

# WSA Convention Report

**W**orkers Solidarity Alliance held its 1991 National Convention in Fort Wayne Indiana on May 25th and 26th. This year nine people attended from seven states. Those attending this years convention managed to cram 18 hours of work into two days and the results were impressive. New leaflets, new activities and new contacts with other groups are planned for the upcoming year. It is impossible to give a thorough report of the convention in such a short space, so this article will only touch on the high points.

This year, like last year, we spent time talking about our focus on special issues, and many new projects originated in this discussion. One of the new areas discussed this year was anti-militarism. Plans for two new flyers came out of this dialogue. One of these will be directed at working class youth (and others) who plan to join the military. This flyer will be a "what the military doesn't tell you about military service" flyer written by two of our members who have been in the military. There will also be a more general anti-military flyer.

Work is going ahead on a leaflet about anarcho-syndicalism and feminism, a "What is WSA?" flyer and a shortened version of "Where We Stand" which can be published in *ideas & action*. Several changes to *Where We Stand* (the WSA statement of principals) that have been in the works for a year are now almost ready to be voted on. These include a new ecology statement and an improved statement on sexism.

In addition to all of the new written material, there are also some new projects. WSA is going to try to have coordinated May Day activities in 1992. Since the groups and members of WSA are present in different numbers and circumstances in different areas, we are expecting a lot of different activities. There is a committee which will coordinate activities and perhaps come up with a common theme or poster to link the actions. WSA also decided to encourage a joint WSA/IWW presence at the Soli-

darity Day 1991 march in Washington D.C. on August 31st.

This year the convention discussed making a concerted effort at fund raising. The local groups are being encouraged to hold fundraisers. Part of the money raised will be used for

travel expenses to send a three person delegation to the IWA Congress in Cologne Germany.

Several decisions were made in preparation for the 1992 International Workers Association (IWA) Congress. Two people were chosen to draft the WSA re-



PO BOX 2265  
KNOXVILLE, TN  
37901

*This is a flyer found posted around the city of Knoxville, Tennessee. It was part of a hate campaign organized by the National Democratic Front, a nazi organization which singled out WSA East Tennessee as a major threat to their scheme to build a Whiteman's America. The campaign included threats and intimidation (even a death threat note written in pencil) and a rather comical attempt at infiltration. The NDF has left Knoxville, to be replaced by the White Patriot's Party.*



---

# Around WSA

## Gay Pride in Knoxville

On Saturday June 30th, Knoxville Pride Inc organized the first gay and lesbian pride parade in Knoxville in 10 years. Most of the members of WSA East Tennessee attended. We were part of a crowd of almost 300, which is a remarkable turn out given that this is a small southern city.

The theme of the march was "Unity in Diversity" and it certainly was a diverse crowd. Unfortunately the

press chose not to tell anyone that. If you watched the local news you would think that every gay man in Knoxville dresses in drag and every lesbian has very short hair. There were gays, straights, lesbians and bisexuals from all walks of life and in all manner of dress, but the press chose to focus only on those who fit their stereotype of what gay people look like. That wasn't surprising, but it was still offensive. Particularly since one of the stations interviewed

the straightest, nicest and prettiest of the nazi protesters present, rather than one of the nazi nut cases in radiation suits.

Did I say nazi? Excuse me, neo-nazi. Yes, a tiny counter protest was led by the White Patriot's Party, a local hate group. Their leader Ken Gregg brought his bible and a poster of a man (labeled 100% redneck by Ken) with a bloody sword and the caption: "Homosexuals sit on this." The rest of the group was about as crazy. They called us every name in the book, told us they hoped we'd all die, and spread all sorts of misinformation like "The AIDS virus can live outside the body for ten days and you can catch it from sweat and toilet seats." Apparently Ken really believes this. The 200 pound gorilla actually called the cops to protect him from a woman who licked her hand and threatened to touch him with it. She was only kidding but he was frightened.

Press and protesters aside, it was a very successful march. It was well attended, the speakers were good and there was a definite spirit of unity among the crowd.

One final note- Knoxville mayor Victor Ashe refused to sign a proclamation declaring Gay Pride Day in Knoxville. Members of the gay community met with him July 2nd and he stood by that position. They interviewed one of the march organizers on tv that night and he called Victor homophobic. The reporter looked like he was going to choke to death. Apparently he wasn't expecting anyone to tell the truth on television.

— Clare,  
WSA East Tennessee

## Boycott Levis!

The Bay Area WSA Group has organized three demonstrations to draw attention to the ongoing national Levi's Boycott. With comrades in the local IWW branch, we have put pickets in front of the Gap clothing store on Haight Street and the Imporium Capwell departemnt store on

## Convention Report...

port to this congress. The report will be translated and sent to the IWA later this year. At the Congress WSA will be proposing that the IWA adopt a position of unequivocal support for reproductive rights. Other proposals that WSA will submit to the Congress are that the IWA secretariat initiate a quarterly newsletter to improve communications within the IWA; that the SAL be accepted as the Finnish affiliate of the IWA; and that the IWA pass a resolution against racism and cultural discrimination. The 1991 Convention also mandated its delegation to the 1992 Congress to vote on any resolution which all members of the delegation are unanimously in favor of or against. By doing this WSA will be able to vote on proposals besides our own.

One of the more controversial issues at this convention was how to respond to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)'s recent interest in affiliating with the IWA. The convention decided that the National Secretary will write a letter to the IWW asking that the IWW respond to a letter sent to them in 1990 by the IWA. This letter asked for clarification of a couple of points, such as what US IWW affiliation would mean for non-US IWW sections. WSA will also be seeking clarification about the role of the IWW International Relations Committee in order to find out if the committee has a mandate to begin negotiations with the WSA, or if this mandate has been given to some other body within the IWW. This initial contact, depending on how it is responded to, maybe the starting point for negotiations between WSA, IWW and IWA.

On the subject of relations with other groups, WSA also passed a proposal that we go on record as supporting the creation of a Free Women's group, autonomous of the WSA and affiliated with the international Free Women's Network. The Working Group on Sexism and Feminism will serve as our contact with this organization. Women from the WSA and throughout the anarchist movement are encouraged to participate in this process.

In many ways, the focus this year was as much on how to get things done as on it was on what to do. People proposing projects also proposed time lines for the completion of these projects. One member will be compiling a list of what people volunteered to do and the deadlines they set for themselves. It is hoped that this will help keep us focused and moving forward. The National Committee plans to write to each other more in the WSA Discussion Bulletin and to do more follow-up work to help facilitate completion of proposed projects.

As someone who attended the convention, I would call it very productive. A lot of action was taken to make WSA more efficient and more vital. The controversial issues were discussed and dealt with in a comradely fashion. Altogether there seems to be a serious commitment within the WSA to finding new ways of expanding our activities and influence. If the convention was any indication, 1991-92 looks to be a very good year for Workers Solidarity Alliance

— Ginger Hutton  
WSA National Secretary



market street. This has allowed us to pass out several hundred flyers and get the message out to a lot of people. Levis shut down their plant in San Antonio, Texas and put about 1200 mostly women, mostly Latin American workers on the streets. Our message is: this is no way to treat people. Many of the workers at the factory had been there over twenty years.

The plant was a major pillar of the community, and the capitalists of Levis pulled out that pillar for higher profits. We've managed to get this point out pretty well around here (including a radio interview on local station KPFA).

— Mike,  
Bay Area WSA

## Workers Solidarity Alliance

### National Office:

c/o PO Box 11838  
Knoxville, TN 37939-1838

### International Secretary:

c/o WSA, PO Box 1197  
San Antonio, TX 78294

### Eastern European Solidarity Working Group

c/o WSA New York Group,  
339 Lafayette St. #202  
New York, NY 10012

### Latin American Solidarity Working Group

c/o WSA, PO Box 1197  
San Antonio, TX 78294

### Working Group on Sexism & Feminism

c/o WSA  
347 W. Suttentfield St.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46807-1339

### Local Contacts:

#### ALABAMA:

Barry Carpenter  
PO Box 1153  
Russellville 35653

#### CALIFORNIA:

WSA Bay Area Group  
PO Box 40400  
San Francisco 94140

#### Silicon Valley:

Tom Wetzel  
PO Box 2027  
Santa Clara, CA 95055

#### FLORIDA:

WSA South Florida Group  
PO Box 191901  
Miami Beach 33119

#### INDIANA:

WSA  
c/o 347 W. Suttentfield St.  
Fort Wayne 46807-1339

#### IOWA:

Jake Edwards  
Linn Grove 51033

#### MARYLAND:

Raven Bay  
PO Box 33528  
Baltimore 21218

#### MASSACHUSETTS:

WSA  
PO Box 1753  
Cambridge 02238

#### NEW YORK:

WSA New York Area Group  
339 Lafayette St. Room 202  
New York 10012  
(212) 979-8353

#### TENNESSEE:

WSA East Tennessee Group  
c/o P.O. Box 11838  
Knoxville 37939-1838

#### TEXAS:

WSA  
c/o PO Box 1197  
San Antonio 78294

#### WASHINGTON:

Arthur J. Miller  
302 N. J St. #3  
Tacoma 98403

#### WEST VIRGINIA:

WSA  
PO Box 2764  
Charleston 25330

## Hoosier Hysteria Update

Last year three unions squared off to fight for their share of the Indiana state employees dues pie. Two unions survived. The United Auto Workers swallowed the Indiana State Employees Association to form The Unity Team, a doubly affiliated bargaining agent with the UAW firmly at the helm.

The Unity Team took on AFSCME, the nations biggest public employee union. Whether deserved or not, AFSCME has a reputation for coming on fast with expensive and dirty organizing campaigns. The auto union giant wished not to be outdone in its foray into public employee representation. The UAW outspent and out-slipped AFSCME by a Hoosier country mile. The result: UAW 15,000 dues units to AFSCME's 9,000.

Union insiders now estimate that the cost of the campaign including expenditures by both unions well exceeds \$42,000,000. Excluding the sacrifices made by those who died at the hands of company goons in other campaigns, the dollar price tag makes this the most expensive union campaign in history. The money went to television advertising, mass mailings of thousands of VHS tapes, scores of lost time workers, pens, buttons, hats, t-shirts, mugs, keychains, carrying bags, suntan lotion, pizza, donuts, fried chicken, miniature basketball hoops, mallet-shaped sponges (no sickle), and scores of other bric-brac meant to convince hoosier state employees that the one or the other union was for them.

The interesting thing about this enormous campaign was that it pitted two unions against each other while the workers' employer favored unionization. Governor Evan Bayh was elected with union support. In making good on campaign promises he backed a collective bargaining bill which died when the republicans added too many strengthening meas-



ures. Bayh (a democrat) then issued an executive order which allowed for representation elections and denied state employees the right to strike. This sent the unions into a feeding frenzy which has chilled somewhat now that several months have passed and no contract has been obtained and no collective bargaining bill has been passed. In the heat of battle both unions pledged not to require dues until a contract had been negotiated. The state legislature did allocate money for a 2% raise for state employees. The money was then purported to have been absorbed into other portions of the state budget. Smart money has it (including this writer) that the 2% is being turned into a silk purse so that the unions can provide their dues units with a contract that includes a raise.

Meanwhile what are the unions telling their members about how they

spent their dues money? If you're part of an FSE affiliate (Federation of State Employees-American Federation of Teachers), you may have seen an article in the Public Sector Reporter. The February/March issue contained the headline: "Unity Team Takes Lion's Share In Indiana." The Reporter went on to say:

"Unity Team campaign co-coordinator and AFT national representative Richard Sanders credited the coalition's positive grassroots campaign for their eventual victory in the clerical unit. 'The election shows that employees were tired of the negative campaigning of the other side. We got out there and developed a campaign around the issues'."

This writer doubts that the article here quoted would lend any credibility to its author if shown to the hoosiers who received Unity Team mail-

ings which highlighted instances of AFSCME decertifications in other states and accusing AFSCME of printing a bogus magazine to promote itself. Not that AFSCME didn't sling mud too. Both unions shat on themselves, the union movement, and the very concept of solidarity.

A number of people in the union movement are examining the debacle and wondering what can be done to prevent a repetition of the hoosier hysterics. The number of people wondering about this is quite small since the affair has not been reported to the membership or covered in a meaningful way by the mainstream press. In unions which are run by bureaucratic cliques and don't have meaningful discussion of issues by the membership, in American unions in other words, this kind of garbage is bound to occur again.

— Nick Keirn

## Requiem for Nick Keirn

To all of us, Nick Keirn was not just a political associate, someone we saw at conferences and rallies, corresponded with, spoke to on the phone every so often. Nick was a friend and a comrade in every sense of the word, and as such he touched us all with his very being and became a part of our lives. It would have been almost impossible not to have opened up to him so, since he approached life and everything he did in it with warmth and openness, yet at the same time with a firm determination and strength that is quite rare.

For Nick, it seemed life was an open book. He shared his thoughts, his feelings, his concerns freely with all of us, and you never tired of hearing from him because his upbeat attitude and his refusal to give in to life's countless frustrations was so refreshing. He took on challenges, sometimes alone, without hesitation, and showed a personal courage and integrity that you couldn't help but admire.

The amazing thing about all this is that we've only known Nick for less than 4 years, and even then, being separated by hundreds of miles, we saw or spoke to him not nearly as frequently as we would have liked. But he quickly became part of our extended family, and our infrequent contacts were that much more valued for it. It was not surprising, given who Nick was and how endearing he could be.

We all knew how deeply Nick loved his family and the pride he had in them, in Angie, Polly and his yet-to-be-born son. Those of us who were able to visit him in Fort Wayne got to see the warmth and caring he had for his friends and neighbors at home. We all knew of his commitment and concern for his work in social services, despite the annoyances and frustration that all the flaws in the system can create.

The death of any person is tragic, no matter what the circumstances. The sudden death of someone who is in the prime of life is even more tragic. To lose someone like Nick, who only a few days ago was so vibrant and alive, is not only tragic but shocking, and only reminds us all that death is our most intractable enemy.

These are so many stories we could share about Nick. We could tell of his

wry sense of humor, his quick wit, his warmth and hospitality, his inner strength. There will be times yet to come when we will all sit down and share these memories, and share the laughter and tears that go with them. For now, however, it is simply time to say goodbye, and this is what we will do.

It was not just ourselves that lost a friend and comrade when Nick Keirn died. It was not just his loved ones who lost a man devoted to his family and friends. It was also the cause of working people everywhere which lost a true champion, a person who gave freely of himself to struggle for a freer, more just world, where no person would lack for the dignity and self-respect Nick had, where we could all practice, in all parts of our lives, the kind of friendship and sharing and mutual respect that Nick took with him everywhere went in his all took brief time among us. Farewell, our brother, you will be truly missed.

Clare Cunningham, Ginger Hutton, and Brian Miller (Knoxville, TN)

Mike Kolhoff and Tom Wetzel (San Francisco, CA)  
Mitchell Miller and Steve Rabinowitz (New York, NY)

Vincent Williams (San Antonio, TX)  
on behalf of the members, friends and families  
of the Workers Solidarity Alliance