

Obama Supports the Workers' Occupation of Republic Windows and Doors, Chicago

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
07 December 2008

In a remarkable instance of radical direct action by labor, backed by Barack Obama, workers at the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago have taken over the premises. At issue is the lack of proper termination and the lack of financing for an employer by Bank of America when the bank has billions of tax-payer dollars as part of the Wall Street bail-out.

Obama said of the workers, in a news conference Sunday, "I think they're absolutely right and understand that what's happening to them is reflective of what's happening across this economy." He is perhaps inadvertently encouraging more occupations, strikes, and physical resistance to home evictions by mortgage banks and landlords.

Hemispheric background:

After Argentina's failure of globalism in 2001, workers took over factories and created cooperatives as an alternative to closures. There was a general movement toward extreme recycling, barter, alternative currency, and road blockades. In 1994 the oppressed indigenous population of Chiapas rose up against NAFTA and the Mexican elite, and created the armed Zapatista movement which to this day maintains autonomous zones and cooperative crafts enterprises.

A nationwide call has been put out to support the Chicago occupation during the week of December 8-13.

The Bail Out The People Movement, a New York City group, publicized this message in a news release:

Organize Protests in Front of Your Local Bank of America Office or Building

Support the Demands of the Republic Windows and Doors Workers:

- Management Must Meet with the Workers
- Workers Must Receive 60 Days Full Pay
- No Repression Against the Workers; No Attempts to Remove, Arrest or Charge Them

"We are sending a message to all the workers in America. We will try to keep up the fight and we ask for your support."

- Vincente Rangel, United Electrical Workers' Steward and participant in the occupation

About 250 employees of Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago, IL began an occupation of the plant on Friday, Dec. 5, the last scheduled day of the plant's operation. The workers, members of the United Electrical Workers Union Local 1110, were not given the legally mandated 60-day prior notification of the plant's closing; also the plant's management and owners did not show up to a meeting with the workers scheduled for Dec. 5.

The workers decided to occupy the plant. They have vowed to stay in the plant until they receive, at the very least, 60 days pay. The owners say that they had to close because Bank of America refused to extend them any more credit. The Bank of America has received hundreds of billions of dollars over the past three months in bailout money from the government.

These workers, who are overwhelmingly Latino immigrants, have taken a courageous stand by putting their bodies on the line in their fight for the right to feed their families and to be treated with respect and dignity like all human beings. In a way, they are fighting for the rights of all workers who are under attack, whether they are restaurant workers, public employees or auto workers fighting to hold on to their jobs and union.

We must stand with them.

To all--no matter what your circumstances are--who are outraged over mass layoffs, home foreclosures and are watching the government spend literally trillions of dollars to bail out banks while doing nothing to stop the massive layoffs and evictions that are beating down working and poor people, take a stand in solidarity with these workers in Chicago. You could be next.

Jobs at a living wage are a right!

An appeal issued by Bail Out the People Movement, Dec. 7, 2008

Endorse at bailoutpeople.org

List Local Action at bailoutpeople.org

Donate to Bail Out the People Movement at bailoutpeople.org

Local Actions:

Chicago:

Sun, Dec 7, 10:30 AM Jessie Jackson and Rainbow PUSH deliver turkeys to workers occupying Republic Windows and Doors factory, 1333 N Hickory st. (near corner of Halsted and Division)

Monday, Dec 8th, 12 noon - Press Conference before UE workers meet with Bank of America and company executives. Supports welcome, bring food and monetary donations.

Tuesday, Dec 9th, 12 noon - Solidarity action at Bank of America, 231 S. LaSalle, Chicago, IL

Charlotte, NC:

Monday, Dec 8th, 12 Noon - Picket at Bank of American national Headquarters to support Republic workers. Corner of

Trade St and Tryon in downtown Charlotte. Organized by UE local 150. call Dante Strobino at 919-539-2051 for more info.

Detroit, MI:

Wednesday, Dec 10 12:00 noon - PROTEST RALLY, WEDS., DEC. 10, 12:00 NOON - BANK OF AMERICA, Guardian Building, Congress at Griswold, downtown Detroit

Additional listings will be posted at BailOutPeople.org as quickly as we get them.

Bail Out the People Movement

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BailOutPeople.org

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"In Factory Sit-In, an Anger Spread Wide" by Monica Davey, New York Times, Dec, 7, 2008:

nytimes.com