

Restructuring of Working Conditions in the Road Freight Industry – Implications for Organizing

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Deregulation in Neo-Liberal Global Agenda

- As product markets, labor markets, and capital investment goes global, businesses push for deregulation
- In global logistics chain, seafaring, trucking, longshoring, and warehousing all face deregulation pressures
- Labor standards fall, unionization decreases, social insurance coverage decreases
- Research on U.S., China, Korea and India reveals similar pattern. EU – especially northern Europe, is partial exception.

Deregulation In US Road Freight

- Deregulation of freight transport passed in 1980
- Unionized firms go out of business
- New firms emerge, non-union, using “independent contractors” to haul freight.
- IC’s are “businessmen,” without collective rights or protections as employees
- No pensions/health insurance

Deregulation is Global

- China's freight transport deregulated beginning in 1978
- Korea 1992
- India – trucking was already contracted; other logistics work casualized as new ports built.
- EU – freight transport deregulated in 1990's, but national systems of regulation continue to varying extent.

Independent Contractors and Unions

- As businessmen, independent contractors can not unionize, bargain collectively, act in concert
- Korean exception – 2004-5, successful organizing campaign among ic's – no union recognition, no collective bargaining, but union gets seat at table of industry-wide consultations. Improve standards.
- Earnings fall, hours of work lengthen, old trucks, diesel exposure, health and safety problems, insecurity --

Trucking

- Teamsters, Change to Win
- Change Employment Status
- Build Labor-Environmental Alliance starting in S. California, where there is
- Strong environmental legislation
- Strong environmental movement
- Strong labor movement
- Friendly government officials

Preparation for Organizing

- Clean Air Act, California Air Resources Board
- Natural Resource Defense Council lawsuit victory 2003 halts port expansion
- Research on health impact of diesel emissions
- Creation of alliance – Coalition for Safe and Healthy Ports – environmentalists, environmental justice, community organizations, public health advocates, labor unions

Introduction of Clean Air/Clean Truck Program

- Developed by Port Governing Bodies, with input from Coalition for Safe and Healthy Ports
- Require trucking firms at ports to meet environmental standards (concessions)
- Phase out old trucks, set deadline for all-new trucks
- Require employment of truck drivers

Resistance to Clean Trucks Program

- Unified shipping lines, terminal operators, shippers, trucking companies, logistics firms
- Narrative: regulation will raise prices, reduce economic growth, harm ports' competitive situation
- Long Beach Port authority drops employment requirement
- American Trucking Association lawsuit says port authorities lack jurisdiction

New Jersey Campaign

- NJ environmental laws/standards weaker
- Environmental movement weaker
- Port Authority – denies environmental problem
- Challenge to create public perception of diesel problem

Education and Social Mobilization

- Create Coalition for Healthy Ports – New Jersey Environmental Federation, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, Ironbound Community Corporation, United Nations Association – USA New Jersey Division, New Jersey Work Environment Council, Greenfaith
- Research project at Rutgers – NSF grant, interdisciplinary faculty, labor students,
- Survey of independent contractors for Change to Win/Teamsters done by Rutgers faculty and students
- Globe in the Port – tours of port with seminars featuring research on global economy, labor markets, environmental and public health impacts of diesel emissions

Embedding Education in Community

- Globe in the Port Seminars evoke response from community leaders, local government officials, clergymen, labor unions
- Invitation to Create Worker Center, funded by churches and foundation grant
- Write grant to NJ Department of Labor, in partnership with New Labor
- Worker Center goals and methods reflect participation of community group

Community Partnership for Learner Centers

- English as a Second Language
- Computer Literacy
- Survival Math
- Workers' Rights
- Health and Environmental Education
- Job Training
- Outreach to employers
- Career Development

Role of Education in Building Labor/Environmentla Partnership

- Research done by and shared with community
- Education for workers, families, community, community leaders, public officials
- Develop education programs responsive to community demands

Results

- Environmental Community adopts Truck Drivers' problems as central to Environmental Challenge
- Port Authority proposes Clean Air Plan
- Labor and Environmental Organizations develop partnership
- Court challenge remains; the reform will probably have to move onto national stage.