The Public i, a project of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, is an independent, collectively-run, community-oriented publication that provides a forum for topics underreported and voices underrepresented in the dominant media. All contributors to the paper are volunteers. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to submit articles or story ideas to the editorial collective. We prefer, but do not necessarily restrict ourselves to, articles on issues of local impact written by authors with local ties. The opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the IMC as a whole.

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Studies show that precarity could affect up to 75% of the US population that is working to middle-class, especially the over 35 million who are at poverty-level. But now there may be a solution for those who live with precarity:

Organization of communities affected by precarity, and unity within workplaces and neighborhoods in the fight against exploitation and instability has been proven to reduce precarious situations and at times have even made revolutionary changes. Known side-effects of organization include: a living-wage, job protections, worker-owned and controlled enterprises, healthcare, lower or no rents for housing, eviction protections, collectively-owned housing projects, stable employment, stable housing, better education, even Social Revolution!
Letting Them Eat Cake at the University of Illinois

By Ricky Baldwin

Loosely proclaiming its poverty whenever workers demand a raise, the University of Illinois belies this claim through actions like hiring incoming President Michael Hogan at $620,000 a year “base” salary, plus retention bonus and perks. That’s more than a third higher than his predecessor’s pay, seemingly a ringing endorsement for the man who made his mark in Connecticut in part by spending $710,000 a year on cardboard likenesses he posted all over campus, raising tuition, and blowing half a million on reno-

vations in and around his own office and private bathroom. The floors, he explained, squeaked.

Campus unions say Hogan’s portent actually echoes UI administrations’ past. Their patterns show a university devolving into a cardboard cutout of itself for some time, as the administration, and the attendant white elephants, have grown fat while the substance and mission of the institution suffers.

Originally a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois came under the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 as a site for members of the working classes to obtain a liberal and practical education. The University of Illinois has been shrinking toward a private institution for elites which increasingly prices most working-class students out and sells its new “illinois brand” to the highest corporate bidder.

As curriculum follows funding, the campus narrowly avoided invasion by a self-described private “academy” organized for the promotion of unregulated private “academy” organized for the promotion of unregulated private industry. When it comes to spending, the University plays in the big tent, like the recently published campus master plan to make more cuts? Will the University repeat this

sum that threatens the recently published campus master plan to make more cuts? Will the University repeat this

A SPREE FOR ME BUT NOT FOR THEE

When it comes to spending, the University plays in the big leagues. Two years ago, with less than one percent of the projected students in evidence, President Joseph B. White’s Global Campus ship was sinking and taking $10 million down with it. Meanwhile, the Global Campus personnel got $120,000 bonuses. That same year the State appropriated money for 2.5 percent raises at the University, but the Administration only handed out 1.5 percent to civil service workers.

Last year the University and Foundation pulled in a record $220 million in donations. The University’s catering service served black-tie alumni events, Republican fundrais-

ers (one with Karl Rove) at the semi-private 1-Hotel, and offered extravagant wedding packages. You can now tie the knot at Memorial Stadium and be photographed with the University’s millionaire football coach.

When it comes to the needs of workers and students, however, we hear about making “shared sacrifices;” no prizes for guessing whose sacrifice is the biggest, consider-

ing tuition increases and zero raises. Over 1,300 UI employees made $100,000+ last year, 125 made $220,000+, and sixteen made over $400,000. Retention and merit raises continue in select areas, along with multimillion-dollar new construction, building renovations, cherry wood furniture, and the like. Meanwhile, University information technologies and printing services are closing, and staff are being fired, with functions farmed out to pri-

vate industry.

Money from the whopping student fees to live and eat in the dorms are not “carmaarked” but blended into the general fund to pay for projects other than the workers who actually clean the dorms or serve the food.

Letting no attention to the administration behind the cur-

tain and the “work orders” that farm out workers to vari-

ous other agencies, for a fee.

Furthermore, at the University, administrators create their own meaning. If a department is losing money, managers need “flexibility” to change workers’ hours, add overtime, lay off workers all over campus and demand that they use their own vehicles. Conversely, if a department is making money, manag-

ers need “flexibility” to do the exact same things.

Sure, civil service workers accuse generous vacation time, but what does this mean when requests for leave are routinely denied, allegedly due to short staffing. Food service workers can take vacations, when they’re laid off. Otherwise, if they want to leave on say, Valentine’s Day, or the day after the Super Bowl, on practically any day that ends with a y, they’re told, “That would be problematic; Building service workers are “essential” after a heavy snow even when the University shuts down and travel is dangerous. Then, when the bill comes due, the workers are expendable. Unions had to fight off attempts in the State Legislature this year to change labor laws to force through unpaid “furloughs.” Non-union workers got stuck with furloughs, of course, and administrators took them, too.

But even twice as many days without pay is not equitable when salaries vary by a factor of ten or twenty. A single day’s pay is significant if you already have trouble paying the bills and your phone may be cut off, compared to even a thousand-dollar loss for someone who earns half a million.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE

This summer Illinois waits with bated breath to learn whether Hogan’s inaugural celebration will top the $170,000 spent when he began at Connecticut? Will he live in the snail president’s mansion or move out and charge the University $49,000 a year to rent another house as he did in Connecticut? Will the University repeat this year’s expenditure of $150,000 looking for a new provost to make more cuts?

Meanwhile, at least three large union contracts will expire this summer at the Urbana campus: two for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and one for the AFSCME. All will almost certainly be offered zero raises. On the Chicago campus SEIU has been bargaining for a year.

After a News-Gazette story revealed University plans to renew a contract already worth over a mil-

lion dollars to pay for consultants out of Indiana another half million to teach administrators “team-based decision-making,” the Campus Fac-

ulty Association (CFA) organized a public protest, and the contract was canceled. Last fall, the University refused to raise the minimum stipend for GEO and continued to refuse to guarantee tuition waivers right up until the GEO went on a strike publicly supported by CFA and other campus unions. After three days, the University announced that it had always intended to agree to these demands. When the GEO in Chicago threatened to strike, the University quickly revised its offer from no raise to raises. In the end, it has been protest, not prudence that has gotten results.

A Paper of the People
May marks the beginning of the 2010 farmer's market season in CU with Urbana's Market at the Square on Saturdays. Urbana’s market—and unofficial town square—is open 7 am to noon every Saturday until November 6th at the corner of Illinois and Vine in the Lincoln Square parking lot. Everything for sale is grown or produced in Illinois. Each week an average of 400 people shop for fruits and vegetables, prepared foods, baked goods, handmade soap and jewelry amidst the buzz of curbside music performances and informational booths for community organizations.

Champaign's markets are opening soon too. Starting in June, the Farmers' Market on Historic North 1st Street will be open Thursdays and the Champaign Urbana Public Health Department’s (CPHD) Marketing Wellness on Tuesdays. Organizers are planning to enhance the accessibility and quality of this year’s markets by expanding education, programming and promotion, adding to available pay methods, and increasing the number of vendors.

There are many excellent reasons for holding farmers’ markets. The community is a whole benefits economically. The direct support of local farmers, businesses, entrepreneurs and hobbyists encourages the circulation of money within the community. The economic benefit is even more direct for the farmers themselves. According to Local Harvest, farmers are paid 18 cents on the dollar for food purchased at a large supermarket; the other 82 cents go to middlemen. At farmers’ markets, the middlemen are mostly removed. Although money changes hands at farmers’ markets, local economist Michael Bralts believes the benefits to the community are more social than monetary. “Both the buyer and the seller get something other than what’s being sold: the pleasure of doing work and supporting our own community, which is a way of being useful, that requires skill, and demonstrates a certain approach to life.” In other words, farmers’ markets are fun, gratifying, and build communities.

Many are celebrating the increased energy around farmers’ markets. Organizations, such as local foods in CU and across the nation. Providing more options for people to use their federal food benefits in addition to the Illinois WIC and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) at farmers’ markets is a step in the direction of equal access to fresh, whole, local foods.

Purchasing items at Market at the Square just got easier with a new card system that allows patrons to swipe credit, debit and LINK cards (formerly known as food stamps) in exchange for wooden tokens to pay for items. In past seasons, many patrons were deterred by the inability to use cards, and the hope is that the new token system will make the market a viable option for those who don’t regularly carry cash. On May 8th, the day of the system’s introduction, 24 credit/debit transactions and one LINK transaction were made.

To use a card, locate the city tent at the Northwest corner of the market. Market staff will swipe the card, enter the desired amount for the transaction, and issue tokens of equivalent value. Tokens for LINK-eligible items are green and valued at $1, while credit/debit tokens are orange and valued at $5. LINK tokens come in smaller denominations.

Urbana Farmers’ Market tokens

May 2010
The April 21st March on Springfield

By Gene Vandenport and Germaine Light

It was a common refrain of rally organizers that they had trouble sleeping the morning of April 21, 2010 before a Save Our Schools demonstration in Springfield. Most of us were up at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m., anxious about the day. We worried about something going wrong. At that point organizers began going over the checklist: 28 dozen doughnuts, sugar and caffeine had kicked in. For many folks, it was a spirited discussion. You might say at this point that the tone of the day did not get better than that! Rose drove him home! For most of us, we thought a lobby day does not get better than that!

A series of speakers representing citizen groups, with drums and whistles providing rhythm and music. As thousands were marching, others headed into the capitol building. Significant numbers of people made attempts to occupy different parts of the capitol, many others engaged in public protest. ASFSME retirees sneaked into the visitor’s balcony, pulled out hidden placards, and began chanting. Security police promptly escorted them out. In the end, SEIU members tried to rush the door of the General Assembly Chambers, but were pushed back.

As the march wound down, people went to various constituency and union tents around the capitol building to be fed and to share experiences. It soon became time to get back on the bus. We knew we had left a message, but it was also time to figure out who was left behind. One of our buses discovered that Jim McGuire, an AFSCME spokesperson, was missing. So we had to look for the missing man.

From there the march commenced and, needless to say, Champaign–Urbana was quite rowdy. Banging on drums, the marchers coalesced around whistles and thumping water bottle drums, hats were distributed and marshals were selected. Champaign Folkis coalesced around whistles and thumping water bottle drums. Parade marshals for the IEA state-wide group asked the rest of the march participants, 15,000 strong. This was the first event ever, the first time it was supposed to have happened. But really, this is the first time they ever met so many people from so many different places.

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The Public i Honors Workers Who Sacrificed Thier Lives For Corporate Profits

An explosion in a coal mine in the mountains of West Virginia killed 29 miners on the morning of April 5, 2010. The Upper Big Branch mine was owned and operated by Massey Energy, which had been cited for numerous violations. In a 2006 lawsuit against the company, a memo was exposed from Massey CEO Don Blankenship that instruct ed superintendents: “If any of you have been asked by your group presidents, your supervisors, engineers or anyone else to do anything other than run coal (i.e. build overcasts, do construction jobs, or whatever), you need to ignore them and run coal. This memo is necessary only because we seem not to understand that the coal pays the bills.” The drive to “run coal” has now cost the lives of 29 men.

Carl Accord, 52
Jason Atkins, 25
Christopher Bell, 33
Gregory Steven Brock, 47
Kenneth Allan Chapman, 53
Robert Clark, 41
Charles Timothy Davis, 51
Cory Davis, 20
Michael Lee Elswick, 56
William J. Griffith, 54
Edward Dean Jones, 50
Richard K. Lane, 45
William Roosevelt Lynch, 59
Nicholas Darrell McCroskey, 26
Joe Marcum, 57
Ronald Lee Maynor, 31
James E. Mooney, 50
Adam Keith Morgan, 21
Rea L. Mullins, 50
Joshua S. Napper, 26
Howard D. Payne, 53
Deward Scott, 58
Gary Quarles, 33
Grover Dale Slees, 57
Benny Willingham, 61
Ricky Workman, 50

Ben Fletcher IWW

By David Johnson

Born in Philadelphia in 1890, Ben Fletcher was the most important African American labor leader in the most influential union of the early 20th century, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). This was no small accomplishment considering that this was a time of wide-spread racism, Jim Crow laws, lynch mobs, and the exclusion of African Americans from the American Federation of Labor (AFL). However the IWW was unique in that it was ideologically committed to racial, ethnic and gender equality. More than any other IWW affiliate, Ben Fletcher’s Local 8 of the Marine, Longshoremen and Transport Union in Philadelphia worked hard to be a progressive interracial Union.

Ben Fletcher became active in the IWW in 1912 working as a longshoreman loading and unloading cargo ships. The dock and ship owners were able to prevent dockworkers in Philadelphia from being unionized for decades by a divide and conquer tactic by pitting the three major ethnic groups of the time in Philadelphia; African Americans, Irish and Eastern European immigrants against each other. They achieved this primarily by using racial and ethnically segregated work crews to compete against each other. Soon after joining the IWW, Ben Fletcher became a popular speaker and leader, winning interest and influence amongst dockworkers because of his oratory style and arguments against racism and capitalism as well as his advocacy of worker solidarity and direct action against the employers.

By 1916, under the leadership of Ben Fletcher, all of the Philadelphia docks and transport ships were unionized by IWW Local 8 with a membership of nearly 5,000 workers. By 1917, IWW Local 8 had nearly tripled their wage rates from 25 cents to 65 cents per hour and won favorable working conditions that no other dockworkers in the country had. This was accomplished by the integration of work crews, membership social gatherings and leadership positions within the IWW. Last but not least, Local 8’s success was also due to its steadfast on the job-site direct action. That is, the willingness of ALL the members to walk off the job and shut down the ports if its demands were not met or if any single member was abused by the bosses. For more in depth information about Ben Fletcher and IWW Local 8, read Peter Cole’s book Wobbly’s on the Waterfront.

11 Killed in Deepwater Horizon Disaster

On March 30th, 2010, President Obama announced a proposal to end a moratorium on offshore drilling, opening the coasts of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and North Alaska. Three weeks later, eleven workers died on the offshore drilling rig Deepwater Horizon after an oil well blowout caused an explosion and the rig sank off the coast of Louisiana.

Since the explosion, crude oil has been pouring into the Gulf of Mexico for weeks in a spill that some scientists say will become the worst in U.S. waters. BP, the company leasing the Deepwater rig, says the amount gushing into the Gulf is 5,000 barrels a day, while scientists around the globe put the figure more at 20,000 to 100,000 barrels a day. Meanwhile the corporations with connections to the rig (owners, renters, operators) are pointing fingers at each other in a circle of non-accountability.

Karl Kleppinger Jr., 38, of Natchez, Mississippi
Adam Weise, 26, of Yorktown, Texas
Aaron Dale Burken, 37, of Neshoba County, Mississippi
Donald Clark, 49, of Newellton, Louisiana
Roy Kemp, 27, of Jonesville, Louisiana
Jaron Anderson, 36, of Bay City, Texas
Stephen Curtis, 39, of Georgetown, Louisiana
Gordon Jones, 28, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Blair Manuel, 56, of Gonzales, Louisiana
Dewey Revette, 48, of Lake Charles, Mississippi
Shane Rodgers, 22, from Franklin County, Mississippi

![Memorial to the 29 miners](image)

By Hazel Dickens

You can tell them in the country, tell them in the town
Miners down in Mingo laid their shovels down
we won’t pull another pillar, load another ton
or lift another finger until the union we have won
Stand up boys, let the bosses know
Turn your buckets over, turn your lanterns low
There’s fire in our hearts and fire in our soul
but there ain’t gonna be no fire in the hole
Daddy died a miner and grandpa he did too,
I’ll bet this coal will kill me before my working days is through
And a hole this dark and dirty an early grave I
stand up boys, let the bosses know
Turn you buckets over, turn your lanterns low
There’s fire in our hearts and fire in our soul
but there ain’t gonna be no fire in the hole
There ain’t gonna be no fire in the hole...
A Tale of a Small Tech Business

By Allison Payne

Allison Payne grew up in the Center of the Universe, but knows better now that she owns cats.

Calling tech support. We’ve all been there. Long hold times with bad music, automated phone trees that go nowhere or are unclear, support staff that are required to follow a script and have a hard time deviating to accommodate different situations, and eventually—this is a trap not to be—will probably cost a lot of money. Two years ago, as a young professional hoping to launch a small business in computer services, I didn’t have a clue as to what I was to be, but I knew what I wanted to avoid: being that number you dread calling, being that person you get agitated talking to, being everything that is frustrating about consumer technology support systems.

As I considered what I wanted to do with the skills and knowledge I had in computer technology, my personal vision of how to be in society was toward community and non-profit efforts. I decided I would offer individualized lessons and completely transparent, patient advice and help, and I would help people figure out what they need and budget. Of course, not everyone can afford a personal computer, and not everyone can afford to pay someone to teach them how to use it or fix it when it breaks. I would address that by instigating a donation and refurbishing program and by offering a set number of pro bono lessons every month. I imagined that as time went on, I’d begin to collaborate with other non-profits in town to meet their computing needs. I’d offer classes and get the community computer recycling program up and running.

And then the economy tanked. My husband finished grad school with no job awaiting him (and no job forthcoming for over a year, so I wasn’t able to leave my steady pay check behind to pursue a large, risky venture. As it happened, having to wait was probably the best thing for me. The information available regarding starting a new business is extensive and intimidating, and the process itself is full of pitfalls. Having to first launch as a side business, more of a hobby than a career, gave me the opportunity to acclimate slowly, to tweak my business model and to network. It meant putting off the non-profit side for another year or two so I could build a solid foundation for my work. It also gave me a very, very clear idea of just how much personalization services are needed.

Just before formally launching, I gave an interview to the News-Gazette’s Debra May. In the interview column, “It’s Your Business,” I had only just nailed down the basics of what I wanted to offer (and change), and my availability was severely limited due to job and family obligations; however, I wasn’t about to turn down the publicity that can be so essential for a new business! The day the article hit, I received phone calls from dawn until dusk; dozens of people called about their computer issues, they’d tried everything, and they couldn’t afford the bigger chains, and could I help? Some called to offer their old computers as donations, and a few called to arrange lessons. It was overwhelming, a family emergency combined with the immense volume and desperation of potential clients. I was blessed completely by the volume and desperation of potential clients. I was blessed completely by the volume and desperation of potential clients. I was blessed completely by the volume and desperation of potential clients. I was blessed completely by the volume and desperation of potential clients. I was blessed completely by the volume and desperation of potential clients.

Since the early 80s the term has been used more and more in the workplace and, as a result, caused the decline of the standard employment relationship and a dramatic increase in precarious work. An important aspect of precarious work is its gendered nature, as women are continuously over-represented in this type of work.

Precarious work is frequently associated with the following types of employment: part-time employment, self-employment, fixed-term work, temporary work, on-call work, home work, telecommuting. All of these forms of employment are related in that they depart from the standard employment relationship (full-time, continuous work with one employer). Each form of precarious work may offer its own challenges but they all share the same disadvantages: low wages, few benefits, lack of collective representation, and little to no job security.

There are four dimensions when determining if employment is precarious in nature:

1. The degree of certainty of continuing employment;
2. Control over the labor process, which is linked to the presence, or absence, of trade unions and professional associations and relates to control over working conditions, wages, and the pace of work;
3. The degree of regulatory protection; and
4. Income level.

F#K PRECARITY!!

I. Precarious—literally means unsure, uncertain, delicate. As a political term it refers to living and working conditions without any guarantees: for example the precarious residence permission of migrants and refugees, or the precarious everyday life as a single mother. Since the early 80s the term has been used more and more in relation to labor. Precarious work refers to all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation—from illegalized, seasonal and temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work to subcontractors, freelancers or so called self employed persons.

II. Precarization at work—means an increasing change of previously guaranteed permanent employment conditions into mainly worse, uncertain jobs. On a historical and global scale precarious work represents not an exception, but the rule. What was a generalized myth was the short period of full (95%) employment during the “welfare” state in the U.S. and Western Europe after WWII. Yet, for those in the Global South, and Southern immigrants in the North, precarious working conditions have always been the norm. Precarization describes moreover the crisis of established institutions, which have represented for that same short period, the framework of (false) certainties. It is an analytical term for a process, which hints to a new quality of societal labor. Labor and social life, production and reproduction cannot be separated anymore, and this leads to a more comprehensive definition of precarization: the uncertainty of all circumstances in the material and immaterial conditions of life of living labor under contemporary capitalism. For example: wage level and working conditions are connected with a distribution of tasks, which is determined by gender and ethnic roles; the residence status determines the access to the labor market or to medical care. The whole ensemble of social relationships seems to be on the move.

III. Precariat—Is an allusion to precarization—meant as used as an offensive self-description in order to emphasize the subjective and upstream meanings of precarization. Through the mass refusal of gender roles, of factory work and of the command of labor over life, precariousness has really a double face: it is possible to speak of a kind of flexibilization from below. Precarization does not represent a simple invention of the command centers of capital. It is also a reaction to the insurGENCY and new mobility behaviors of living labor, and in so far it can be understood as the attempt to rectum manifest struggles and refusals in order to establish new conditions of exploitation and distribution of capital. Precarization thus symbolizes a contested field: in which the attempt to start a new cycle of exploitation also meets desires and subjective behaviors which express the refusal of the old, the so called feudal regime of labor and the search for another—better—we can even say flexible life. However, we think that precariat as a new term of struggle runs in an old trap if it aims at a quick unification and creation of a dominant social actor. Precariat gets even into a face, if the radical left tries to legitimize itself as main force in its representation because of the increasing involvement of leftist activists in precarious labor and life conditions. But the main point is that taking into account the hierarchies which shape the composition of the contemporary living labor (from illegalized migrant workers to temporary computer-finales), the strong diversity of social movement and respective demands and desires, nobody should simplify precarization into a new identity. We are confronted here with the problem of imaging, inuring a process of political subjectivation in which different subject positions can cooperate in the production of a new common ground of struggle without sacrificing the peculiarity of demands which arise from the very composition of living labor.
By Michael Brün

The Aging of America: Is It an Economic Problem?

Some writers suggest this very thing, writing articles about getting lots and lots of expensive health care. Is this really a problem around longer collecting pensions and social security and that? That’s fewer replacements for retired workers. Sec-ond, people are living longer—that means retirees stick around longer collecting pensions and social security and getting lots and lots of expensive health care. Is this really a big deal? The short answer is no. It is not a big deal (except maybe the health care part, but that’s another article).

Look at the birth rate numbers given above, and how they have changed. Were it a major problem, most countries would be in a lot more trouble than the U.S. Indeed, some writers suggest this very thing, writing articles about China getting old before it gets rich, about the graying of Japan, about the heavy burden of retirees on European economies. The funny thing is these articles appear mostly in the U.S., where they see appeal to local prejudice. In those other countries, few seem to think the issue worth even discussing. Why not? The answer is that retirees are not really the only part of the story. While it is true that they are depen-dent on the productive work of non-retirees, and that their proportion of the total population is everywhere increas-ing, it is also true that they are not the only dependents. There is another big group of dependents—children. The point is that the important number is not really the ratio of only retirees to workers, it is the ratio to workers of both retirees and children. This second ratio is known as the dependency ratio. You get the dependency ratio by adding together all those below 15 and all those over 64, and dividing the total by the population in between those ages. Of course this is still a very approximate measure. Not everyone between 15 and 64 really is productively employed, while some below 15 or above 64 may be. The average annual cost of supporting a child is probably not the same as the amount to support a retiree. Also, when comparing the dependency ratios in different countries, you have to remember the cost of supporting children or retirees is not everywhere the same. Conditions and stan-dards of care do differ. Even with all that in mind, it remains obvious that the total dependency ratio is a much more relevant measure of the cost burden on workers than the ratio to workers of only retirees.

If you make a graph based on the information from the World Development Indices comparing the total age dependency ratios with the ratios to workers of just people over 64, it looks like the capital letter L. What you see is that as you move from countries with less than five percent of the population over 64, the dependency ratio goes higher, and then basically levels off. How can this be? The answer is simple. In countries with really high dependency ratios the fertility rate is very high—lots and lots of children, and low life expectancies. In these countries, very few people live to be 65. In coun-tries with low dependency ratios, there appears to be a roughly even trade-off. As the proportion of those over 64 gets higher, the proportion of those below 15 gets correspondingly lower, so that the total dependency ratio is about the same for quite a range of countries. We have determined that the ‘Aging of America’ is not as dramatic as the ‘Aging of the Rest of the World,’ and that the aging trend does not mean an increase in overall dependency. So, there is no economic crisis to worry about—at least not from this source.—no new burden on productive workers. What we do face is a political and financial challenge. The proportion of retirees is increasing, so more funding is needed for the social security system and for pensions, two institutions that have nothing to do with childcare. But the problem is not about an added bur-den on productive workers. Instead, it is about a shift in the burden from children to retirees. The political chal-lenge is to persuade people that the money they would in the past have spent to support an extra child should now instead go to support the old. The financial challenge is to adjust the taxation system so that cash flows shift accord-ingly. There are both challenges, both serious enough, but there is no problem of overall economic viability.

What is Tamms?

By Joseph Dole

Joseph Dole is an inmate in Tamms.

- Tamms Super Maximum Correctional Center, which opened in March 1998, is Illinois’ only ‘Supermax’ prison. It is located at the southern tip of Illinois, originally opened under the guise of being for short-term incarceration.
- There is no bus service to the prison. There’s no way for family or friends to get to Tamms without a car. Visits hardly ever happen, and visitors only see inmates through a Plexiglas wall.
- Tamms inmates are not allowed to make any phone calls unless there is a death in the family, and even then may have to go on a hunger strike to get it. Even at Flo-rence ADX, the federal supermax prison where convicted al-Qaeda terrorists are imprisoned, inmates are allowed to make one phone call each month.
- No one is sent to Tamms for the crime they were incarcerated for. Criteria for placement at Tamms are current and vague. Even for a person in the Illinois Department of Cor-rections is eligible. Decisions to send men to Tamms are secret and not open to review.
- Man at Tamms Supermax is kept in solitary confinement. Men never leave their cell except to shower and exercise in a concrete room. Meals come through a slot in their cell door. Men at Tamms eat alone, pray alone, and walk the yard alone. Tamms keeps strict limits on the personal property men can keep. This includes family photos, letters and Christmas cards.
- Long-term solitary confinement causes mental illness. Suicide attempts, self-mutilation, smearing of feces, and severe psychological illnesses are com-mon at Tamms.
- Just 3 months in solitary confinement has detrimental effects. Yet 100 men have been there for over four years. The other men at Tamms have been there for years and years. On and on and on. What is the situation at Tamms? The Illinois legislature was told that it would be used solely as a sort of shock treatment for periods of one year for the “worst of the worst.”
- Taxpayers pay about $90,000 per year to keep a man at Tamms—over four times the cost of either of the other prisons.
- There is no clear benefit for this expense. Not for the court costs incurred to defend against the numer-ous lawsuits for violations of these inmates’ constitutional rights.

Kiwan Carrington Update

The Peoples’ Community Potluck is a food-sharing communal gathering to discuss the economic and social problems in our community. The intention is to harness the talents of the family , and even then may have to go

PEOPLES’ COMMUNITY POTLUCK

Sunday, June 6, 6–8 PM, Independent Media Center, 202 South Broadway, Urbana

Get Involved with the Public i

You don’t need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The Public i is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC), or to contact one of the editors.
History on the Platform, Memory in the Street
Notes from May 1, 2006 Chicago

By Helena Woreth

Helena Woreth is a labor educator at the University of Illinois School of Labor and Employment Relations. She and her husband Joe Berry will be leaving this summer. We wish them well, and thank them for their contributions to our community.

This is a reflection on the May Day actions of 2006 and a sudden conclusion brought to life the complex relationship between “history” as spoken from the platform and “memory” as lived in the street. In 2007, 2008, 2009 and again this year tens of thousands marched in Chicago, and again a small memorial was held at the Haymarket statute.

In 2010, plans were announced by the Illinois Labor History Society for a major campaign to restore the Haymarket burial monument in Forest Home Cemetery in River Forest. More information will be available at illinoislaborhistory.org.

HERE IS THE STORY...

On Mayday, 2006 I left the huge Immigrants Rights rally in Grant Park in Chicago and headed towards Haymarket Square to get there by 4:30 for the Labor History Society celebration at the Haymarket monument. As I came up Randolph Street toward DesPlaines, I noticed that the monument, a statue representing a hay wagon with figures, was surrounded by portable barriers.

Normally, there are no barriers around the statue. In fact, bronze soapboxes are set into the sidewalk beside it and it is common for people to stand on the soapboxes and climb up on the wagon. The statue replicates what was there 120 years ago. It stands on the spot where the hay wagon stood from which the speakers at the Haymarket mass meeting addressed the crowd.

But that day, barriers enclosed both the statue and the soapboxes. Something was the matter.

As that point, it was still early and only a handful of celebrants were in the square. Five or ten uniformed police were standing around. There was a big speaker’s platform set up about forty feet north of the statue. People were setting up microphones and video cameras.

Then a group of anarchist kids came into the square, dancing and jumping and beating paint can drums. They wore the usual green hair, black jeans, some masks, some theatrically ripped and debrided shirts and skits. They made a circle below the speaker’s platform and danced and beat their drums. They looked like the cast from Les Miz.

Now more police appeared. Some were on bicycles and wore yellow bike jackets and bike helmets.

Suddenly the anarchist kids ran toward the statue, jumped over the barriers and climbed up and placed their black flag on top of the statue. In their gray and black clothes, they looked like part of the statue. They looked great against the dark gray sky.

Just as suddenly, the police rushed them. I was standing about twenty feet away. The ferocity with which the police threw themselves towards the kids on the statue, tore them down and tore their flag down, was breathtaking. They pulled the kids to the ground. Some kids got up again and struggled, but they were overpowered.

My first thought was that this was some kind of theater, a choreographed historical re-enactment of the police riot that had ensued after the bomb was thrown among the demonstrators in Haymarket Square 120 years ago. One policeman was killed by that bomb, but eight were killed by gunfire from the police, who went crazy and started shooting into the crowd.

The teasing continued with the kids getting up off the ground and pushing back at the police, and the police grabbing them and knocking them down. There were a lot of photographers who were deping and snapping all around. I was standing near a lamp post beyond the statue when the police rushed some kids who were fleeing in my direction. I was not right in their path, but I was close enough, and one policeman knocked me down with his bicycle. It was not an accident. They were using their bicycles as prods and shields, and he lifted his bike up and aimed it so that the front wheel struck me in the chest. At this point, I realized it was not theater.

I was shaken.

The four people who were tried and hung after the Haymarket massacre of 1886 were not the police, but some anarchist immigrants, most of whom had not even been at the demonstration, which had been called to protest the killing of two strikers over at the McCormick factory. Their trial consumed the public press and received international attention. It is a tale of a judicial process distorted by ideology, money and fear.

The first statue that was erected in Haymarket was not a statue of the martyrs but of a policeman, shown standing in uniform with his hand raised to signify that he was ready to protect family, community and country. This statue was bombed several times and finally placed in an inner garden inside the police academy, where it still stands.

Then for many years there was nothing to mark the site of the Haymarket Massacre. He was taken to it, and of course, there was nothing there. Nothing there! He was amazed and angry. “Even in the worst of times,” he said, “we in India did not forget. We never lost the left, we never forgot, even in the worst of times.”

The statue that stands there today, the haywagon, is very new and was the product of years of difficult negotiation with Mayor Daley, the City Council, and the Chicago Police. It started to drizzle. Now various labor leaders climbed up onto the platform. The musicians started playing, loudly. At the same time, more police flowed into the square, some on bikes. By the time the speeches started there were at least four dozen police standing in ranks beside the statue. They had taken their bicycle jackets off. The speakers got into gear. Not one mentioned the rush to tear the anarchist kids off the statue. Not one commented on the presence of the silent ranks of police in their blue uniforms as if at a funeral. It was as if the speakers were reading prepared scripts that couldn’t incorporate the confrontation between police and anarchists that had happened right in front of them. I decided to leave. I was sore where I’d been whammed, and still shaky. Also, I had to drive down to Champaign that night and it was just about time to hit the road and join the end of rush hour.

On the way down to Champaign, I listened to NPR. Lots of the news was about the immigrants’ rights marches but the commentators seemed to be disparaging their significance: they weren’t as big as they looked, the marches weren’t as many as expected. One official said, “These people who are marching today want to be part of the American mainstream. It’s too bad the left-wing groups, the labor unions, have tried to hitch a ride on this movement. These people don’t want to be associated with left-wing groups.” She explained that May Day is “The socialist leftist-holiday in some other countries.” Yet two things had just happened that were indisputable, no matter how comfortable it might be to deny or ignore them: the streets had filled with thousands and thousands of marchers, reclaiming May Day for immigrants and workers, and the police had once again, as if reliving an old memory, tried to beat up anarchists.

In Champaign the next day, I attended a symposium at the Center for Democracy in a Multi-Racial Society. One speaker compared the domains of history and memory. “History is the arena of data, of libraries and archives, of writing and paper,” he said. “Memory is the arena of the street.”