

# **Manifesto of the fast food worker - Socialist Alternative (U.S.)**

## **Introduction**

In October of 2003 workers at Emerald City Pizza (a Pizza Hut franchise in the Tacoma/Seattle area) began an extensive organizing drive to improve their wages and working conditions.

The fight was long and bitter. Some workers spent more than eight months going store to store, patiently explaining the benefits of forming a union. In the end, however, the movement fell short of victory. Nonetheless, it galvanized many Tacoma Pizza Hut workers and rallied support from Emerald City employees all over western Washington.

Despite the fact that no union was formed Pizza Hut delivery drivers were still able to achieve several, small victories. In an attempt to kill the union movement, Emerald City reluctantly gave a twenty-cent per hour raise to every driver in Western Washington, an extra \$700 dollar bonus for drivers who pass the 10,000 deliveries mark and an additional \$70 for every 2500 deliveries taken. Upper management also put an immediate stop to a rapidly increasing delivery charge. This was the hated policy that sparked the campaign in the first place.

Far from being an example of the Hut's boundless generosity these pay increases were merely an attempt to buy-off the campaign at a low cost to the company. Initially this tactic failed. Management then launched a very elaborate and expensive union-busting operation to derail the worker's efforts. This included intimidation of activists, promises of change, and mandatory meetings where employees were forced to sit through hours of pro-company anti-union propaganda.

Last, but not least, this was topped by the President of the company taking a two-month long goodwill tour of every restaurant in the area. To finally break the back of the movement, the owner of this multi-million dollar company was forced to ride in the coffee and junk food littered cars of delivery drivers night after night and beg them not to unionize.

Close to six months has passed since these meetings and none of managements promises have come to fruition. This pamphlet will attempt to answer why and address what our next step should be.

Spreading this information can seriously strengthen our organizing drive and ultimately lead to increased wages and better conditions for workers at Pizza Hut. In order to take this campaign to the next level, we now need to strengthen our activist base in the movement. If

you agree with these arguments and our campaign, please get in touch with us to see how you can help.

Most workers in other pizza companies and other fast food companies face similar conditions of work as we face at Pizza Hut. We have written this pamphlet in a way that addresses issues facing other workers in fast food. Through the campaign at Pizza Hut, we met numerous people interesting in organizing a union at Papa John's, Domino's, Pizza Time and Red Robin's. We know there are countless other workers who are looking for a way to fight back against their fast food bosses. As restaurant workers we face similar conditions and need to unite for victory.

## **Our conditions as workers**

### **Pizza Delivery Drivers**

In 2003 more delivery drivers were murdered on the job than any other occupation in America. Almost twice as many drivers were killed delivering pizzas than were cops slain in the line of duty. Over the last ten years, delivering has consistently rated as the fifth most dangerous job in the country.

Drivers jeopardize their lives facing robberies, auto accidents and a whole host of dangers on a daily basis. How does Pizza Hut repay workers for these life-threatening risks?

By stealing nearly one dollar from every driver on each delivery they take.

Drivers, not Pizza Hut, pay for the costs associated with delivery. They are bled white by the price of gas, insurance, and costly auto repairs. Yet out of the enormous \$1.60 the company charges for delivery, drivers at Pizza Hut receive only sixty-five cents.

Customers naturally believe the \$1.60 fee goes to the drivers and tip far less (if at all) because of it. Taking this into account and the fact that gas prices have essentially doubled over the last four or five years, drivers are paying more to deliver and getting less in return. It amounts to a two-fold pay cut.

### **Crewmembers**

The situation is much the same at other restaurants and is even worse for inside workers, the backbone of any fast food company. Around four or five fast food workers are murdered on-the-job every month, usually during the course of a robbery. Yet, the restaurant industry has fought not only the introduction of any guidelines on workplace violence, but any enforcement of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

Fortunately most fast food workers do not have to deal with this kind of direct violence. Instead, however, they are forced to tolerate robbery and injustices which are subtler, but equally noteworthy.

Every last dime made in a restaurant begins and ends with the inside crew. They sweep the floors, mop the bathrooms, clean, prepare, cook and serve the food (effectively doing all of the profit-creating work). Ironically, however, they are the lowest paid employees.

Area coaches and corporate management, on the other hand, draw enormous salaries even though they do not participate in the operations that actually generate money. While they may set foot inside a restaurant once in a while, the “work” these high-paid bosses do is secondary at best.

Don’t believe me? Try operating an empty restaurant without workers and see if it generates money. Pushing pencils doesn’t make one penny for the company. Cooking and selling food does. As a matter of fact, it is the day-to-day tasks performed by the inside crew that actually pays for these bosses gigantic salaries.

Upper management could probably live on the moon and all the stores would still operate perfectly and continue to generate profit. These highly paid cronies are essentially parasites, yet it is the workers who are treated as unimportant lackeys. Fast food workers deserve respect and a living wage.

There are issues beyond monetary concerns as well. Few people stop to realize that the workplace is an area unlike any in America. It is quite literally a dictatorship. In just about every other arena of life, you have some democratic say in what goes on and the policies that are made. These rights stop in the workplace. You do what you are told, when you are told... or else. You may think you have some kind of choice in the matter, but the choice really boils down to this: Obey, or risk a very uncertain job market and on a long enough time-line, homelessness and possible starvation.

To put it another way: You need a job to live, but a job can live without you. The fear of getting fired and being deprived of a way to make ends meet is a kind of invisible gun which is pushed into the back of every worker each time they show up to their job. One smart comment, or sometimes just asserting yourself as a free and independent human being can be enough to make some authority-crazed boss pull that trigger and send you to the streets.

It seems strange when you think about it, but managers are essentially unelected officials who have a great deal of power over your life and your livelihood. The sad fact is that the majority of workers in this country spend around 40 hours a week living in a situation comparable to a totalitarian environment.

Like any dictatorship control is maintained through propaganda and the best propaganda is the kind that goes unnoticed. Ever wonder why management always refers to workers as ‘team members’? It’s actually a very subtle form of brainwashing designed to conceal the

autocratic reality of the workplace. Favoritism, punishment for being too independent is the norm. Management's use of the 'team' concept is a highly sophisticated technique used to control the workforce and extract more profit.

Notice, though, how the 'teamwork' stops when it comes to real issues like control of shifts, pay rates, and rights on the job? The boss makes those decisions. And if corporate management views itself as just another part of the "team" why don't they make team member salaries?

We are fighting to end management abuse by instituting a shop stewards system –a contract through which workers can elect a representative who can write-up managers who misuse their powers. It is a small, but important step towards democratizing the workplace.

### **A Union for a Fast Food Job?**

"But wait," some say to this, "Are you telling me you want to have a fast food job forever? If you don't like it here go someplace else". It is a cowardly suggestion, but one which should be addressed nonetheless.

The great myth of the fast food industry is that such jobs are temporary and held largely by kids looking to make a quick buck or two. Over the past couple decades there has been a steady exodus of manufacturing jobs overseas, including an estimated 3,000,000 positions in the last couple of years alone. Thirty-five years ago the number one employer in the country was General Motors. That meant a good union job with excellent pay and benefits. Today the number one employer in America is Wal-Mart, and number two is McDonalds.

For many of us a fast food job or something similar is all that is available. Some of the workers we have met are in their mid-forties and Pizza Hut or Dominoes is their only source of income. One worker we know has to make regular visits to the food bank. As everyone we have talked to is painfully aware, there are no better job options in the area.

With the economy quickly shifting to the service sector, many of us (some of whom formerly held union jobs) feel a stand must be taken here in the low wage service sector. We feel that Pizza Hut, Taco Bell and McDonalds, etc are capable of paying its employees a living wage and that any job should be able to provide those who work there with a means of supporting themselves and a family.

At Pizza Hut we are fighting to receive the full \$1.60 delivery charge for the drivers and we want a living wage, not minimum wage, for cooks and all crewmembers. In addition we have agitated for paid vacations, sick leave, maternity leave, real healthcare benefits, a seniority system, shop stewards, and a repair fund for the drivers.

# The fast food industry and how it was built

The fast food industry is dominated by a handful of powerful corporations who are determined to aggressively drive production costs to the minimum. Low wages are a central part of this program. Why? Because every dollar an employer has to pay in the form of wages is one less dollar in their pocket. The lower the wages, the better the profits.

The companies that have applied this formula most successfully are McDonald's, Burger King and Yum (Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, KFC). Together these huge conglomerates dominate the industry, employing 3.7 million people worldwide; operating a combined total of 60,000 stores.

Though we have become accustomed to thinking of fast food restaurants as a timeless and essential part of American culture, the industry is actually a very recent development. It began around 50 years ago when a small group of businessmen saw the opportunity to make a lot of money by cutting the costs of production in restaurants. They did this by introducing increased mechanization, which allowed them to hire low-wage unskilled labor –initially high school students and eventually anyone desperate for work.

Since then, these corporations have continually found new ways to further mechanize the workplace and employ cheap labor. They have even persuaded customers to reduce overheads by working for the company, for free!

It is common, for example, to have paying customers come to the counter, order their food, take it to their table, and then throw their dirty plates in the garbage. This cuts costs dramatically by eliminating the need for waiters and bus boys. The pressures of competition have forced other restaurants to do the same or perish. The result has been the destruction of many of the family restaurants, which paid their workers higher wages.

In his best selling book *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser describes how McDonald's pioneered these new methods in the late 1940s, "for the first time, the guiding principles of a factory assembly line were applied to a commercial kitchen. The new division of labor meant that a worker only had to be taught how to perform one task. Skilled and expensive short order cooks were no longer necessary... instead of relying upon a small, stable, well-paid, and well-trained workforce, the fast food industry seeks out unskilled workers who are willing to accept low pay."

He explains: "The leading fast food chains spread nationwide; between 1960 and 1973, the number of McDonald's restaurants grew from roughly 250 to 3,000. What had begun as a series of small, regional businesses became a fast food industry, a major component of the American economy."

Ray Kroc who took over the McDonald's franchises in the 1950s, led the way in developing the fast food industry. Kroc described his business philosophy in the following way: "This is rat eat rat, dog eat dog. I'll kill 'em, and I'm going to kill 'em before they kill me. You're talking about the American way of survival of the fittest." Kroc once said about his business rivals: "If they were drowning to death, I would put a hose in their mouth."

Not only did they pay minimum wage to their workers, but they also heavily lobbied the government to reject any calls to increase the minimum wage. In 1972, Kroc lobbied Congress and the White House to pass new legislation, known as the McDonald's bill, that would allow employers to pay 16 and 17 year old kids wages 20% lower than the minimum wage. This would reduce the wages of many of its workers to \$1.28 an hour.

The McDonald's bill failed, but fast food industry leaders have attempted to get similar bills passed at a state level. In Washington State in the last year the fast food companies have been at the forefront of lobbying the legislature to pass a bill to create a sub-minimum wage.

For these corporations there is no bottom-line. They will keep cutting pay and benefits to compete with their rivals. This means they will keep attacking wages until workers are forced to toil from sun up to sun down in order to make a living.

Making an employee work harder for cheaper means more money for the owners. It is not a relationship of mutual benefit –of workers helping employers and employers helping workers –it a relationship of a knife to the throat. When owners make gains it comes at the expense of workers; when workers make gains it comes at the expense of the owners. This is why as members of the working class it is important that we fight together as one

# **The economics of the fast food industry**

## **Huge Profits and Salaries for the Owners**

In order to best maximize their profits, the big fast food giant's created the franchise system. This system allows the companies to maintain overall control of the product, and give them a guaranteed rate of return, while at the same time allowing local owners to create a low-wage work force best suited to local conditions. For us, as workers, that means our immediate employers are often small business owners, and franchise owners who plead poverty when we demand higher wages.

At present 2,708 of Pizza Hut's 4,496 stores are franchises. The rest are run directly by corporate headquarters. In Western Washington the franchise for Pizza Hut has been given to Emerald City.

Pizza Hut is the world's largest pizza chain, with over 7,500 stores in the US alone. The parent company, Yum! Brands Inc, (previously called Tricon Global Restaurants) also owns A&W, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Long John Silvers, and Taco Bell. According to a company

press release, it is: "the world's largest restaurant company in terms of units with approximately 33,000 restaurants in more than 100 countries and territories."

In 2003 Yum! Brands Inc's gross earnings on US operations were \$5.6 billion dollars, and its US profits were \$812 million. In the first 6 months of 2004 they opened 537 new stores.

The CEO of Yum! Brands Inc. is David C. Novak. In 2002, he earned a salary of \$996,154. But that was not all. He also earned in that year: a bonus of \$2,625,000, other compensation of \$427,500, and received stock options worth \$4,029,534. That's a total of over \$8 million for one year's work.

If that money were used to increase the current wages of the roughly one thousand workers employed in the 61 stores in western Washington, it would be enough to pay them \$15.16 an hour, 20 hours a week, for a full year! If the company's \$812 million in profits were redirected in a similar way, the same would hold true for over 100,000 workers.

According to a 1997 survey in Nation's Restaurant News, the average corporate executive bonus (not their wage) was \$131,000. In 1995, at McDonald's the annual take-home pay for a manager was \$150,000 a year for each restaurant owned. This was seven times the earnings of a crew member working full time, at minimum wage.

Under a scheme set up through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, the fast food chains have for years claimed at tax credit of up to \$2,400 for each new low-income worker they hired. It was supposedly an incentive to give young workers on the job experience. This brazen example of corporate welfare has continued despite an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1996, which concluded that 92% of these workers would have been hired anyway.

Fast Food chains spend about \$3 billion each year on television advertising: enough money to pay 75,000 workers \$40,000 a year to build hospitals, schools or any number of productive activities which would actually benefit society.

### **Low Wages, Few Benefits for Workers**

The fast food industry hires around 3.5 million workers and pays minimum wage to a higher percentage of its employees than any other industry in the US. The only group that earns a lower hourly rate is migrant farm workers.

Roughly 90% of the nation's fast food workers receive no benefits and are scheduled to work only as needed. There are few if any possibilities for advancement. Assistant managers, a misname designed to entrap workers who are looking to build a career at these chains, are also exploited, often forced to work 50, 60 or 70 hours a week, sometimes off the clock, with no serious opportunities for promotion. Of the 20 or so assistant managers I worked with in my two years at Pizza Hut only one was promoted. All of them were diligent workers who in many cases performed the duties of our store manager (if not more), yet received little more than minimum wage.

In 1998 employee benefits accounted for a miserable 2.5% of total expenses. [Reference Sacks 2000.] Employee benefits are only 8.6% of total compensation. The national average for employees was 27.5% in 1999. Even among service workers it was 26.2%. [Stats from Labor Relations in that Global Fast Food Industry, edited by Tony Royle.]

### **Answering Company Arguments Against Higher Pay**

During our organizing drive management repeatedly tried to justify the poverty level wages we earn. Below are the most common arguments and how to refute them.

Though we will focus exclusively on the claims made by Emerald City during our campaign, most of the pizza and other fast food franchises will use similar tactics. These responses can help workers combat corporate propaganda justifying the low wages and few benefits we are paid.

*“Pizza Hut doesn’t have money for raises and we simply can’t compensate you for the cost of delivering our products”.*

This is the most common argument made by company executives and owners when workers demand better compensation for their work. The problem is, this is just an assertion. And they expect us to believe it. We need to ask: where’s the evidence? We want to see financial records, including: all payment to directors and share-holders and payments to the multinationals. When a union organizer asked an executive of Emerald City to do so, he refused.

This executive then claimed that he too drove a “used car” and that he was “just like the rest of us”. Anticipating this kind of argument, organizers had paid a visit to his listed address only a week earlier and took photographs of his vast home. Apparently this executive must have believed that “the rest of us” also live in a multi-million dollar home in an exclusive neighborhood just north of Seattle.

Unless management gives us unfettered access to all the necessary records, we have no evidence to believe what they say. We should not put off our goal of proper and decent compensation for our labor by pleas of poverty from local franchise owners. The reality is that their cries of destitution are an attempt to distract us.

### **Our Labor — The Source of Their Wealth**

What we know is that the fast food industry is massively profitable. It has created huge multinational corporations, which have made massive profits for their share-owners and executives. The corporate records we quoted in our chapter on the economics of the fast food industry confirms this. The question we must ask is: How did they amass all that wealth? And, how is it that all the workers who make the pizzas and deliver them are stuck making minimum wage?



The owners will attempt to argue that it is their 'entrepreneurial' skill that has created the wealth and that we are lucky to have any kind of job at all. They argue that we as workers need to follow their example, save our dollars and become businesspeople if we want to get ahead.

Children may believe in these fairytales, but those of us who work for a living know otherwise. When you have bills to pay, saving up for a small business that will only be swallowed by the Wal-Marts of this world, is impossible. No one gets ahead on a part-time minimum wage job. This is not how it works.

We, the workers, are the ones who make pizzas and deliver them. It's our sweat in the hot kitchens that creates the product. We are the ones who suffer cuts and burns on our fingers from table blades and hot pans. It's our car that breaks down from years of abuse and extreme road conditions.

Much of this is true for all fast food workers. It's also true in every other area of the economy. Every teacher, plumber, computer programmer, or Boeing worker is part of the process of creating the wealth in our society. It's our labor, not the bosses' that produces the necessary products that keep the world moving.

The reason why they are getting rich and we aren't is because we don't control the wealth realized by the sale of these products. Under the wage system, the boss owns the product, and he takes the proceeds from its sale.

### **Profit is The Unpaid Labor of Workers**

The way owners achieve their wealth is not immediately apparent, but can be easily understood. When we start working at a job, we basically agree to a contract which says we are going to be paid a set amount of money for working a set amount of time.

Hypothetically, let's assume in this instance our job pays \$7.50 an hour and our boss wants us to work for twenty hours. At \$7.50 an hour for twenty hours, that's a total of \$150. In that same period of time, however, the work we do will probably make \$300, \$400, or \$1000 worth of pizza. That's the trick.

What does this mean? Just for arguments sake, let's assume we only create \$300 worth of pizza. After our boss gives us \$150 for our week's worth of work (meaning our own labor essentially pays our wage) he is left with an additional \$150 which he did not work for. Taking the rest of the crew into consideration this adds up to thousands of dollars. By the end of the year there will be hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars our fellow workers and we generated, but will never see.

If someone took \$150 from your wallet on the street, you would demand it back. But in this system, this theft of \$150 worth of value created by our labor is legal. This exploitation of our labor is at the heart of how the owner of a company can accumulate wealth, while we

slave away and have barely enough to live on, with no decent health care, no paid vacations, no pensions, and no security.

The factories that build society's machinery, the land that grows our food, and the restaurants where that food is cooked –economists call all of these things “the means of production”. These “means of production” are the “tools” which help produce the goods that are necessary to keep society functioning.

Think about this. The people who use these “tools” don't own them. The people who own these “tools” don't use them.

We are told America is composed of one great middle class. The reality is that it has been polarized into two main groups of people.

The first class, which accounts for about 80% of the population, makes their living, like us, by working for a wage or salary in some kind of non-managerial capacity. The ranks of this class are filled by those of us who don't own our own multi-million dollar company and have little to sell but our own labor (be it mental or physical).

The other class main class, however, does not have to work for a living. This group basically represents the richest 1% of America and owns more wealth than the bottom 95% of the country. Because of their privileged circumstances they do not need to live off their own labor.

Instead they live off the labor of others. Despite what conventional wisdom tells us, you don't get rich by working hard; you get rich by getting people to work hard for you. This possessing class pays the working class for their labor and simply lives off of the profits that labor creates.

One class lives by working; the other lives by owning.

In ancient times inequality was maintained through force. Someone with a sword or a whip would beat you into servitude. Today this isn't necessary. Robbery is committed on a grand scale and it is done with the blessing of the law. An economy powered by large privately owned entities gives the possessing class power over the non-possessing class: You. It enables those who own, not only to live without working, but also to determine whether the non-owners shall work and under what conditions. It establishes a master and servant relationship, with the capitalist class in the position of giving orders and you in the position of obeying them.

The source of profit is buying our labor for a lower price than the value that we produce. That's because our labor can create new wealth. Other costs of production like dough, tomato sauce, and rent can't create new wealth. An owner of a company cannot make profit off these items alone. So, they are transferred at their cost price into the value of the pizza pie. They do not affect his profit. It's your labor that lays the golden egg for management.

A simple proof of this can be seen by the fact that if we all stopped work, then the boss makes no profits. The whole labor movement is based on the fact that by withdrawing our labor, the owner is denied any profits.

This shows how important our labor is. The bosses couldn't make any profits and support their affluent lifestyle without having us work. Their whole aim is to hire more and more workers, so THEY can live off the surplus we produce, but which THEY can legally take.

Just think if we as workers took home all the wealth we created. We would be able to immediately improve our living standards.

Owners definitely need us, but do we need owners?

### **How Do They Get Away With This?**

The owner's of society need a legal system to defend this system of wide scale theft. So they use part of their profits to finance the two pro-corporate political parties, the Republicans and Democrats. They raise funds to ensure politicians who defend their interests are elected. These politicians pass legislation which restricts our right as workers, makes it almost impossible to form a union, set the minimum wage below the poverty line and fail to provide funds for an affordable public healthcare and childcare system.

By lobbying Congress, the fast food industry, and other industries which employ low-paid workers, ensured that the real value of the minimum wage fell by almost 40% between 1968 and 1990. Today it is still 27% below its level of the late 1960s.

That piece of paper you signed when you took the job - that was where they won your consent for the exploitation of your labor. That cheerful smile from the manager and corporate executive is designed to make that theft seem more palatable for you.

Eric Schlosser in Fast Food Nation describes it this way: "Local fast food franchises have little ability to reduce their fixed costs: their lease payments, franchise fees, and purchases from company approved suppliers. Franchises do, however, have some control over wage rates and try to keep them as low as possible. The labor structure of the fast food industry demands a steady supply of young and unskilled workers. The immediate needs of the chains and the longtime needs of teenagers are fundamentally at odds."

*"If we pay higher wages and better benefits it will make our product uncompetitive. We will lose our customers and you will lose your jobs".*

So now let us see whether there is a basis for pay raise based on our best possible estimate of Emerald City finances. Since they are not a public company, they do not publish their financial figures. As we mentioned earlier they also refused to give us this data when we politely asked if we could see it.

Pizza Hut, on the other hand, is a public company. Unfortunately, because it is owned by Yum! Brands Inc (which owns several different chain restaurants) its financial figures are mixed with other companies. Therefore we will need to look at comparable published statistics to see how the company makes its money.

Fast food operations, though highly profitable, are extremely mechanized with large overhead costs, great expenditures in real estate, transportation, and advertising. The percentage of total cost represented by our labor is actually very small. In a review of McDonald's finances, a survey done by Lee and O'Roark Research called 'The Impact of Minimum Wage Increases' showed that a \$1 increase in the minimum wage would add only 2 cents to the cost of a food hamburger. (Fast Food Nation, p. 73) This shows how little wages figure into the cost of the final product. One can expect to see fairly similar statistics for other areas of fast food.

Another source of valuable information is the pizza industry website "pizzamarketplace.com". Managers of Dominos have posted many articles here describing their business costs.

They state that on average, labor comprises about 20% of the value of a pizza –not including the manager's salary. With the close competition between the major brands, we can assume this is pretty close for all pizza companies (and the limited data we managed to acquire from ECP only confirms this).

So let's say the workers in a store get a raise of \$2 an hour. Since labor is only around 20% of the price of a pizza, then this would increase the price of a pizza by around 40 cents (\$2 times 20%). A \$2 an hour wage raise would be a huge step forward for us as workers. And yet the Emerald City executives say they can't afford it, because it would drive our customers away.

But if that was the case, how come the company recently increased the price of nearly every product by about \$1? Management will probably argue that this is because the price of cheese went up, but notice when their money is at stake nothing is mentioned about high prices driving customers away.

Also, what about the fact that management has increased the delivery charge to \$1.60? They weren't afraid of customers fleeing from Pizza Hut then, unless they expected the customer to balance that out by reducing our tips.

This whole argument leaves one important item out of the picture – profits. We are not interested in increasing the price of food for working-class people. The wage increases we propose can easily be achieved by a cut in ECP's profit margins and in a worst case scenario a small increase in menu prices. However, the majority of that money should come out of company profits and executive bonuses.

*"Working in the Pizza industry is a low wage job. You knew that when you took the job. We are paying the rate we hired you at."*

What choice do we have? We'll starve if we don't work! That doesn't mean we accept these wages and conditions as fair.

*"Fast food is a low pay industry – go look for a different job if you want a better wage."*

The fast food industry tells its workers that these jobs are just a stopping place on the road to a better job. This is used as a way of justifying low wages and no benefits. There was a time when fast food hired almost exclusively teenage labor. But as we know that has all changed. We have to ask, what other real choices are out there? Most of the higher paid jobs have been disappearing during the 1980s and 1990s due to closures and layoffs. The average salary of jobs being lost is \$34,000 (\$16 an hour). The average salary of jobs being created is \$19,000 (\$9 an hour) [Statistic from MSN News, 10/27/03]. Close to nine million are unemployed, with 5 million forced into part-time jobs, who would prefer full time jobs.

Unemployment in Washington State is very high. There are no real options. Companies like yours are the reason for low their wages. You have got rich out of this, while we face poverty-wage jobs, with no rights. That's why we need to make this job a living wage job.

*"We are just a small franchise. We understand how hard it is to live on these wages, but we just can't pay any more"*

That's what Emerald City told us. Below we list many sources of income that are available to pay for higher wages...

- Opening Up New Stores

Emerald City opened two new stores last year at a cost of around \$300,000 each , which comes to \$600,000. Management might argue that this comes out of profits, but as we have already explained profits are the unpaid labor of us workers. Management might instead argue that they borrowed the money from the bank. However, the bank will need to be repaid, and again the money to pay that will come out of profits, which again represent money that we should receive as wages.

Certainly management doesn't need to build new stores to survive. This is simply another way for them to accumulate wealth at our expense. It comes out of the wealth we created, and was siphoned off as profits. If this money was redirected towards us workers it could help improve our wages and benefits. In fact, according to figures supplied by Terry Hopkins in a memo put out in April of 2004, \$600,000 would be enough to increase driver reimbursement by around 20 cents per delivery –meaning about an 80¢ to \$1 an hour raise for every driver in western Washington.

- Profits and Earning of Owners and Executives

Executives and owners of Emerald City are used to enjoying a fine lifestyle. Their profits, bonuses, stock options and dividends are the source of that wealth. Certainly they don't live on minimum wage with out decent health benefits or paid vacations. Company President

Terry Hopkins admitted at a meeting of Pizza Hut workers that his salary alone is \$150,000 a year. We do not know what other executives make.

Every dollar that goes towards Emerald City's profits comes out of our pockets. This poses the question: what role does Emerald City play? Essentially they are subcontractors for Yum Brands Inc, who attempt to keep labor costs lower than they could. For that privilege they take their profits.

- Payment to Yum! Brands Inc for the Pizza Hut Franchise

We know that Yum! Brands is the biggest most profitable fast food company in the world or at least they say so on their website. If they are indeed this successful they could certainly do with a little less, so we can at least scrape our way out of poverty. Just think that the whole international expansion of these fast food giants into an international empire was only possible due to the exploitation workers in the US for the past 40-50 years. It seems a drastic re-ordering of priorities is in order.

- Giving Back the Delivery Charge

One of the victories, admitted in private by an Emerald City executive, of the organizing drive was to increase the compensation for delivery drivers from 60 cents to 65 cents. Of course this does not compensate for the huge spike in gasoline prices, but it is still a step forward and small victory.

At first the company told a meeting of workers that they made no money off the increase in the delivery charge from \$1.50 to \$1.60. Then, company President Terry Hopkins wrote an announcement to drivers saying that the new five-cent reimbursement "will cost our company about \$156,000 per year in profits". According to that very figure (which openly admits the company is making profits off of the delivery charge) if Emerald City makes \$156,000 per year for every five cents of the delivery charge, taking into account the sixty cents that went to drivers last year (leaving a remaining one dollar which contains 20 five cent increments), that means the company made \$3,120,000 off of the delivery charge ( $20 \times \$156,000$ ) and will still make \$2,964,000 this year ( $19 \times \$156,000$ ) with the five cent increase. Drivers, not Pizza Hut, pay for the costs of delivery. That money belongs to drivers. Here is another excellent source of money to improve the situation of workers.

- Money spent trying to lower our wages

In case no one noticed, the company was willing to pay thousands upon thousands of dollars organizing mandatory meeting for workers to listen to their anti-union campaign during the summer of 2004. This meant renting out expensive convention halls over the course of several weeks, food for the meetings, door prizes and paying the wages of a large section of its workforce to watch these twisted and deceptive videos. It also meant expensive consultation fees from the union-busting company which supplied the films. That was certainly money that could have been spent on better wages for us workers.

We also know that the restaurant industry has spent a lot of money to push a bill in the Washington State legislature to create a sub-minimum wage (\$2 an hour for workers who receive tips). We don't have access to records to show whether Emerald City management contributed to this, but we have not seen them withdraw their membership from the local restaurant associations that funded it.

We don't need to point out that such legislation does not benefit us as workers. Certainly Yum Brands has been active at the federal level supporting similar bills. Obviously any such expenditure by Emerald City would be available to help us get better wages. We should note that the entire labor movement in Washington State has been putting resources into defeating this bill.

## **Conclusion**

We feel these statistics are sufficient to justify our demands for living wages and that Emerald City is totally capable of improving the wages and benefits they offer us as workers. We also feel we are totally justified in claiming this money since it comes out of the wealth we create as pizza workers. Again we feel that other franchises are in a similar situation.

# **Fast food workers organizing**

The creation of low-wage jobs in the fast food industry is only a recent development. It is not unusual to see low wages being forced on workers in new industries when they first develop. This was the case in the coal mines, steel industry, textile industry, the auto industry etc.

Large-scale exploitation in the fast food industry has created a few super rich millionaires, and a small number of huge corporations. These corporations like, McDonalds and Yum Brands Inc were extremely vigilant in preventing workers from organizing unions to change these conditions. In the other industries we mentioned (mining, steel, etc.) workers eventually built-up enough organized strength to build powerful enough unions to force those company millionaires to pay higher wages, improve benefits, and to provide workers with some security in their lives.

The fast food industry will be no different. Workers in British Columbia and Quebec have forced McDonalds to accept a union. The same has happened in Germany. Workers in Australia and France have mounted organizing drives at Pizza Hut. During our organizing campaign at Pizza Hut/Emerald City in the Tacoma/Seattle area we have found widespread support for the idea of a union. As we mentioned earlier we have also met groups of workers in Dominos, Papa John, and Pizza Time in Tacoma and Olympia who are looking to build a union. One Pizza Time in Olympia even went on strike!

In attempting to organize we are following the traditions established by previous generations of workers, our grandparents and great-grandparents. They stood up to the

robber barons of their days and demanded a living wage job with decent benefits. To achieve this they organized dynamic unions which were able to stand up to corporate giants like General Motors, Ford, Bethlehem Steel, General Electric etc. and force them to start to pay higher wages, guaranteed work shifts, better working conditions and improved benefits out of the profits of the bosses.

That's the task we face as workers in the low-wage fast food and service economy of the today. Unlike many manufacturing jobs, service jobs cannot be outsourced. In today's world of two parents working there will be a demand for delivered food. Some company will need to produce and sell fast food. They cannot deliver it from Mexico. They can't even deliver it from Seattle. That means that if we organize well in Tacoma we will have the leverage to force these companies to start to address our needs as workers

### **Should We Be Afraid of Unions?**

Fast food companies are determined to make their product at the lowest possible cost. That means keeping our wages down. That is their guiding light. McDonalds, as the pioneer fast food company, set the trend for other companies. The others followed.

These huge corporations have used their muscle to systematically lobby Congress to scrap the minimum wage, to introduce a sub-minimum wage, and have continually broken federal and state work-and-safety laws to keep wages as low as possible.

For example in 1997, a jury in Washington state found that Taco Bell (a Pizza Hut sister company also owned by Yum! Brands Inc) had systematically coerced its crewmembers into working off-the-clock to avoid paying them overtime. It found that the bonuses of Taco Bell restaurant managers were tied to their success at cutting labor costs.

Whenever workers at these fast food companies have begun to organize a union, they have faced a ferocious response from management. In the recent libel case brought by McDonald's in Britain against Greenpeace activists, it was documented how the company hired spies to follow activists. Sydney Nicholson, UK vice president of McDonald's said "if every single member of a crew in a particular restaurant joined a union, McDonald's would still not negotiate with the union."

Despite such threats, these companies have been forced to accept unions in a number of countries. Very often they will spend more money fighting a union than it would cost to accept the unions demands. The reason is that they know that once a new trend starts it will encourage other workers to step forward and follow suit.

Despite the scare stories spread by the corporate-owned mass media, and the scare stories told by company executives, there is widespread support for unions in the US. A 2002 poll showed that over 50% of workers who are not union members would join a union tomorrow if given the chance.



The reason more workers are not in unions is the refusal of management to negotiate with workers, their tactics of intimidation, firing of activists and their ability to subject their workers to anti-union propaganda sessions. Because the corporations control both major political parties, the laws in this country give workers who want a union less rights than any other country in the industrialized world.

Emerald City has followed this well-worn path. They have spent tens of thousands of dollars attempting to defeat our organizing drive renting banquet halls, and, paying fees to union busting companies and paying for us to watch anti-union propaganda videos. They have threatened workers with firings, refused workers the right to give out material at work, driven away activists from outside their stores, even calling the police to stop workers from giving out pro-union fliers

## **Answering the bosses' lies about unions**

In the costly series of mandatory meetings held in the summer of 2004, Emerald City management blasted the audience with videos made by union-busting corporations, which attempted to paint all unions as corrupt and self-interested. They also made many arguments attacking unions. Those workers supporting the union were not given an equal amount of time to respond to the charges.

*"Unions are corrupt and are only interested in pocketing your union dues".*

No one can deny that there are some corrupt union officials. However, statistics show that only 1% of unions have been tainted with corruption. In comparison 10% of corporations have been tainted with corruption. Owners of corporations, and the corporate-owned mass media, parade these examples of corrupt officials for a purpose. That's because they are completely hostile to unions, and want to confuse workers who are looking for unions to help them out.

Corruption of unions is always a two-way process involving management collusion. While management opposes unions, once a union is established, management tries to wine and dine union officials in order to get them to see issues their way. They attempt to get the union leadership to ignore their members' interests by signing sweetheart deals. It's usually in this situation that union officials get corrupted. The victims in this situation are the workers. Management then points the finger of corruption in the unions as a way of discrediting unions.

Real life examples of corrupt union leaders living high on the hog off members' dues is very rare. It is a scare tactic that management uses to stop or unions. The most recent and most publicized example was in the Teamsters Union in the 1970s and 1980s. However what they don't say is how workers in the Teamsters rose up against these leaders, who were voted out of office by a rank and file revolt. Union reform candidates were voted into the leadership of the Teamsters union in 1991.

As we mentioned earlier most of the industries like auto, steel, transportation, construction, used to be low-wage jobs. It was only those workers determination to build unions that changed that. Higher wages, health care, job security, etc, were won due to the workers' determination to organize, see through the arguments of the boss, and fight for their rights.

Through unions, workers win better wages, benefits and a voice on the job—and good union jobs mean stronger communities. A few facts to consider:

- Union workers earn an average of 26 percent more than nonunion workers and are more likely to receive healthcare and pension benefits than those without a union.
- In 2002, median weekly earnings for full-time union wage and salary workers were \$740, compared with \$587 for their nonunion counterparts.
- 79 percent of union workers are covered by pension plans versus 44 percent of nonunion workers.
- 70 percent of union workers have defined-benefit retirement coverage, compared with 16 percent of nonunion workers.

What these arguments of Emerald City management cannot explain away is: how come unionized workplaces pay higher wages and improved benefits compared to non-union workplaces?

*"Unions will take dues out of your paycheck, and you will be worse off than you are now".*

We need not fear unions. Yes, we will pay union dues, in the region of \$20 or \$30 a month. That goes to pay for the expenses of having a union ready and able to fight for our interest. But the argument of management leaves out the fact that a union contract will include a far greater improvement in our wages and conditions. The idea that we will be worse off with the union, because we would have to pay dues, is an attempt by management to confuse us, and has no truth in it.

Of course, Emerald City management matched this argument with their other assertion that they could not pay higher wages. We have already shown that Emerald City is quite capable of doing this if it is pressured to do so. That's exactly why we are organizing.

But the advantages of a union go far beyond that. A union contract would spell out our rights as workers on issues such as discipline, seniority, job security and other issues on the job. As members of the bargaining unit representing Emerald City workers we would vote on issues that were in our contract that affect us in our workplace. Once voted on, the union contract would set out the rights and privileges we have gained, and establish a grievance procedure to hold management to this agreement. We will set up a steward system where we have an elected representative on the job to deal with management when they attempted to break the contract.

Think about it. At present we have no rights on the job. We have no defense against arbitrary and retaliatory actions by management. The union will be an instrument we can use to stand up to management to ensure they comply with the contract. That's what management really fears - control of the workplace. That's why they so ferociously oppose unions.

*"Unions are outsiders. They will create an atmosphere of conflict between management and worker".*

It's funny how management calls the union the 'outsider.' It is us, as Emerald City workers, who are organizing the union. We are the organizing committee; we have discussions with our fellow workers and distribute our own material, not some outsider.

Yes, we know we need help from the union to negotiate with management. However, that union is made up of elected representatives from other workers in the restaurant and hotel industry who face situations similar to our own.

Our success in building a powerful union will depend on the willingness of workers to support and participate in this campaign. It is a myth that some 'outside force' will be injected into the situation. We are the only "force" at work, not some 'outsider'.

As for the argument that a union will spoil the relationship between management and workers, it's exactly because management's actions are hurting us that we are organizing a union in the first place! We have been forced to form a union to defend ourselves from management.

*"The union is powerless to affect anything, they cannot win you any improvements".*

This has already been disproved in this campaign. We have already won a five-cent increase in compensation for the driver for each delivery. That was achieved as a result of only the beginning of our organizing drive.

Our power comes from our ability to act as one and stop production at Emerald City. That's what will make the company start to make concessions, since they make money only when we work. That is the way we will be able to stand up to Emerald City and Pizza Hut, and for the first time win some control over our workplace. That has to be our guiding light.

The US working class is potentially the most powerful force in this society. Fighting unions won all the benefits now enjoyed by workers over the last 50 years. Dedicated and militant union leaders who looked to mobilize that power of the US working class, and backed by an active and educated membership were able to force management to give back some of their profits and redistribute it back to workers. This is how the labor movement was built. This is what it took to stand up to and defeat General Motors, and defeat them through a 44-day sit-down strike in 1936. It is this tradition that we want to build upon. This is the kind of union we aim to build.

By being members of a union, we will join the labor movement. We would then be able to call on other unions and workers to help us in our struggles. For example, Teamster members have language in their contract giving them the right not to deliver goods across a picket line. This would enormously frustrate management if they attempted to continue doing business if we went on strike. By organizing a union we become much stronger because we're part of the wider labor movement.

*"We are your friends, come to us to talk about your concerns, you don't need a union to represent you".*

Yes, management has become friendlier in the last couple of months. But, we have to ask the question: why? If they are friendly now, but were not before, what does that tell us about their motives? The answer is that management is trying to get savvy. It is part of the "carrot and stick" strategy. They have become better trained by anti-union companies in 'how to confuse workers by calling them team members'. We shouldn't buy it.

In *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser describes the practices of McDonald's; "the company developed sophisticated methods for keeping unions out of its restaurants. A "flying squad" of experienced managers and corporate executives was sent to a restaurant the moment union activity was suspected. Seemingly informal "rap sessions" were held with disgruntled employees. The workers were encouraged to share their feelings. They were flattered and stroked. And more importantly, they were encouraged to share information about the union's plans and the names of the union sympathizers. If the rap sessions failed to provide adequate information, the stroking was abandoned for a more direct approach... The company's guidance has helped McDonald's franchises defeat literally hundreds of efforts to unionize."

At a recent Multi-Unit Foodserver Operators Convention, filled with the CEOs of the major fast food industry, a discussion developed about how to overcome a lack of low wage workers, and maybe the need to move the industry from a workforce based on "low wages" and "high levels of turnover" to one that would "create long-term careers in foodservice". The issue of how to fight unions came up. David Novak, President of Yum! Brands Inc, who is Emerald City's boss, described his strategy of giving pep talks, prizes and special awards of plastic chili peppers and rubber chickens. He said that giving employee awards creates greater sense of pride and esteem, showed that management was watching, and it did not cost a lot of money, he said: "we want to be a great Company for the people who make it great." [Fast Food Nation, page 88.]

Pizza Hut calls this the "CHAMPS" program –a more appropriate name might be the "CHUMPS" program. The idea is basically this: Don't pay workers a decent wage for busting their asses –instead just give the drooling idiots a cheap card with gold stickers and some glitter on it. Then, like good little monkeys they'll think that means the company loves them and they'll work twice as hard so they can get more glitter and gold stickers.

The end result: High productivity, with low pay –and that means more money for Terry Hopkins and David Novak. The bottom line is the dollar sign.

Don't be a chump. Yes, management may be more pleasant to us as workers now. But that's based on the their own self interest to prevent the union growing. It doesn't replace a decent pay raise. If we drop our campaign, the smiles will go away.

*The Rumor: Management will just close a store if we organize?*

Yes, if they can get away with it. The fast food industry is vehemently anti-union, jealously defending their wealth and profits. They will close one store if they think that will isolate a union.

For example, in February 1997, workers at a McDonald's restaurant in St. Hubert, a suburb of Montreal, applied to join the Teamsters union. More than three quarters of the crew members signed union cards. McDonald's fought this in the courts for a year. A final certification hearing was planned for March 10th 1998. But, on Friday 13th 1998, before the hearing could be held, McDonald's shut down the store for good. Management claimed it was a money-loser, though it had operated continuously at the same location for 17 years.

In Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser describes another example: "During the early 1970s, workers were successfully organizing a McDonald's in Lansing, Michigan. All the crew members were fired, the restaurant was shut down, a new McDonald's was built down the block – and the workers who'd signed union cards were not rehired."

We need to learn a lesson from this. This is the reason we cannot build a union in one store at Emerald city. We know we have to organize citywide in the Tacoma area. We know they will not close all the stores in the Tacoma area. Otherwise they will lose all their profits – and that's what they are after. We know this makes our task harder task, but this is the only way to prevent management from closing one store, and defeating us. We have a lot of support in some Tacoma stores, and aim to continue building support in the other stores. This will give us much more power to force the company to negotiate with us.

The strategy of 'threatening to close the store' is a weapon that is open only to the larger franchises. Most local fast food chains don't have the capital to pull such a thing off. It is only an idle threat to try to intimidate us. The bottom-line is that the big fast food chains are not going to abandon the Tacoma area as a source of income to be exploited by their rivals. We have to demand they pay a living wage if they want to do business in Tacoma.

## **An effective organizing strategy**

**These are strategies that have proved successful in organizing workers into unions, and which guided our campaign at Pizza Hut.**

Keep your heads down as long as you can. Management will usually move to preemptively fire workers who they see seriously organizing a union. To start with, check out your fellow workers on a one-on-one basis, to see if they want to fight for better wages and more rights. Avoid discussions with anyone who is supportive of company, since they could well

spill the beans to management. You want to build up a core of union supporters undercover without management knowing. The stronger the base of supporters you have when management finds out, the harder it is to single anyone out, or defeat your campaign.

Gather all the facts you can about the company: its profits, who owns it, the salaries and benefits earned by its CEO and management, etc. You will need this to show fellow workers how management isn't a 'team player' but instead is getting fat off your work.

Gather lists of workers who are interested in fighting the company. Get their names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail. Use the e-mail to send them information. It's better than printing up pieces of paper, since inevitably one of them gets into the hands of management which can then lead to greater vigilance, harassment and firings. If you do print up flyers, don't give them out at work if you can avoid it, and don't put identifying information on it, if possible.

Make sure you build support among all categories of workers, whether by job description, or race or gender. Management will attempt to divide you up, and set one group of workers against the other, so you need to develop demands that benefit all workers at the your store.

Keep a look out for supporters in other franchise stores. These might be people who moved from a generally union-sympathetic store to a new store, or friends of friends, etc. As soon as possible, you want to build up at least one strong union supporter in each store, so they can build support in their store. This might take time, but it is essential to try to do this from the beginning.

Create an Organizing Committee of the best activists that can meet weekly or every other week to coordinate the work, help each other with issues that come up, and build solidarity. At these meetings discuss important strategic and tactical issues that will affect your ability to organize a successful struggle. Read and discuss books on union struggles that have been successful. Usually, these struggles have been won due to the leadership being militant. Very often, these leaders will be socialists, since socialists have no illusions in the courts, police, corporate media or the bosses to side with workers in a struggle. Instead, they look to place emphasis on building an educated and mobilized membership, linked to a mobilization of the strongest community and union support, in order to win struggles. Such tactics are key when looking to break through into a traditionally non-union industry like fast food. These strategies are key to our success. See list of books at back for details.

From the start you need to build an educated active rank-and-file base to your campaign. Put out educational material, which anticipates the lies management will use to confuse workers. Give a clear pro-union answer to these lies. Educate all new supporters. In this pamphlet we have provided answers to many of these lies. This is essential for the time when management starts its own propaganda campaign. Work out a system to rate workers in the stores based on how supportive they are of the unions to ensure you organize relevant discussions, often one-on-one discussions, and readings with as many

workers as possible, to clarify the motives behind management's actions, and to find a way of involving them in building the union.

Draw up a program of demands, which address the key needs of workers. Don't compromise on these demands. Put down what you need, with demands for all groups of workers. The best way to develop these demands is to develop a survey for workers to fill out. This is also a great way for other workers to see how democratic our movement is, and how they will be consulted on all issues that affect the coming struggle.

Do research and ask members of other unions informally to try to find a union local which is most committed to struggle, which has strong democratic traditions, and which has shown a good fighting tradition. Many unions do not have experience in organizing low-paid workers in the service industry, and will not know how to put up a serious fight for workers in a mainly non-union industry like fast food. One of the best local unions is the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU). It's important that you don't make formal links with a union before you are clear on the type of union you want, on the strategies and tactics you want to adopt, and you have a strong organizing committee.

The more organized and militant and determined you are, the more you can shape the type of campaign that the union will adopt. Remember, it will be your militancy that will determine the success of your struggle. It is your organizing committee which should make the decisions on how the struggle proceeds. Many unions have little recent experience in leading militant struggles, and would prefer to just make a deal with the employer that established a union, without really addressing the issues that can change the lives of the workers. Spell out the strategies you want to use when looking for a union. That way you will be able to find most militant union in your area to represent you.

Make links with other unions, community organizations, and activists organizations like "Jobs with Justice" to explain your issues and prepare them for the fact that you might be going out in struggle, and you might well be looking for support. Actively support other struggles of workers in your area to build solidarity for when you may need to go into struggle.

Only when you have close to 70% of workers supporting the union, and have developed strong activists in all the stores, have clarified your demands and strategy and tactics and are ready to fight should you approach management. That's the idea. Usually management finds out before that point, in which case you will need to fight their lies earlier than you wish to.

You do not want to put allow your struggle to be channeled through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). This is a government agency that pretends to be neutral to unions, but in reality is stacked with pro-corporate government appointees. The NLRB allows management to challenge the names of your union supporters, challenge who you want to include in your union and can seriously sidetrack your campaign by allowing the company to mount numerous legal challenges. Your campaign then loses momentum, which allows management to intimidate and confuse workers.

Instead of going through the NLRB, you want to demand that the company accept your union immediately and start negotiating. If they challenge how much support you have, you can call for an independent person, like an independent-thinking clergy person or professor, to count union cards to see if you have as much support as you say you do.

Now is when you start to demonstrate your support in action to management. For example, you can have union button day, where all union supporters wear a union button to work. They can't fire 70% of the workforce, and it helps the other 30% see how strong the union is. You can have a rally outside work. This is the way to demonstrate your strength, not by bowing down to legal challenges through the NLRB. This will build confidence among workers, build solidarity, and show management how determined you are to win a decent contract. It is also an excellent way to get publicity through the media and to link up with other unions and workers.

In the end, your power will be determined by your ability to demonstrate to management your willingness to walk off the job in strike action. Stopping the flow of profit is the language management understands. That is your power. That's why the more militant and organized the workers are, the more you will win. Mobilize support from your supporters in the community and labor to show management that others in the community will support your struggle. You need to show management you are willing to walk the street, for however long is necessary, to force them to accept they need to negotiate with you and accept your key demands. That's why the more militant you are, the more you will win.

**These are some demands you should strive to get in any contract negotiated with management:**

- A living wage- studies have shown a living wage to be between \$12.50 and \$15 an hour.
- Quality health care benefits paid for by employer.
- Full package of benefits including vacation days and sick days.
- Guaranteed shifts for all workers of 8 hours and 40 hours a week, or such amount as applicable to the worker.
- Overtime paid after eight hours in one day.
- Agreed amount of paid maternity leave, and right to return to job, at comparable pay and benefits up to two years after baby is born.
- Workers who chose to take part-time shifts should get a guaranteed number of hours each week, and pick shifts, based on seniority.
- Work pick shifts decided based on seniority – no interference from management.



- Clear rules, enforced by the union, on any discrimination or harassment based on race, gender or sexual orientation.
  - A shop steward system, with one shop steward elected in each store, and for each shift. Shop stewards to be elected by workers in an annual election.
  - Contract to clearly lay out a system of progressive discipline, so management cannot arbitrarily fire workers for no reason.
  - Workers who management tries to discipline should have the right to file a grievance (complaint), and should remain on the job until completion of grievance process.
  - Right of union to strike over management's refusal to accept the contract's language on grievances.
- A short contract date, preferably one year, but never over three years.

Fast food is the battleground of the 21st century. These fast food mega-corporations have got fat off our labor for too long. The campaign at Pizza Hut has shown that fast food workers at Pizza Hut in Tacoma/Seattle can see through the lies and by organizing have forced concessions from the company. This struggle is still ongoing to establish a union. We have met workers in other fast food companies that are also looking to get organized. Let's get to work.

## **Low wages and capitalism - what about socialism?**

Young people today face a future of low wages and corporate domination of their lives. To secure any sort of decent life, we need to organize to force our bosses to give up some of the wealth he is stealing from us. Along with fighting in our own workplace, we also need to educate ourselves about how this whole system works, and what our interests are as workers.

It's not just us that are facing low wages. Workers across the country and internationally are seeing their living standard under attack. Why in the richest country in the world, are we facing this kind of a future? You won't find the answer in the corporate-owned mass media. The reason is that it's the system itself that is causing the crisis. Capitalism on a global scale has been in decline since the mid-1970s.

Capitalism is defined by Websters dictionary as: "the economic system in which all or most of the mean of production and distribution as land, factories, railroads, etc. are privately owned and operate for profit, originally under fully competitive conditions; it has been generally characterized by a tendency toward concentration of wealth, and in its later phase, by the growth of great corporations." At least Websters doesn't try to sugar-coat

reality. The owners of these 'great corporations' that dominate our lives are determined that the costs for this crisis in their system be put on the back of workers.

Where does that leave us as workers? The answer is that we are going to be driven down even further while this system still exists. The big capitalist owners openly admit that they will not tolerate any challenge to their control of the workplace or society. Yet, that is our task as workers, to challenge this control, not only of the workplace, but also in society. We believe the interests of the more than 100 million workers in this country should have priority over the narrow interests of these few rich owners.

There is an alternative to capitalism, and it has been embraced by large layers of workers here in the US, and internationally, when they have moved into struggle – it is called socialism. Once again, Websters give us a more honest description of socialism than you will hear in the corporate-owned mass media. "The theory or system of the ownership and operation of the means of production and distribution by society, or the community, rather than private individuals, with all members of society or the community sharing in the work and the products." Since around 500 huge corporations dominate 80% of our economy, that means ending the domination of our lives by these rich individuals, and putting the over 100 million workers, and their families, in charge of running society. No wonder you never hear that mentioned in the mass media.

Previous generation of young workers were forced into struggle by greedy corporate owners in the mining, auto, transportation, and hospitals. Workers took on these bosses, formed unions and transformed their lives through struggle. The battleground today is in the service industry, especially, fast food. We need to build a powerful movement of fast food workers who will be able to help each other out and take on these corporations.

As members of Socialist Alternative, a democratic socialist group active in the Seattle/Tacoma area, we have been involved from the beginning in helping organize the union drive at Pizza Hut. Our aims were identical with its workers: to attempt to enable it to be as strong and powerful as possible. We have published pamphlet to provide help and support to further union organizing in the fast food industry. Through it we also seek to clarify the real economic interest of workers to fight the bosses and this system that they used to enslave us, as workers.

We urge anyone interested in these ideas and conclusions, whether related to union organizing or our socialist ideas, to contact us. As Karl Marx, the pioneer of the working class and socialist movement, wrote: "Workers of the world unite - they have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."