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.
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
200 Barnard Hall
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/laborstudies. Free admission. no reservations. For more info 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/laborstudies.

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 p.m in the Guthart Cultural Center Theater, Student Center, Hofstra U. For a schedule of film showings, visit www.hofstra.edu/laborstudies. Free admission; no reservations.


NATIONAL


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

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<tr>
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<th>2013 RELEASE DATE</th>
<th>NATIONAL</th>
<th>REGIONAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>U.S. Employment &amp; Unemployment</td>
<td>Job Openings &amp; Turnover</td>
<td>Real Earnings</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>17</td>
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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.