

We walk, we hold,
for Fellow Workers,
we do not cross

The Line

Olympia, Wash., September - October, 2019 | Volume 2 | Issue 3

FREE



No Pay, We Stay

Coal mine workers in Harlan county, KY are in their 2nd month of blockading a railroad to keep a train from moving coal they had mined. The miners, who were formerly employed by Blackjewel, are owed wages for that coal. In the beginning of July, Blackjewel filed for bankruptcy and at the end of July, with no notice, the miners paychecks bounced. The workers are also not receiving unemployment benefits because the company has not supplied them with layoff notices.

According to Payday Report, "Despite lacking a union, workers at Blackjewel mine are fighting back. They are manning a blockade of the train tracks outside of Blackjewel's Cloverlick mine 24 hours a day with the support of many

> Harlan, Cont. on Page 6

The City plans to displace residents for the sake of business and developers.

See page 2!

2 *Displacement in the name of ... what?*

3 *News from around the Union*

5 *Minimum wage & the housing crisis*

Hi Fellow Workers!

Labor Day is the time of year that the Industrial Workers of the World holds its convention. So all our fellow workers are in our thoughts as we prepare this issue and we wish everyone a happy Labor Day and good convention.

In this issue we hear about the election loss of the Little Big Union but are happy in the knowledge that they will continue to fight – the struggle continues. We are also heartened by the spontaneous railroad blockade by mine workers in Harlan County, Kentucky! May they win their just demands and until they do may they be safe and keep that coal from moving.

No matter what your Labor Day plans are, whether you have to work or not, may you remember that the workers with their hands in their pockets have more power than the bosses and besides the bosses can't put their hands there.

In Solidarity,
Dylan B. - Editor



The Line

Publication of the Olympia IWW.

Editorial Committee
Dylan B.
Roger R.

Olympia IWW Branch Secretaries
Vaughn E.
Summer B.

Press Date: August 28th, 2019

Published Bi-Monthly.
Articles not so designated
do not reflect the Olympia
IWW's official position.

Displacement in the name of ... what?

On August 20th the City of Olympia issued a "Notice of Area Trespass" to the camp under the 4th Ave bridge. The notice says that the residents will be swept on September 11th. Although the title of the notice is "Notice of Area Trespass" the text of the notice gives the reason as "health and safety." Of course the city doesn't care about the health and safety of the people living in the camp or they would be doing more than just paying lip service to the crisis of homelessness. Since there is no investigation, let alone any evidence that the camp, or any camp, is causing any health and safety concerns for others not living at the camp, we can see that this is a hollow reason.

Some of the specific reasons given at other times by the City Staff is that the 4th Ave Bridge Community is a threat to the quality of the surrounding waters, however the City itself has been providing two port-a-potties so the residents have been able to dispose of human waste in a safe way. Before the city placed the port-a-potties, the residents built their own toilets to avoid contaminating waters.

However, the waters had significantly been contaminated by the Tumwater distillery oil spill and the sewage line break near SPSCC caused by a construction company. The construction company allowed this situation to fester before properly notifying the city, but during this time the city was quick to lay the blame on the 4th Ave bridge camp.

Another reason given in the past by the City Staff is that there is a danger of fire. This is true in every home. There was a tent fire in the 4th Ave bridge camp but what the city does not mention is that it was started by a person who does not live at the camp. A stranger to the residents ran through the camp with a "fire-bomb," started the tent fire and ran away. The residents were able to put out

the fire before the fire department arrived. Also not mentioned by the City is the fact that residents have been working with the City to reduce, if not totally stop, open flame fires and to keep propane tanks safe.

In relation to the issue of fire, the City has claimed that there is a gas-line under the 4th Ave bridge and thus fire is even more of an issue. This is simply not true. The City has continued to justify the removal of the tent community by claiming that there is a gas-line beneath the bridge that could explode or cause a disaster if a fire got out of hand beneath the bridge. However, there is no gas-line under the 4th ave bridge. The gas-line is under the 5th ave Bridge.

Health and safety is also the classic reason given as cover to the forcible removal of people. It was the reason given to remove people from Zuccotti Park in New York City during Occupy. It was the reason given by the Egyptian government in an attempt to remove people from Tahrir square in Cairo. And on and on...

A year ago the Martin v. Boise decision came down from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. The decision stated that citing or arresting people for sleeping outdoors or on public property, when there was no alternative shelter available to them violated their eighth amendment rights against cruel or unusual punishment.

After this decision a houseless camp came into existence downtown and then nearby the city created the mitigation camp. There were many issues with the mitigation camp from the start. There are 40 tent sites at the mitigation camp and so the city says it can hold 80 people. But that is only if there are two people to a tent. The city was more interested in how the camp looked and so would not allow the people to use their experience from living on the street to

put up the tents in ways that would be better at keeping the water off and keeping them warmer. While some did feel better at the mitigation camp because there was some protection against theft, others felt uncomfortable because you had to check in coupled with little understanding of what the rules were, because they shifted from day to day.

Another way that the city uses this mitigation camp is to hold spots open just prior to a sweep, just as they are doing now ahead of the sweep of the 4th ave bridge camp. This is so the city can tell people at the 4th ave camp that there is a place for them to go and therefore the city hopes to stay inline with Martin v. Boise. But this is just superficial and cycles people back out to living on the streets.

The notice that the city posted mentions storage of personal items. In the past when the city removed the homes of the people living in the "Smart Lot" camp downtown, they also promised storage. On the day of that sweep they had initially provided nothing for storage until members of Just Housing (now called Just Housing Olympia) and a lawyer asked city officials about it. Then staff returned with city trash cans to put people's stuff in. These trash cans were then taken to a shipping container stored outside of the Gospel Union Mission. These trash cans were loaded and moved by members of Just Housing Olympia not the city, who provided no help.

On September 11th we can expect bulldozers, cops, and the destruction of people's homes, more than likely we can expect no members of the City Counsel to be present.

If you wish to know more or want to get involved please contact Just Housing Olympia at contact@justhousingolympia.org & 360-562-0239 

Little Big Union loses election but vows to keep on fighting

The Little Big Union closely lost the National Labor Relations Board election that the company had called. There were several issues with the election, see below for the statement issued by the LBU.

Workers at Little Big Burger announced their union back in March, see the last two issues of The Line for more detail on this. The workers are calling for wage increases, fair and consistent scheduling, respect, and standard benefits.

The company Chanticleer Holdings responded by hiring a known union busting law firm and then jumping on an election. The company tried to use the guise of the election that it was giving its workers a choice. However, the company spent lots of money and time on fighting against the union and also fired several workers who had spoken out for that union. All the while, the workers themselves who live paycheck to paycheck, don't have millions of dollars to spend.

Here is the statement released by the Little Big Union:

Last Tuesday LBU had our election. Many of you may be wondering about the outcome. As it stands now, we the workers did not win the majority vote. We lost with 12-challenge votes that were not counted, and with many workers whose ballots never arrived and could not vote in time. What does this mean for the company, Little Big Burger?

It means LBB is currently not legally obliged to bargain for a fair contract. It means they waged a scorched earth anti-union campaign. It means

they paid huge amounts of money to union busting attorneys and out of state "HR consultants" to personally attack, smear, and misinform workers instead of listening to our concerns. It means they threatened workers livelihoods, lied about union statements, under-scheduled union members, tore down union posters, and threw away union buttons.

It means they retaliated and fired nine outspoken union supporters in the run up to the election in an attempt to intimidate workers. But most of all it means what we've always known: that corporate suits who profit off our hard work oppose our chance at having fair schedules, decent wages, health care, or recourse with managers. It means that they believe, simply, that workers deserve less than everyone else in the company.

But what does losing the election mean for us, Little Big Union? It means our work is not done. It means we are doubling down on our fight for workers rights. It means we don't need the government - the National Labor Relations Board - or the corporate office - Chanticleer Holdings - to tell us we have a union, because we already do. We are strong, we are unphased, and we aren't going anywhere.

We have spoken up collectively and here's what we've already won: safer working conditions with repairs of long-broken equipment; schedules posted 1-2 weeks in advance instead of 1-2 days; getting our legal break time without retaliation; and access to paid sick time forms in compliance with Oregon law. Seems basic, but these were never part of our working reality before Little Big Union.

We all know that the fight for what is right is a long one, and that there are stalls along the way. However Little Big Union remains strong and we are continuing to organize for what is right. This is a movement of workers struggles all across the food service industry, and our fight is crucial. We don't believe that anyone should get rich off the underpaid, overworked, and overstressed backs of cooks, servers, and bussers. Stick with us because we are Little Big Union and WE ARE NOT GIVING UP! 

UberEats Strikes: What's Next?

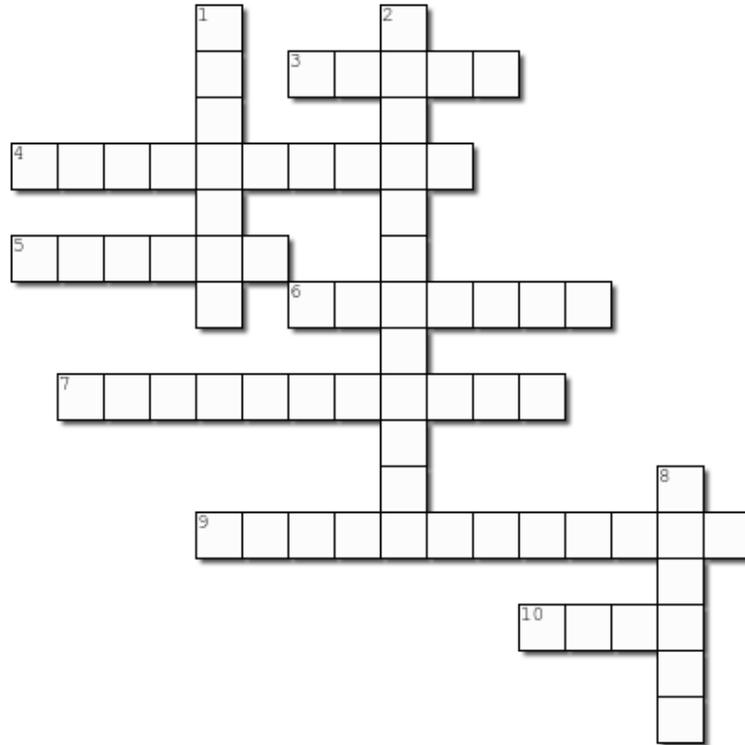
Originally published in the January issue of "The Drop." An IWW publication out of the UK for the London Courier's Network

This autumn saw the biggest and most militant delivery strikes in London's history.

On September 19th hundreds of drivers across London refused to work after Uber announced plans to cut pay per drop from £4.26 to £2.82. They demanded £5 per drop, + £1 per mile, after the UberEats fee. The strike lasted three days across the city, and in some parts up to five days. Picket lines were organised in front of McDonalds shops where drivers prevented scabs from strike-breaking. There was also a major rally at Uber HQ, with a mass of drivers blockading the road to protest the changes.

Managers attempted to kill off the protest by asking to talk to drivers individually and giving out a letter claiming they had consulted hundreds of drivers about the changes. The workers said they would only negotiate as a group and ripped up the letter. While there was some lack of

The Word on The Line



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

3. When the City forcibly removes people
4. A weapon not a word
5. International Workers Day
6. Who has the power
7. IWW boycott happening in Oregon and Washington
9. A union setup by the bosses
10. Nickname for a person who crosses a picket line

Down

1. When workers strike with out the leaders permission and a symbol of the IWW
2. This state saw a teacher uprising that began a wave of teacher unrest in the US
8. Nickname for a member of the IWW

unity across nationalities in certain areas, overall there was strong participation across national lines - including Brazilian, Algerian, Pakistani and other drivers.

During the September strike, riders approached the IWW union and asked for help. The IWW organises food delivery workers across the UK in its Couriers Network, and on the back of the September action the network called for a national courier strike, choosing October 4th to support striking McDonalds, TGI Fridays and Weatherspoons workers. IWW activists spent the next 10 days visiting as many McDonalds as possible, from Wembley to Dartford, Walthamstowe and Surbiton. Activists across the country also mobilised, which led

to drivers joining the strike in Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Southampton and Portsmouth.

On October 4th hundreds of drivers across London went on strike from 5–9 PM. There was good unity across nationalities and we know of around 20 McDonalds that had picket lines, which were very effective at stopping scabs. However, in other places striking workers just decided to go home or worked through another app. Where this happened, there was no one to prevent scabs from undermining the strike.

So what have these strikes achieved? On the one hand, Uber has ignored the drivers' demands. This may seem like a defeat, and some drivers have

expressed their frustration by saying the strikes were pointless or by blaming the lack of unity from other nationalities. However, Uber is a multibillion-pound company that hates unions. Deliveroo is the same. It was always going to take a long campaign of strikes and actions to win change, and these companies won't negotiate until they are forced to. This can happen if we make ignoring drivers more costly than listening to drivers.

In Cardiff, riders forced Uber management to speak to them after they blockaded the local Uber office. In Paris, drivers forced management to negotiate after blockading a Deliveroo Editions. If we put the work in

> **Uber**, Cont. on Page 6

Full-time minimum wage workers cannot afford a 2-bedroom rental anywhere in the US

Originally published on CNBC.com
By Alicia Adamczyk

New York, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. are often spotlighted for their astronomical housing prices. But a new report finds that it's not just the coasts that are facing an affordability crisis: A full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour cannot rent an affordable two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the country, where affordable is defined as comprising up to 30% of a renter's budget.

That's according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 30th annual Out of Reach report, which finds that a nationwide affordable housing shortage, wage stagnation and racial inequities have left a growing number of people unable to find a place to live that's reasonably within their budget.

NLIHC's report calculates a "housing wage" that estimates how much a full-time worker must make in order to afford a fair market rental without spending more than 30% of his or her income. For 2019, the housing wage is \$22.96 for a two-bedroom rental, and \$18.65 for a one-bedroom. The means someone earning the federal minimum wage would have to work more than three full-time jobs — 127 hours per week — to afford a two-bedroom rental, and 103 hours for a one-bedroom.

The report notes that it will take more than just an increase in the minimum wage to rectify the situation. More than 40 cities and states have instituted higher minimum wages than

the federal minimum of \$7.25, but the highest tops out at \$12 per hour — far less than the housing wage calculated by NLIHC.

Even the national average renter's income of \$17.57 per hour, as calculated by NLIHC, is too little to afford a modest two-bedroom. Someone earning \$17.57 per hour, in fact, would be able to find an affordable two-bedroom apartment in just 10% of U.S. counties.

Financial experts routinely recommend that people spend no more than 30% of their income on housing, but the report drives home just how hard this is to do for a wide swath of workers in the U.S. today. Not only are many Americans not earning enough to afford a "modest" rental, but a lack of reasonably-priced housing options is another culprit: NLIHC calculates there is a shortage of 7 million affordable rental homes nationally.

The organization expects the situation to get worse in the coming years. Most of the industries forecasted to see the most growth over the next decade, including home health aides and food prep workers, boast median wages that are less than the one-bedroom and two-bedroom housing wage figures detailed above.

The report calls for increased funding to certain federal housing programs, such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and advocates for a renters tax credit based on the difference between 30% of a tenant's household income and their rental costs. 📌



Charlene "Charlie" Sato was born in 1951 and died in 1996 after a struggle with cancer. She was an active member of the O'ahu General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and a tireless fighter for the rights of workers and those who speak Hawai'i Creole English, or pidgin, as it is locally known. She grew up in Wahiawa, on O'ahu, Hawai'i, and would go on to teach pidgin and creole studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. She published and spoke extensively on pidgin and was the editor of Carrier Pigeon newsletter from 1989-1993.

In 1987, she testified before the Board of Education when it created a controversial policy to make Standard English the only language allowed in classrooms, effectively banning pidgin. Her protest of this policy, which emphasized the role language plays in identity and culture, helped force the Board to recant. At this time, Charlie also acted as expert witness on behalf of several pidgin speakers who filed a suit against the US National Weather Service for job discrimination based on the workers' local accents. Upon her death, Charlie created the Sato Fund, which facilitates women and trans people's participation in the IWW. 📌

HARLAN

Cont. from Front Page
community groups and local unions.”

The workers have been blocking the track since July 29th. That was the day they got word that the train was being loaded with the coal they mined but have not been paid for. The miners went down to see what was happening and then decided to stop the train.

Not only did their last paycheck bounce, with workers being owed as much as \$4,000, but, according to Labor Notes, their second-to-last paycheck which had been deposited already was taken out of their accounts. In total laid-off Blackjewel workers are owed \$2.5 million in back wages.

Harlan county has a long history of battles with the coal companies. It has been know as Bloody Harlan since the 1930s, when a series of strikes and skirmishes took place all the way up to the 1973 with the Brookside Strike against Duke Power, about which the famous documentary, Bloody Harlan, was made.

In the 1930s, the Harlan County War, as it is called, was a bitter struggle over the right of the miners to organize. Lasting nearly the entire decade it would claim the lives of many before the company and their gunthugs were ultimately defeated. The famous folk/union song “Which Side Are You On?” was written during the Harlan Country War.

Florence Reece wrote the song and reported: “Sheriff J. H. Blair and his men came to our house in search of Sam – that’s my husband – he was one of the union leaders. I was home alone with our seven children. They

ransacked the whole house and then kept watch outside, waiting to shoot Sam down when he came back. But he didn’t come home that night. Afterward I tore a sheet from a calendar on the wall and wrote the words to ‘Which Side Are You On?’ to an old Baptist hymn, ‘Lay the Lily Low’. My songs always goes to the underdog – to the worker. I’m one of them and I feel like I’ve got to be with them. There’s no such thing as neutral. You have to be on one side or the other. Some people say, ‘I don’t take sides – I’m neutral.’ There’s no such thing. In your mind you’re on one side or the other. In Harlan County there wasn’t no neutral. If you wasn’t a gun thug, you was a union man. You had to be.”

As of this writing the miners today are in their 26th day of the blockade. Support has been strong with the local community, unions, and activists. The miners have said that it is not all about the money, while they do want to be paid for sure, it is also about doing what is right and standing together.

You can support the miners with a donation - <https://www.gofundme.com/f/DonatetominersHarlanCAA>

Please also support Payday Report and Labor Notes.



UBER

Cont. from Page 4
and stick together, then we can force these companies to talk. What the strikes did achieve was to bring together thousands of workers who are treated like shit by these companies.

Migrant workers from different countries left behind the fear of getting in trouble and went on strike, blockaded roads, cornered managers and stood against scabs. This was itself a huge

step forward. The drivers showed they know how to fight and how to stick together. Uber and Deliveroo will remember that and think twice before making a big pay cut in the future.

The question now is how do we communicate between the thousands of drivers in London? Whatsapp groups can be useful to get information out but they are not a good platform for talking or making decisions. Should the union organise local meetings between drivers from 3–4 McDonalds? Do we need to get representatives from different areas to sit down and make a plan? Can we use this newsletter to spread information and communicate? We need your ideas and your help. The drivers have shown what they can do without preparation. Now we need them to show what they can do when they are organised, united and strong. 🐾



Why Join the I.W.W.?

It does not take long to figure out that workers and their employers do not have the same interests. Workers want shorter hours, higher pay, and better benefits.

We want our work to be less boring, less dangerous, and less destructive to the environment. We want more control over how we produce goods and provide services. We want meaningful work that contributes to our communities and world.

Our employers, in contrast, want us to work longer, harder, faster, and cheaper. They want fewer safety and environmental regulations and they demand absolute control over all decisions, work schedules, speech, and actions in the workplace.

The easiest way to stand up for each other in our workplaces and communities and the easiest way to improve our working conditions is to join a union.

That is why employers fight so hard, and spend so much money, to keep unions out of their workplaces. Workers with unions generally have higher pay and job security, better benefits, and fewer scheduling problems. More pay equals fewer hours at work and more hours for enjoying the good things in life.

Nothing will change until we organize. Joining the IWW is easy. Just give us a call. The sooner you do, the sooner things will improve and the sooner we, and not the bosses, will enjoy the good things in life.

OlympiaIWW.org IWW.org
360-362-0112
Organize@OlympiaIWW.com
PO Box 1293, Olympia Wa,
98507



Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the evergrowing power of the employing class.

The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.