

Fast-Food Strikes, Union Lockouts, Job Search and Labor Policy Debates: Snapshots of Local Labor Activities in 2012-13

The Great Recession may have officially ended in mid-2009, but its painful pay and unemployment impacts are still strongly felt by working people in both the public and private sectors. The past year has seen energy giant Consolidated Edison and New York's billionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg demand concessions from unionized workers and stonewall their efforts at reaching bargaining agreements. At the same time, growing resistance to low pay and job instability has been underway among even the lowest-paid employees of huge fast-food chains. Public debates over these and related job developments and policy proposals to address them have drawn large campus audiences in recent months.



1. Consolidated Edison, NYC's main gas and electric utility company, demanded major pension and health insurance concessions from its employees last summer, then locked out 8,000 members of its largest union for nearly a month. A new four-year contract was reached on July 26, 2012, only after personal intervention by the governor as a heat wave approached. Local 1-2 of the Utility Workers of America managed to fend off most concessions demanded of the current workforce, but at the expense of weakening pension and health care guarantees for new hires.

2. New York City school bus drivers picketed in freezing weather for over a month in early 2013 to protest Mayor Bloomberg's decision to end their job protections in new contracts that the city signs with private bus companies. In their first walkout since 1979, the 8,800 drivers continued their strike until February 15th, even as their income was cut to \$150 – 300 in weekly union benefits and their health insurance was suspended. They returned to work when the mayor turned down any negotiations, in the hope that the next mayor taking office in 2014 will agree to good-faith bargaining. Above, members of Local 1181 of the Amalgamated Transit Union picketed outside the Board of Education in lower Manhattan on February 4th.



3. One of the most unexpected labor movements of the past year has been the activism of fast-food employees across the country, mounting one-day job actions to draw attention to their low pay and erratic work schedules. Among their demands have been pay rises to double the minimum wage and union representation. Workers in downtown Brooklyn rallied above on July 29, 2013.



4. The devastating impact of the Great Recession on the construction workforce was evident in early August 2013 when hundreds of jobseekers lined up overnight for days in lower Manhattan outside the Hudson Street training center of the NYC District Council of Carpenters. Even though no direct hiring was on offer, they were applying for a limited number of new building trades apprenticeships.



5. The offshoring of U.S. manufacturing jobs to low-wage nations with few labor protections was the focus of a talk by Charles Kernaghan at Hofstra University on April 4, 2013. Kernaghan, the internationally known director of the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, argued that the recent garment factory fire in Bangladesh that killed 1,100 workers was the deadliest evidence yet of the human toll of the “race to the bottom” strategy of profit-hungry U.S. clothing companies that have shipped thousands of jobs abroad. He advocated new Congressional legislation to curb such practices. The event was presented by Hofstra’s Labor Studies Program. The Institute’s Assistant Director, Barbara Briggs (right), co-leads their many tours of foreign worksites.



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6. One week after the re-election of President Obama last fall, Hofstra’s Labor Studies Program presented a day-long conference: “The White House and Working America 2012: What the Election Means for Our Jobs.” Among the many distinguished participants discussing the election’s implications for our economic future were Lawrence Mishel, President of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington (top photo, left) and Roger Clayman, Executive Director of the Long Island Federation of Labor (top photo, right). Luis Valenzuela, President of the Long Island Immigrant Alliance (photo at right) discussed the current proposals in Congress for comprehensive reform of U.S. immigration Policy.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Regional Labor Review*, a refereed multidisciplinary journal now in its 15th year of publication, invites submissions of original articles on a range of subjects that we hope to explore in upcoming issues.

These include the following:

- ▶ Youth employment, wages and career trends
- ▶ Occupational safety and health insurance issues
- ▶ Developments in worker rights to privacy and collective bargaining
- ▶ The working poor and government safety net policies
- ▶ Immigrant workers: their impacts on local industries and on unionization
- ▶ Racial, ethnic, and gender inequalities in earnings and occupational status
- ▶ Union organizing successes and failures: recent case studies of a specific industry or a large employer
- ▶ Labor Law: new laws and/or influential cases with broad implications
- ▶ Labor History of New York City & its metropolitan region in the 19th and/or 20th centuries

We welcome articles on these issues in a national and international context, so long as their relevance to New York workers is made clear. Articles should be 1,000-7,000 words in length and written in a clear style, without academic jargon, and accessible to a broad audience. All text, tables, charts, and references should be consistent with earlier issues of RLR (see our Style Sheet, available online at: www.hofstra.edu/cld). Three print copies should be submitted along with a PC diskette copy (formatted in Word for Windows). Manuscripts can only be returned if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed. Copyright can revert to author upon publication.

Please send papers or article proposals to:

Regional Labor Review
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104 Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11549

Or email to: laborstudies@hofstra.edu.

For a sample of recent articles, email us for a free sample of our latest issue and visit our archive of past articles on the website: www.hofstra.edu/cld.

Local & National Events: Fall 2013

NY METRO

Oct. 1 – “Minimum Wages and Youth Jobs,” a forum commemorating the 75th anniversary of the U.S. minimum wage law, hosted by Hofstra’s Labor Studies Program, the Economics Department, and the Economics Club. Irv Miljoner (Director of the U.S. Labor Dept.’s Wages and Hours Office on Long Island) and James Parrott (Chief Economist & Co-Director of the Fiscal Policy Institute in Manhattan) will discuss the importance of government pay regulations for youth employment today. Recent controversial proposals on raising the minimum wage, expanding overtime coverage and improving internship jobs and pay. At 2:15-4 p.m. in the Plaza Rooms, Sandra and David S. Mack Student Center, North Campus. Free admission; no reservations. For more info. visit www.hofstra.edu/laborstudies.

Oct. 23 – Day of Dialogue IX: At Hofstra University, 9 am – 10 pm. For detailed schedule of panels and speakers, visit: www.hofstra.edu/cce, or contact: Co-directors Professor Greg Maney (Gregory.A.Maney@Hofstra.edu, ext. 3-6182) or Mario A. Murillo (Mario.A.Murillo@hofstra.edu, ext. 3-6062).

Dec. 3 – Labor & Employment Relations Association of Long Island Meeting. Starts 6 pm at Nassau Co. Bar Association, 15th and West Streets, Mineola, NY. For info. call: 516/746-9307, or visit: www.lilera.org.

Dec. 10 – Human Rights Day. Series of candle-light vigils and other events focused on child labor and sweatshop abuses. Start of nation-wide Annual Holiday Season of Conscience. For info. visit website: www.nlcnet.org.

February 13, 20 & 27, 2014 – African-American History Month features Hofstra University’s annual Labor Studies film series “Africans At Work: Life and Labor in Africa and America.” Each film has an introduction and discussion led by academic experts. For film schedule with individual film titles, screening times and campus location, see: www.hofstra.edu/laborstudies. Free admission. No reservations. First come, first seated.

March 6 – Labor & Employment Relations Association of Long Island Meeting. Starts 6 pm. For location and other info. call: 516/746-9307, or visit: www.lilera.org.

April 8 – Equal Pay Day. Hofstra’s Labor Studies Program commemorates this nationwide event by hosting a daylong series of forums on the continuing pay and promotion gaps between full-time working men and women and on proposals for broad-based improvements. Co-sponsored by Hofstra Women’s Studies Program. For a schedule of the day’s events, visit www.hofstra.edu/cld. Free admission; no reservations.

May 1 – “Mayday At The Movies: Comedy & Tragedy At Work,” the 13th annual labor film festival at Hofstra, showcases new and classic movies on work and working people’s lives. At 10 am – 4 pm in the Guthart Cultural Center Theater, Student Center, Hofstra U. For a schedule of film showings, visit www.hofstra.edu/cld. Free admission; no reservations.

June 5-7 – “How Class Works – 2014,” conference at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Send paper proposals to: the Center for Study of Working Class Life, at www.stonybrook.edu/workingclass.

NATIONAL

Jan. 3-5, 2014 – Annual National Meetings of Labor & Employment Relations Association (formerly IRRA) at ASSA Meetings, Philadelphia, PA. Theme: “Growing Good Jobs & Connecting Workers to Them.” For info. call: 608/262-2762, or visit www.leraweb.org

March 26-29, 2014 – “Organizing for Power: A New Labor Movement for the New Working Class,” Annual National Meetings of United Association for Labor Education (UALE) in Los Angeles, CA. For info. visit www.uale.org

May 29-June 1, 2014 – Annual National Meetings of Labor & Employment Relations Association (formerly IRRA) in Portland, OR. Theme: “Renewing Employment Relations for Shared Prosperity: Research, Practice and Policy - See more For info. visit: <http://leraweb.org/#sthash.mtSi5M1E.dpuf>

RELEASE DATES FOR MONTHLY LABOR MARKET INDICATORS

2013 RELEASE DATE	NATIONAL			REGIONAL	
	U.S. Employment & Unemployment	Job Openings & Turnover	Real Earnings	NYC/LI Metro Jobs Count	NYC/LI Metro Unemployment
SEPT	6	10	17	19	24
OCT	22	24	30	17	22
NOV	8			14	19
DEC	6	10	17	19	24

Sources: National Statistics – U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): *The Employment Situation; Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLT); Real Earnings*; and *Metro Area Employment & Unemployment*. <http://www.bls.gov>
 NY State and Local Statistics – NY State Dept. of Labor: Monthly Press Release. <http://www.labor.state.ny.us>.

NOTE TO READERS:

If you know of upcoming labor-related meetings or conferences, collective bargaining contract expirations or renewals, or other events you would like considered for our next Calendar, please send us a brief description, together with the time, place, contact person, and their telephone number. Either fax this information, with a cover sheet addressed to *Regional Labor Review*, to fax # **516-463-6519**; or email us at: laborstudies@hofstra.edu.