

TRUCKERS UNITED

Newsletter of the Motor Transport Workers Industrial Union 530 - Volume 1 - Issue 4 - Spring 2009

15 NC and VA Drivers Laid Off, IWW Responds

In a move seen often by workers attempting to improve workplace conditions, trucking bosses fired 15 drivers in North Carolina and Virginia early in January this year. The companies claim it was for decreased business volumes, but most of the drivers were among internal organizers for the IWW. In addition, the companies began hiring new drivers immediately following the lay offs. "We have no doubt this was in retaliation for our organizing efforts," one driver said at a meeting held January 17.

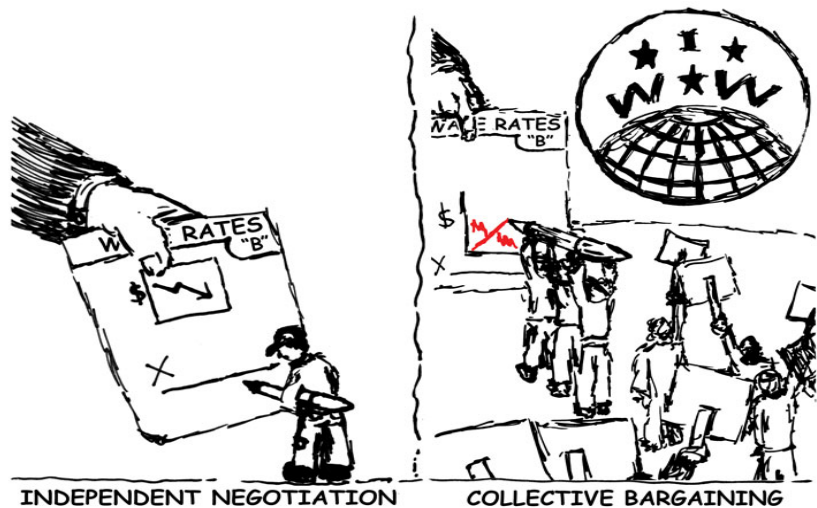
The IWW conducted a scheduled meeting, January 17, which was originally planned to formally establish the union was altered to determine how to proceed with the organizing effort given the firings. Undeterred by the boss's aggression, many drivers (including many of those laid off) still joined the union. A petition for charter is still being circulated.

In an outpouring of altruism, IWW members across the globe responded to the layoffs by donating money to the struggling drivers.

IWW members in Cambridge, England and Cologne, Germany held fundraisers to help the drivers in NC and VA. This act indicates that Wobblies everywhere believe in

this movement. The money has been an incredible help to the drivers and the campaign in general.

The campaign continues in the Southeast...



Mid-States Trucking Files for Bankruptcy

On March 27th of this year, Mid-States Express, a trucking company headquartered in Aurora, Illinois, announced it would be filing for bankruptcy. With an estimated \$100 million dollars in annual revenue, the firm had previously employed 525 people nationwide. According to a spokesperson for the company, the company's bank pulled the line of credit and forced Mid-States to close its door. In at least one location, workers were only given a single day's notice the company would be closing. According to one ex-worker, "They

let us all work until Thursday afternoon. Then tell us you have just worked for 2 weeks for free and don't return tonight we are done. Now that is some bulls---."

Mid-State's closure is symptomatic of the plight of small to mid-sized trucking companies. Inflated fuel costs, frozen credit markets, and the continuing recession have squeezed many players out of the industry, along with the jobs of countless truckers. According to analysts, in the long run these 'market fluctuations' may end up benefitting larger companies such as Conway and FedEx Freight. With more capital to sustain themselves

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Truckers Hit Hard by Recession

Last Year, 3,065 freight transport businesses (of over 5 trucks) went bankrupt.

Some completely closed shop:

Moore Truck Lines
Jevic Transportation
Preston Trucking Company
Guaranteed Overnite Delivery
DHL (US operations)
Hartwig Transit
Midstates

Others laid off workers or shut down terminals:

YRC (200 terminals consolidated)
Conway and Vitran both shut down dozens of terminals
Saia Lays Off 5%

During this difficult time, workers of the trucking industry need to stick together more than ever. Only collective action can prevent our bosses from throwing us out on the streets to protect their personal wealth.

Friends and Fellow Workers,

Local Organizing Committees for the Freight Trucking Organizing Committee are forming in Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco.

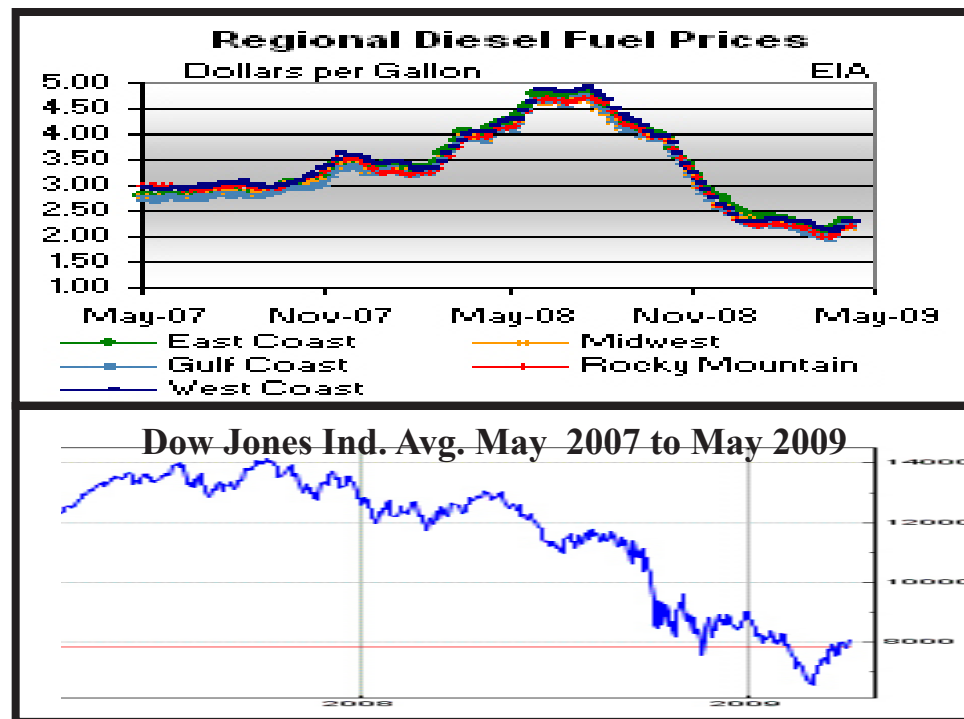
If you are interested in volunteering for the FTOC, call us today!

224-353-7189

Despite Drop in Fuel Prices Drivers Remain Wary

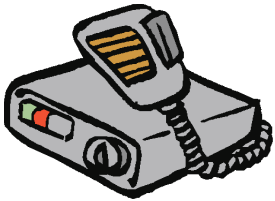
Although diesel prices are nearly half of their over \$4 per gallon high, professional drivers are still bearing the brunt of the down economy and are driving less because of it. The reasons for this state of affairs are many. One is the simple fact that demand is down. There's less freight moving and that that means less driving, less work, and less money for truckers. Second, when fuel prices spiked, other trucking costs—everything from tires to repairs—went up right along with it. While diesel may now be just over \$2 a gallon, those other items have remained just as

expensive as they were during last year's fuel spike. Worsening the crisis, idled trucks drive down the cost of labor. With so many drivers struggling for work—and thereby increasing the labor supply—companies are cutting rates. Elaborating on the situation, one driver put it this way: "The dilemma for us, when the fuel prices came down, the big companies' freight rates dropped down - that's the rate they pay out," he said. "It's been extremely tight ... We even stopped using air conditioning and heat ... to cut down costs."



...BANKRUPTCY

through the current crisis, larger companies will hold a greater market share once the economy recovers.



CB Soap Box

Truckers get the Inside Scoop -Gear Grinder

One day in last year, I made a delivery to a new factory constructed as an annex to a felt filtration distributor. The two separate companies are owned by the same men. While I have been making deliveries to and pick-ups from the distributor, I had not yet been in the newly constructed factory portion.

I backed in and walked in the brand-new, clean, and quiet factory. I noticed all the workers had southern accents. This was strange so I thought of all possibilities as to why there is a whole factory of southerners in Chicago's north suburbs. Why would a whole group of people relocate that far just for a machine operator's position, a common and relatively low-paying job? Then I looked at what they were doing - they were not operating the machines, they were assembling the machines. The factory was being prepared for operation. So I asked one of the men unloading my trailer "do you guys just assemble 'em," as I motioned toward the massive machines. "Yep, the man said."

So I further inquired: "Where you guys from?"

"Georgia."

"I thought you were southerners," I said.

I continued: "So what do they do, set you up in a hotel while you're out here?"

"Yep." "All of you?" "Yep."

There was about twenty or thirty working on the six machines.

"Do you travel often?" I asked.

"No. Most of our customers are in the south, so we never go too far from our homes. This place is an exception."

"How long have you been here?"

"Since November."

"Damn! You guys are like truckers, living away from home for months at a time."

"Yeah, we're roughnecks."

"So why are most of your customers down south?"

"These are textile machines. There ain't no textile plants up here. They usually go in cotton mills, which are all in the south."

"That's interesting," I said; "this guy thinks he can compete with southern plants using northern-priced labor?"

"I guess so; that's one of the owners there."

He pointed out a man in a suit walking and talking with a worker.

"He's got deep pockets," he whispered. "Why do you say that?"

"Not only is it strange that we are putting these machines in a northern factory, but is even stranger that these are all brand new. I have never seen an owner purchase all brand new machines. Usually they buy a few used ones and one new one. These things are so expensive; most cannot do it any other way."

"So what do they do anyway?"

"See those bales over there?" "Yeah."

"Those get placed in that hopper, the fibers are drawn out in that section, and then they are combed over there. They are further combed into very fine parallel threads and placed on top of each other in layers. They are stitched over there and the product comes out in sheets from that opening. It is rolled up, cut and looks like that." He pointed to the finished rolls of fabric.

"That looks like the stuff I pick up next door," I said.

"It is," he said. "They're tryin' to cut out the middle man. They are no longer going to buy in bulk and sell in smaller parts. They are gonna make it all and sell it all here."

"No shit!"

"Do you guys manufacture the machines in Georgia?"

"No, those three came from France and those came from Germany."

He went on to tell me how such massive machines, each as big as a house, were moved from Europe to Chicago.

This delivery turned out to be very informative indeed:

1. I was under the impression that our textile industry was exclusively overseas. I have never seen nor delivered to any fabric manufacturers, and I've been to nearly every factory between Chicago and Milwaukee. So my limited perspective led me to believe all textiles must be overseas, when many still exist in the American South.

2. Business growth is dynamic. Businesses go through similar life cycles, depending on their success. Many businesses begin in retail and if they accumulate enough capital they take on wholesale distribution and then, as

this company did, move on to manufacturing, from there they diversify their capital and move into the financial industries. (The careers of many workers mirror this path.)

3. Machine assemblers, a.k.a. "capital goods," have a geographically sparse market. These machines are made by one or two European companies and shipped all over the world, despite their immense size and consequently their immense transportation costs. This machine industry is truly global. I can't imagine more than a few competitors existing in this world market for these products.

4. Machine assemblers must be paid well to sacrifice months of their lives to a job. They also must live very close to the market which they serve.

5. It further proves that manufacturing is a service to distributors who purchase the goods. The manufacturers are helping the distributor out by putting together a product for them to sell. Otherwise the distributor would have to put it together themselves. They may not have the skill, knowledge, or resources to take on the endeavor. If they do acquire these characteristics, they can "cut out the middle man" as this company did and be better off.

6. Truck driving is incredibly enlightening work. The amount of knowledge that is in our heads could be valuable for many aims, among them, organizing our fellow workers to improve their (and, as a result, our) lives at work.

**Got a Story about
your Company???**

Send your submissions to

CB SoapBox

C/O MTW IU530

PO Box 274

Waukegan, IL 60079

Join the IWW

And Improve your Life at Work

The Motor Transport Workers Industrial Union of the IWW is committed to building one big union of truckers across the globe.

The IWW has been organizing in transportation since its founding in 1905. We currently have members on four continents. Unlike other unions, MTW organizers also work in the trucking industry, so they understand the conditions that affect you. There is still a lot of work to be done and we welcome any help. We need your knowledge, skills, and creativity to help us improve the trucking industry for all.

MTWIU members are building a proud, member-run, fighting union willing to stand up for their fellow workers in the trucking industry. We know that improvements at work can only be realized when solidarity reigns among the workers of our industry. We invite you to join the IWW and to let other transportation workers know about us.

Joining the IWW Means

- ✓ Solidarity across the industry and beyond
- ✓ Members across the globe willing to take action for your struggle
- ✓ More members yield stronger negotiating position
- ✓ Already a presence in the transportation sector
- ✓ Large network of experienced people willing to help you
- ✓ Skilled organizers to assist you
- ✓ Free legal counsel
- ✓ Free Trainings
- ✓ Structures give us most freedom locally and most power globally
- ✓ 100% democratic decision-making in our affairs

What We can Accomplish Together

- ✓ 100% fuel reimbursement
- ✓ Respect from our companies
- ✓ Pay Increases
- ✓ Paid wait times
- ✓ Paid overtime
- ✓ Sensible scheduling
- ✓ Voluntary overtime
- ✓ Protection from Firings

Donate to the FTOC!

Help the IWW's most exciting Trucking organizing project make thing happen!

Donate by PAYPAL or our PO BOX
or become a member of the
IU 530 REFUELERS CLUB by donating 2
bucks a week.

Visit
truckers.iww.org

Interested in joining?

Email us at:

mtw530@IWW.org

Write to us at:

**Motor Transport Workers IU 530
PO Box 274
Waukegan, IL 60079**

Visit us on the Web:

<http://truckers.IWW.org>

Phone us at:

224-353-7189



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PLACE
STAMP
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To: