, children's immunizations, public education, technical rescue, car seat safety checks, just to name a few of our services.

The above-mentioned facets to our approach are not all encompassing; however, they are major keys to our success. The labor movement faces strong challenges and, in many areas, a very uneven playing field. We must not allow tradition to hamper progress as the working world is ever changing, it is certain that our approach and our outlook remain fluid and adaptable to ensure success.

Firefighters/Part-Time

by Jim Carney

The long standing and heated debate in the International Association of Firefighters regarding the representation of part-time firefighters continues to lack an acceptable solution.

This same issue has been debated without resolution in other unions throughout the AFL-CIO and, indeed, in unions around the world.

The Firefighters debate stems from several beliefs; some of these beliefs are core to the mission and image of the IAFF. The IAFF represents only fulltime professional firefighters, EMS providers, and dispatchers. This narrow scope of jurisdiction gives the IAFF the ability to speak solely for those members who protect 85% of the population in the United States and Canada; our members are career fulltime professionals with different needs and responsibilities than part-time or volunteer firefighters.

For example, the interests of our members often conflict with a part-time firefighter who works fulltime as a computer programmer or truck driver. The programmer may not see privatization of the fire department as a big problem if they will continue to retain their employment as a part-time employee with the private company. Often times private fire protection companies will use more part-timers and reduce the fulltime staff so this is quite possible. As far as the truck driver goes, whether union or non union, his career interests may conflict with the firefighters, such as the ability to haul three trailers with a truck instead of two, or less restrictive hazardous materials hauling regulations. Both of these issues are paramount to the career firefighter and obviously conflict with the priorities of the part-time and volunteer. These are just two examples of the vast number of conflicts that may arise in the legislature, the city council, the township trustees or county commission.

Another problem facing the IAFF, and all trade unions, is the decline in union density around the world. While the IAFF represents a specific trade, the overwhelming need for increased union density in the labor movement has prompted other unions to organize part-time firefighters in the same department where an IAFF local already exists. This leads to two unions competing for funding within the same department. Unlike the competition between different unions in the same city, which causes tension, this is seen as a direct attack on the career firefighter and his or her livelihood, safety and health. Human nature, I believe, will cause these feelings to build over time and then erupt into worksite disputes which may cause irreparable harm and division within the department. Therefore, as a nexus for the debate is the issue of density of the labor movement versus our core belief that we are career firefighters etc. If we chose to focus on density and increasing our numbers, it may be possible to organize another 200,000-300,000 members as an estimate, but at what cost? How would we assign representation to those part-time members in regards to convention and contract voting? Our current by-laws provide for member for member voting, but why should a part-time member who works only once or twice a month receive the same voice as a career member? Another question that must be addressed is our own members working part-time at other organized departments. While this practice is prohibited in our constitution and by-laws, the enforcement by trial board is costly and time consuming for the local involved; therefore, this has evolved into a no harm-no foul enforcement system. Specifically it is up to the local to decide to pursue charges

against the member committing the infraction. This leaves the local leadership with a complex decision. Often times part-time employees are just that, not career members with the same training and experience as fulltime firefighters, they may also work with such infrequency that they become unfamiliar with new equipment and techniques, whereas, a part-timer who is fulltime at another department does have the training and often the familiarity with new technologies and operational experience that he or she may seamlessly fit into the crew. The local leaders must decide this issue taking into consideration the union beliefs as well as the safety of the local members and the community they are sworn to protect. Herein lays another question. If the part-timer is a member of another local how do we organize them? Or, as I have suggested, could we tax them for working outside of their locals' jurisdiction, much like the building trades do? While this would need a constitutional change it would be a step towards the possible solution of the problem. There are strong sentiments that our members should not "scab" at other departments. While I do not necessarily disagree with this, there are sentiments, as listed above, that if the part-time member working at another department is not taking away fulltime positions then there is no harm to that local but the benefit of their experience becomes an asset. Some departments have such small part-time programs that if the part-timers all quit they would not be replaced with other part-timers let alone fulltime.

This leads us into another issue facing the labor movement and the IAFF. While our constitution and by-laws prohibit working part-time or volunteering as a firefighter, it does not prohibit firefighters from working part-time, which almost all do in some form or fashion, in another trade. For example, many firefighters work in what we call construction; the building trade unions obviously have another name for it. While it is common for firefighters to work in construction and a myriad of other occupations part-time, so it is common for other trades members to work as part-time firefighters or even as volunteers. Where can we as a movement draw the line of what our members can and cannot do to provide for their families? And, what can we do to invest in our members as workers or owners to encourage them to use union labor? For example, many firefighters operate contracting companies in some way; perhaps the building trades could invest in those companies to establish a new union market share in residential construction and remodeling.

As far as volunteering goes, the issue is very complex and there is not enough space here to delve deeply into it, many say that the community cannot afford paid firefighters and EMS personnel; to this I will say that you do not see volunteer teachers in a community. Society has determined that having paid teachers, although not always well paid, is important enough to invest in for our children, why then have they decided that those same children do not deserve the very best in emergency medicine and fire protection? It is well documented that the leading cause of death for children is accidents. How many young lives could be saved each year with timely professional EMS and fire protection?

In conclusion, the current international debate regarding the labor movement must focus not only on the international level but also on the local level, where the members are most involved. We must come to terms with the jurisdictional disputes that seem to leave our movement crippled. We must reassure our members that their membership in the union will help them to provide for their families not hinder them. We must cooperate not compete. We must realize that our future depends on our solidarity, if this means that we need to have strict jurisdiction, like the IAFF, then we must proceed along those lines after those jurisdictional debates have concluded. We must resolve our internal structural

problems, such as the part-time issues and others, before we can present a viable alternative to the unorganized workers of the world.

Under the Table in Florida

by Bob Blanco

In the early 60's and 70's the bricklayers union in Florida and the southeast enjoyed large amounts of market share, power, and political influence in this southern Right to Work State. However, through internal and external changes the decline of union density has taken its toll on union contractors and locals throughout the southeast. Today we find ourselves in a continuing struggle for our very survival. Contract negotiations have never been more difficult. Along with member apathy and lack of participation in the rank and file have made the leadership make changes to offset the backward trends. The influx of illegal immigration in the southeast will need to be addressed along with the abuse of IRS 1099 payroll abuses and the contractors who cheat the system by not paying workers compensation insurance and taxes. Contractors have embarked upon a new trend in recent times. In hopes of avoiding conventional building practices and paying for skilled union workers, contractors will import Mexican laborers into Florida via Texas. This backdoor immigration has had the profound effect of upsetting the Florida union labor market balance that took many years to create. Labor unions in Florida missed a golden opportunity in the last 2 decades to organize the millions of laborer's who migrated there in search of a better life. The immigrants lost good training opportunities and the unions lost jobs and the union members that would perform those jobs. In search of representation these new workers organized themselves into such groups such as the Latin Builders Association. Today, this newly organized unaffiliated organization has become politically very powerful and virtually controls the entire residential construction market in South Florida. If unions are to survive we must learn from these mistakes to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Since attending the Harvard Trade Union program and seeing similar struggles worldwide, my eyes have been opened to the fact that this trend is world wide problem. However, I do remain optimistic and committed to the fact that unions have seen far more serious times than this. Unions have survived. Because the saying is true that when the going gets tough the tough get going. The use of union pension funds to invest in construction projects have proven to be very successful for organizing in the southeast along with improving training standards for unskilled craft workers. The benefits that collective bargaining brings to the workforce will always be beneficial to today's worker. Unions still offer unparalleled resources, and benefits that will continue to help the organized work force and first generation Americans in their quest to achieve the American dream.

Waging War in the Public Market

by Richard Antonellis

The public market within the jurisdiction of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 103 Boston has long been nonexistent. Up until the 1960's, Local 103 has had somewhat of a monopoly in the public market doing 90%- 95% of the work with virtually no competition. 1963 brought us the Prudential building and the start of the Boston

skyline and downtown Boston begins to take shape with the construction of the cities hospitals, universities and financial Institutions such as Fidelity and Putnam. This is when Local 103 turned its back on the public market “putting all our eggs in the downtown construction basket” believing we were on to something bigger and better and the public market was now a thing of the past for Local 103 electricians. It wasn’t until the mid 1990’s that we decided something had to be done, there were parts of our jurisdiction that we had no presence in at all. 1998 began our war in the public market with the implementation of a market recovery fund. This fund was crucial to our ability to compete again with nonunion contractors in a market we gave up 40 years earlier. In 1998, union bidding on public construction projects was 25% winning 12.5% of those jobs the same in 1999, in 2000 we were now bidding on 50% of all public construction projects in our jurisdiction now winning 25%. In 2001 and 2002 we now had a union contractor bidding on 70% of the work winning 35% we were making progress. By 2003 we were now bidding on 90% of the public construction projects and still only winning 35%. This would have been impossible without market recovery. In 2005 the market recovery fund is in full bloom but we are finding larger signatory contractors are reluctant to get back in the public market leaving the fund to our smaller newly organized contractors who specialize in the public works. So far our newly instituted market recovery fund has been a success; our presence in the public market is growing and, hopefully, with the help of our signatory contractors continues to grow.

Building Construction Trades

by Mike Mitchell

There are so many things that effect building trade unions ability to negotiate good wages and fringe benefits for our members. The biggest factor of course is union density in any given geographic area. Most construction unions have not been able to maintain a majority of union density in their areas. The exception to this is some of the unions have done pretty well in urban areas, but this has depended on state laws to some extent. The states that have so called Right to Work (for less) Laws and have eliminated their prevailing wage laws have not faired near as well as other states when it comes to maintaining union density, wages, retirement or health care. Some other factors that have affected construction unions is the failure of NLRA, we have the right to organize, but the way the system is set up tips the balance in favor of the employers. The failure of the act is unjust and a moral failure. The NLRB has failed as a whole and the way the law stands and with current board members makes for all intents and purposes impossible to organize through the election process, even when an overwhelming amount of workers have voted to have union representation. Some other things the act fails in are the slow election process, the failure of penalties and back pay of unfair labor practices. The whole act needs a major overhaul to make it fair and just. Another factor is the failure of the Federal and sometimes state government to keep steady funding for this countries infrastructure, such as highways, roads, bridges, power distribution, treatment plants and the list goes on. These public projects will help not only the building trades, but would also boost are economic well being for our whole country. Just look at what the interstate system has done for this country. Other factors for the trades have been resources, especially for smaller locals. We will have to see more mergers or some of the bigger unions will have to share resources if some of these smaller unions will be able to survive, if we don’t start helping each other, even across craft lines it will be just a matter of time and we will not be a viable entity. We have had to be creative in our organizing, using a combination of tactics, from bottom up,

top down and a combination of top and bottom up organizing as well as other tactics such as organizing and getting support from other community institutions. The good news is with the advent of C.O.M.E.T., Construction organizing membership education and training our members are aware of our need to organize and was the start of mobilizing our membership and leadership, after all our greatest asset is our members.

The National Education Association

by Liz Picone, CAE

NEA is the largest professional association in the world. Currently, 1 out of every 100 people in the U.S. is an NEA member!

The National Education Association (NEA) was established in 1857 as the National Teachers Association “*to elevate the character and advance the cause of popular education in the US.*” Dues were set at \$1 a year; a life membership could be purchased for \$10. In 1870, the name was changed to the National Education Association (NEA). At that time, membership stood at 5,000. By 1922, membership exceeded 100,000; by 1953, the number of dues-payers reached the half-a-million mark. NEA membership has increased, each year, for 20 consecutive years. In 1967 NEA achieved its membership-recruiting target by reaching the one million level. In the 2001-2002 school year, the number of members hit the 2.7 million mark.

In April, 2003, NEA President Reg Weaver launched the **Great Public Schools Action Plan (GPSAP)** – a commitment to create **Great Public Schools for Every Child**. Recognizing that it is only through the collective power of its membership that the NEA, and its affiliates, can fulfill this promise and that without an increasing, engaged and vibrant membership, the NEA and its affiliates cannot amass this collective power, membership organizing/affiliate capacity building was made a significant component of the **GPSAP**.

The membership organizing/affiliate capacity building component of the **GPSAP** targeted twelve state affiliates for special financial, staffing, and technical assistance. To receive this special assistance, the targeted affiliates were required to develop and implement data-driven, outcome-based projects. After fifteen months, the **GPSAP**-oriented results have been significant. Thus, in collaboration with both staff and leaders of state affiliates, the NEA has created the GPS-National Membership Strategy (**GPS-NMS**).

The mission of the **GPS-NMS** is to recruit, retain and engage a larger, more active association membership in order to achieve **Great Public Schools for Every Child**. The **GPS-NMS** aims to organize and mobilize three (3) million NEA members across all membership categories by August 31, 2010 by:

- Assisting every state affiliate develop and implement a membership organizing plan that is appropriate to its needs – a plan that will help it recruit the largest, most active membership possible;
- Creating the systems necessary to welcome every new member into the association within seventy-two (72) hours of enrollment; and,
- Initiating grassroots organizing programs in every state that will facilitate the mobilization and engagement of members on critical issues.

The **GPS-NMS** is about building a culture of organizing at all levels of the Association. It is about helping affiliates develop:

- A positive culture that will cause people to want to be part of the Association, to belong, to be members rather than just consumers of its products and services; and,
- To develop the systems, structures and processes that will enable affiliates to engage with all current members and to reach out to all potential members in traditional and new markets.

Changing an organizational culture takes time and effort. It is more than rearranging flow chart boxes, reassigning personnel, tweaking budget line items, and broadcasting catchy slogans. It takes a fundamental shift in how members, leaders, and staff at all levels think about themselves, their work, and their organization.

The NEA, the national affiliate, is prepared to do things differently...but, it will take the support and commitment of its state affiliates and *all* Association stakeholders, the commitment of the total enterprise, to this effort to create a strong, vibrant organization that through its collective power can create ***Great Public Schools for Every Child!***

Nihil Illegitimi Carborundum **“The Fight Goes On!”**

by Bob Baker

But the fight goes on and we can never quit. Our children and future generations have to be taught about fairness and decency. This is not a matter of constantly looking at our weaknesses and shortcomings, it is time for change and we all must shoulder the responsibility, no matter where we are in life, just beginning or ready to retire, we have to examine ourselves and truly ask what can be done.

Maybe if we take a little time to reflect where we have come from, then we can examine what roads to take to move forward. From the early nineteen hundreds to the middle of the century, employers (some not all) used much violence and hired goon squads and pinkertons and the likes to put fear into working men and women and even had some killed to stop union progress. The workers got tired of the intimidation and fought back and finally everyone seemed to learn this is not the answer and thank the ALMIGHTY for that.

The next phase labor went through was the hiring of more sophisticated opposition and our adversaries carried briefcases and wore gray flannel suits and tried to knock us down on the courthouse steps and many times were very successful and their results had very long lasting and devastating effects on workers. We then responded with our own lawyers and lobbyists and in some instances were able to counter some of the legislation but then the trends came in the form of many more service oriented jobs and this required much thought and effort. One such movement came in the way of State Public Employment Legislation, which resulted in State Labor Relation Boards and these Boards have somewhat evened out the playing field.

Now the next phase has begun and the private sector workers in the United States face outsourcing, fair trade, free trade etc. and the public sector is facing deception tactics

and literally takes the blame for every downfall the current Whitehouse Administration has encountered and there are many.

We, as a labor movement, have to adjust in the private sector and take strong stands and demand the labor laws practiced in the United States are adhered to in other countries and we need to make sure our products and services are comparable to those of other countries. If the field is leveled out then we can compete and the American Worker can be just as productive as anyone in the world.

In the public sector we have to make our case and fight back when the people are deceived by public relation campaigns coming from our enemies in the White House and the right wing controlled press. One horrid example of this is the No Child Left Behind Legislation passed by the White House Administration and supported by many of our so called friends on the other side of the isle. This whole thing sounded great to everyone; after all it involved our children, which are the future of America. No sooner than this legislation was passed, it was destined to fail due to the lack of funding to carry out the measures of so much detailed criteria that had to be followed.

Who got the blame? The teachers and the labor movement! All everyone heard from the press was that teachers were greedy and wanted to make more money and add to their benefits. The most definitely damaging and misleading statement coming from the administration and the right wingers was that teachers somehow did not care enough to make sure students were properly taught. That is total nonsense, no teacher wants a student to not reach their full potential and they take pride in knowing that their past students make major impacts on society. It touches a teacher's heart to know they had something to do with developing those students and has since the beginning of our education system in this country.

There are many other examples of misrepresentations by the right wing White House and controlled press and they all fall back on the backs of working people. We have to adjust to the next phase of fighting our enemies and that means stealing that misleading thunder and correcting the falsehoods made against organized labor. In order to do this we will have to create our own media sources and get a share of the market that is presented by working people and this is going to require a great deal of sacrifice and thought. We can do it though, because our children need for us to do it and they need us to continue to make whatever adjustments that may be necessary for them to have a future of hope and progress.

This Harvard Trade Union Program Class of 2005 has all the right ingredients to begin this journey and I'm looking forward to reading about their progress. Then we can change the newsletter from, *Blue Collar Blues* to *Labor's Good and Truthful News*, followed by *Labor's Satellite TV Station* and finally don't forget to vote for the Labor Party Candidates.

So, Where Do We Go From Here?

So, what do we do with all this new knowledge and awareness we have read about and discussed over the past six weeks? What can we do when we return to our respective worksites? We would like to suggest the following activities:

- Explore forming coalitions with organizations like *Jobs With Justice* and Inter-Faith groups that promote social justice issues.
- Monitor state and federal legislation. Are there bills that are worker-friendly? Are there bills that promote an unfriendly working environment? Educate your members as to these bills and encourage appropriate action when needed.
- Take responsibility for education. How are you going to educate your members and fellow community members on the state of the labor movement in your country?
- Build a network of local leaders from government, education, the trades, the community and other unions in your area to keep communication open and to discuss local labor issues. Take responsibility for keeping the communication flowing!

Class Web Sites:

<http://htup05.blogspot.com>

<http://www.geocities.com/htup05/htup05.html>

2005 Harvard Trade Union Class

Richard Antonellis, Jr.
IBEW – Local 103
Boston, MA

Bob Baker
Amalgamated Transit Union
Washington, DC

Bob Blanco
Int'l Union of Bricklayers &
Allied Craftworkers
Pembroke Park, FL

Natalie Bradbury
Health Services Union
Sydney, New South Wales
Australia

Jim Carney
Plain Township Fire Fighters –
Local 3850
Gahanna, OH

Mark Crosdale
Transport Workers Union of Australia
Hamilton, New South Wales
Australia

Vicki Di Paolo
Communications Workers of America
Local 9400
Paramount, CA

Karsten Ditlevsen
HK - Danmark
Tastrup, DK
Denmark

David Fantini
Int'l Union of Operating Engineers -
Local 4
Medway, MA

Isabelle Ferreras
Universite Catholique de Louvain/ANSO
La Neuve
Belgium

Bryan Jeffries
United Mesa Fire Fighters

Shogo Kawamoto
Denki Rengo – MEIWU

IAFF-Local 2260
Mesa, AZ

Don Kelly
AFSCME/CSEA
Local 1000
Albany, NY

Chris Ketter
Shop Distributive &
Allied Employees Assn.
Brisbane, Queensland
Australia

Cathleen McCann
American Federation of Teachers,
Great Lakes
Westmont, IL

Mike Mitchell
Int'l Union of Operating
Engineers – Local 370
Pasco, WA

Ellie Ortiz Lopez
AFSCME – Council 95
Santurce
Puerto Rico

Carel Paul
HTUP
Cambridge, MA

Liz Picone, CAE
National Staff Organization –
NEA
Austin, TX

Jim Sullivan
Int'l Union of Operating Engineers –
Local 3
Salt Lake City, UT

Darryl Watkins
Flight Attendant Assn. of
Australia
Alexandria, New South Wales
Australia

Kadoma City, Osaka
Japan

Joe Kerr
Orange County Professional
Fire Fighters Assn. – Local 3631
Santa Ana, CA

Lee Lipps
California Teachers Association
Santa Maria, CA

Ron Middel
Ontario Provincial Police Assn.
Barrie, Ontario
Canada

Paul Nowak
Trades Union Congress
London
England

Barbara Pallazzo
American Federation of Teachers
Washington, DC

Tony Penn
Laborers Int'l Union of North
America – Local 362
Bloomington, IL

Ras Stark, Jr.
Int'l Union of Operating Engineers –
Local 3
Fresno, CA

Steve Turner
Public Service Assn. & Professional
Officers Assn.
Sydney, New South Wales
Australia

Carter Woodruff
AFSCME – Council 61
Des Moines, IA