

"Do strikes still work? One year later, a look at Harley" by Brent Burkey, *York Sunday News*, January 27, 2008, p. 1, 7

[Beginning of York article excerpt]:

*Truly 'international'*

Most or all of American labor is in the same boat with ESAB workers, said Jim Dator, a professor at the University of Hawaii and a leading futurist - the term for someone who is paid to academically guess what comes next.

Strikes are unlikely to work because companies can too easily move to another part of the world where organized labor doesn't exist.

"You just make it easier for them to get rid of you," he said.

He sees a strong future for organized labor, though. But the strike component will likely wither away.

Instead, unions will be economic organizations that have individual employees' backs with things like health care, retraining and generally being a safety net for workers.

Much of that idea is already coming about in this year's presidential election. Some candidates are touting a reform of tax laws so that employers are not the sole provider of health care to Americans.

Instead, civic groups, churches - and especially unions - could take over that function. And membership in these institutions is often more stable than a job is in today's economy, Dator said.

Strikes could, however, stay viable if labor became global in the same way business has spread.

Americans too often complain about the rest of the world instead of working with it; in this case, American unions could help counterparts overseas get off the ground, and help raise wages in their countries.

Then, Dator said, strikes would stay effective.

[End of York article excerpt]

I got the information about the possible emergence of true global union solidarity from the following article. It is VERY long. I have excerpted below the portion that I thought was particularly important:

The Future of Global Unions: Is Solidarity Still Forever?

By Alan Howard

<http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=942>

Dissent Fall 2007

[Excerpt begins here]:

AS AMERICAN UNIONS become more involved in China, as they inevitably must, they are faced with questions similar to those that arose in Venezuela--on a much larger scale--about their relationship to official government unions and to dissidents, about the relationship between development and democracy, about the meaning of solidarity in the post-cold war world.

It used to be that when a factory closed in the United States and moved to China, it was the end of the discussion--except possibly for some racially tinged grumbling about foreigners stealing American jobs. But this past April a meeting took place in New York City that suggests something fundamental has begun to change in this picture. Union officials and activists had come to the meeting to hear an adviser to China's official All China Federation of Trade Unions ask for their support on labor law reform. No, not the "card check" bill in Washington that unions were lobbying furiously for, but legislation proposed by the Chinese government that would make some modest improvements in protecting Chinese workers against arbitrary and detrimental policies of employers.

The reason that Liu Chen, director of the Social Law Institute at Shanghai Normal University, was in the United States is that the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai was waging a high-powered campaign to kill or neutralize the proposed reform measure. Liu thought that American unions (he had also notified European unions about European Union multinationals doing the same as their American counterparts) should know about

this and would want to weigh in when they did. He had just come from a meeting in Washington with AFL-CIO and other union leaders and was gratified to report that he had indeed gotten their support--so that American unions were now fighting transnational capital on labor law reform simultaneously in Washington and Beijing. Labor ended up batting .500 on this one. Within a week of each other, the U.S. Senate shot down card check and the National People's Congress approved China's new Labor Contract Law.

In describing and analyzing the dire condition of the Chinese working class, which now provides one out of every five industrial workers to the world economy, Liu spoke of the need for "moral solidarity in our global village" and urged his audience to remember the words of Martin Luther King. "The arc of history is long," he said, "but bends toward justice."

[End of excerpt].

Beth-Ann, I think this is an important development worth noting--and you can quote me on it!