

World Anarchist News (WS 40)

Workers Solidarity Movement

1993

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Brazil: Landless use anarchist methods to improve their living standards

BRAZIL is the world's fourth largest food exporter. Yet 40 million of its 155 million people go hungry, even in good times. Millions of peasants are landless; while American, Japanese and European multinationals control 36 million hectares of prime farmland.

The Movement of Landless of Brazil (MST) has been organising landless rural workers to seize large estates and work them themselves. One such occupation lasted for more than two years and involved 600 families.

Some 1,400 families are camping on lands in the state Rio Grand do Sul, while there are another 30 encampments in the state of Parana. The landless share the work necessary to run these camps. Hygiene, education and food production are all organised co-operatively. Decisions are taken after discussion at general assemblies, which in turn take place after discussion in smaller groups.

Of course, the authorities don't sit around with their arms crossed — police regularly attempt evictions and more than 100 activists have been assassinated since 1991. But this hasn't ended the occupations because, as a government study admitted, participants have seen their purchasing power double, while infant mortality has fallen well below the national average.

Guatemala : Solidarity Wins Victory

Workers at the 'East-West' factory in Guatemala have reported that physical abuse and sexual harassment of workers stopped after international pressure forced a visit from a labour inspector. Workers who were suspended or fired have returned to work with back pay. The workers received many faxes and letters of solidarity. They ask that their gratitude be conveyed to those who joined them in their struggle.

Legal limits or the limits of the law

For those who put their faith in good laws to stop racism, sexism, etc; a cautionary tale from Minneapolis, USA. These events occurred in the course of an abortion clinic defence campaign.

A group of 'pro-choicers' was tailing Operation Rescue for several hours to find out what clinic or doctor's home they were going to hit — standard practice for 'pro-choice' groups when OR plans a hit. The bigots spotted them, so they pulled into a police station and got them busted. For what? For violating an "anti-stalking" law designed to stop bigots who tail & harass clinic doctors. Later outside the clinic pro-choice activists were threatened with arrest for wearing masks, by invoking an old anti-Ku Klux Klan law that prohibits hiding your face. The masks were to frustrate Operation Rescue attempts to video tape them and a protection against the tear gas being fired by the police.

Longest ever strike in Nepal ends in victory

WORKERS at the Nepal Battery Company, a subsidiary of Union Carbide, returned to work at the end of the summer after winning 15 of their 16 demands. The 222 day strike was longest

in the history of the Nepalese trade union movement. The dispute was for sick pay, protective clothing, health & safety standards, life insurance and against intimidation of union activists.

Anarcho-syndicalist unions and anarchist organisations were among the organisations from all over the world who aided the struggle. Messages of support and donations arrived from India, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, Germany, the Ukraine, Britain, Sweden, Spain and France. The Workers Solidarity Movement also expressed its support.

The NIWU union and the GEFONT trade union congress wrote to the Workers Solidarity Movement with their greetings and thanks. The victory “was possible because of our militant solidarity and solidarity support from our comrades abroad”.

Australian workers have law set on them for creating jobs

WESTERN AUSTRALIA’S Engineering & Electrical Union is being threatened with reregistration and individual members face fines. The employers and the state government are not going to put up with their behaviour.

So what awful things were they up to? Job creation! For the last three years the union has imposed a total overtime ban in the contracting industry in the greater Perth area. As a result of this ban the employers have had to take on more workers.

One of the best examples is at Hismelt, with an electrical workforce of 100, where the overtime ban resulted in an extra 40 electrical workers being taken on. Les McLoughlan, an organiser with the union said “We have made a conscious decision to help the unemployed. There has not been a more deserving cause for union members. Now the bosses want to get rid of it.”

International solidarity made illegal in the good ol’ USA

Solidarity is illegal, and so is internationalism. That was the ruling of a US federal court when it issued an injunction barring the International Longshoremens Associations (dockers union) from asking unions in Japan for help in dealing with two non-union companies. The companies load citrus fruit in several Florida ports, and the ILA hoped that Jap[anese dockers would refuse to unload the ships when they arrived there.

The ILA argued that the courts have no authority over the actions of unions outside the United States. The court — surprise, surprise — took the bosses side and ruled that the ILA’s request for help from Japanese workers amounted to an illegal secondary boycott.

Source:Libertarian Labour Review

Japanese government is doing alright

A recent survey of Japan’s 749 lawmakers in both houses of the legislature showed, as in all other countries, Japan’s rulers come from the rich. Those from the Liberal Democratic Party own an average \$1.2 million in personal wealth. Parliamentarians from Komeito (Clean Government Party) held average assets of \$508,000, followed by \$440,000 of those from the Democratic Socialist Party (SDP), and the \$404,000 of those from the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Assets held under the names of spouses and family members, jewellery, precious metals and gold, did not

have to be declared. Parliamentarians in both houses own an average \$835,000 of personal assets but the list was topped by Takashi Sasagawa with \$40 million.

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