

asia workers organising

may 2015



**GLOBAL PICKETLINE**

how workers can win

workers change the world

australia asia worker links - po box 45 carlton south victoria 3053 australia  
tel: +61 3 9663 7277 email: aawil@aawil.org.au web:aawil.org.au - may 2015



## The Global Picketline Concept

## How workers can win in a globalised economy

*Presentation for LabourStart Conference –  
Toronto, Canada May 2016*

# Australia Asia Worker Links (AAWL)

- AAWL is a labour movement solidarity organisation with trade unions and workers as members
- AAWL started in 1979 from labour activists returning from South Korea
- Solidarity activities began with labour activists from South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines
- Initial focus was on establishing contacts and understanding the local labour situation.
- Within the Australian labour movement, focus was to increase the knowledge and understanding of the expanding industrialisation of the SE and East Asian regions, and its new working class

# AAWL history (cont.)

- Original focus was on specific labour issues
- Area of work has expanded to cover the rest of Asia
- Solidarity visits/exchanges by workers a crucial part of our work
- Campaigning against repression of workers has always been a key area of work
- Has a focus on women, indigenous issues and refugees
- Our work has developed and changed to reflect the increasing globalisation of the economy via linking workers and struggles over many countries
- The issues and workplace environments facing workers in all countries have become more and more similar

we need a  
**global labour  
movement  
charter**



The right of all workers to organise collectively without being subjected to violence, intimidation or legal harassment

The right to organise unions and take collective action including industrial action and solidarity actions

Secure employment

Health & Safety at work, compensation, rehabilitation

A living wage for all workers in all industries

Decent work, with appropriate hours of work proposed by workers, paid leave and paid holidays

Full rights for women workers

Indigenous workers' rights & Land Rights

Permanent residence with full employment rights for all refugees and all migrant workers in all countries

No child labour

Education, housing, health and childcare provisions

Social security and adequate welfare benefits

**australia asia worker links - workers change the world**

po box 45 carlton south victoria 3053 australia  
tel: + 61 3 9663 7277 email: [aawl@aawl.org.au](mailto:aawl@aawl.org.au) web: [aawl.org.au](http://aawl.org.au)  
abr: 82 920 590 967 inc assn no: A1318 aawl december 2010



**The Global Labour  
Movement  
Charter**  
**A global set of  
demands for all  
workers**

# Developing the Global Picketline

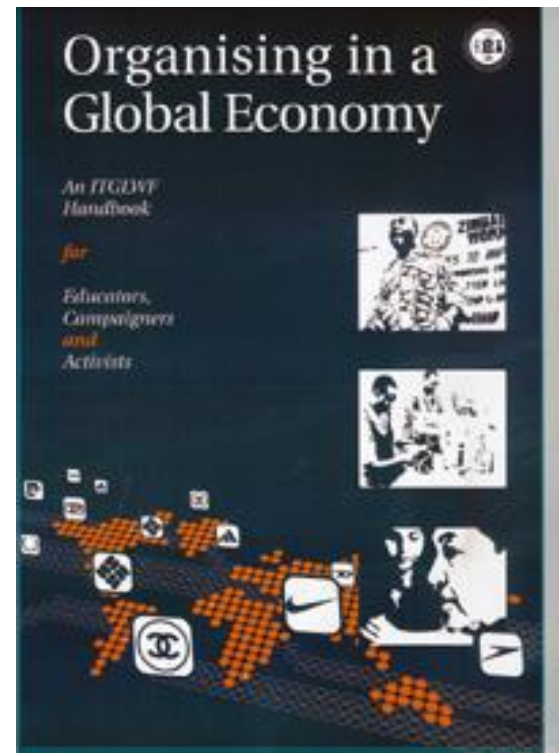
- Came out of discussions with labour activists around the development of the Global Labour Movement Charter (GLMC)
- Questions were raised on how workers and unions would be able to implement the GLMC.
- New round of discussions with labour activists around the world began, as well as reflecting and evaluating on our own solidarity work
- The Global Picketline (GPL) concept was the result of this work. This framework was used for the Airlines Campaign that came out of mass sackings at Philippines Airlines, Turkish Airlines and mass grounding of workers by Qantas.

# Background to the GPL

- The economy is global
- New communication and transport technologies have integrated the economy globally
- There are global structures and global systems
- Countries and companies that don't engage with the global economy are left behind
- For companies, engaging with the global economy means competing globally
- Global competition between companies creates a *Race to the Bottom*. Companies cut wages and conditions so that they can continue to compete

# Tactics employed by companies in the *Race to the Bottom*

- Shifting production to lower wage countries
- Keeping workers unorganised
- Using contracting out and casualization
- Pushing workers to produce more
- Cutting back on Occupational Health and Safety
- Importing migrant workers





# Response by workers

- Workers are used to organising at the local level in the workplace.
- This has produced many victories.
- With the changing economy workers need to adapt their strategies and organise in new ways.
- They need to coordinate their efforts: locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- They need to organise and show solidarity at a global level – create a global picketline.

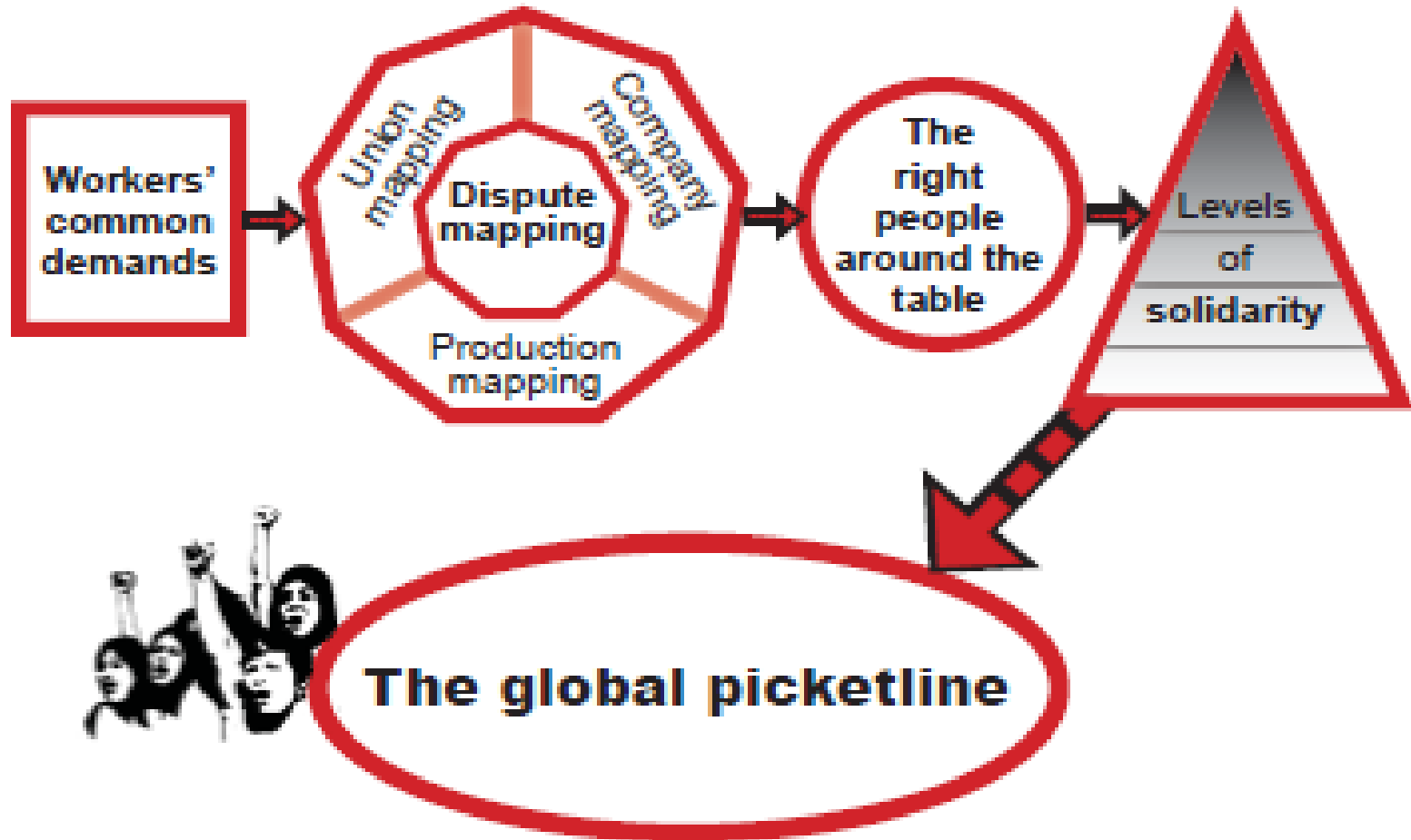
*If we want to shut down the factory ...*



*we need a picketline in front of every gate*



# The Global Picketline



# Dispute Mapping

- Dispute mapping is a method that can be used to help us understand the global situation for a particular dispute.
- It can provide critical information for a campaign.
- Dispute mapping is made up of three parts
  - a) company mapping,
  - b) production mapping, and
  - c) union mapping.



# Company Mapping

- Company mapping shows where the company operates and where its production facilities are, worldwide.
- To do the maps, you will need to look for information about the company. Look for factories and other productive assets like offices, mines, warehouses and shops. Look for subsidiaries and other trading names.
- You need to know how big company operations are, in terms of numbers of employees or contractors and volume of transactions.
- The company map will help us target solidarity actions.

# Production Mapping

Production mapping shows:

- where the raw materials or assembly products come from,
- how they reach a company,
- where critical assembly or processing happens,
- how products are shipped out, and
- where products are sold.

*A production map is developed to identify critical points where a company is vulnerable to disruption, and where their profits can be affected most easily. Once identified, these critical points can be targets of solidarity actions like pickets or occupations.*

# Union mapping – Who are you going to call?

- Find possible friendly unions and/or labour organisations that might provide solidarity because they are close, or connected politically or industrially, or along the production chain.
- Often a company may not be fully unionised. Some worksites or branches may be better organised than others.
- In some countries, the unions are government controlled and/or 'yellow', and genuine unions/labour activists have to operate underground.
- Find out where workers' forces are strongest.
- Finding out the history of disputes in a company, who are the relevant representatives of unions/labour organisations, and how they can be contacted.

# Who to involve

- When you look at the company map, the production map, and the union map, you can see where a company is vulnerable and where union action can be concentrated. This is the dispute map.
- Solidarity partners are then contacted according to what you have identified in the dispute map.

These can be people:

- In genuine unions or labour movement organisations
- Involved in the dispute, or
- Able to discuss possible solidarity campaigns with other workers in genuine unions in the same company, the same industry or in the same location

# Different levels of solidarity

- We have classified solidarity in four levels. They are not always separate from each other and more than one strategy can be used simultaneously.
- The first level is the easiest to undertake. Each subsequent level needs greater organisation, but becomes more powerful by uniting workers into more strategic and co-ordinated activities.





# Levels of solidarity (cont.)

## ***1. Solidarity messages***

Workers support other workers around the world by sending solidarity and protest messages for their struggles. This can have a big effect on the morale of the workers who are in struggle while also helping to publicise the issues.

## ***2. Connecting the struggles***

Workers show solidarity via actions. This can be in a workplace, outside company premises, or in prominent public places. Actions in the workplace have the most power. Support can also be shown through solidarity visits by workers' representatives to workers in struggle, and participating in their activities and demonstrations.

# Levels of Solidarity (cont.)

## ***3. Joint actions***

Workers solidarity becomes stronger when joint actions are undertaken. These will be planned, co-ordinated activities in more than one country that target a particular company, industry or issue. These protests and actions then form part of an ongoing, mutual solidarity campaign involving workers with agreed objectives in different countries.

## ***4. One struggle***

Workers develop a common set of demands for the company or industry, in workplaces over many different countries. Actions are organised by workers in different countries as part of one campaign. The campaign becomes one struggle carried out at a global level. This allows workers to fight at a global level and to increase global standards in wages and conditions for all workers collectively.

# The Airlines Campaign

1. On 27 September 2011, Philippines Airlines (PAL) locked out 2,600 workers in an outsourcing dispute. Philippine Airlines Employees Association (PALEA) decided to fight.
2. On 30 October 2011, QANTAS grounded all its international and domestic flights in an effort to defeat the unions in a long-running enterprise bargaining dispute. These were the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA), the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Australian and International Pilots Association (AIPA).
3. In May 2012, the Turkish government introduced changes to the law that would effectively ban aviation workers from joining a union. Members of Hava Is, the aviation workers union, protested this move. 305 workers were sacked as a result. Turkish Airlines (TA) refused to negotiate with Hava Is, resulting in a 6-month strike.

# The first steps

- An Australian labour activists met PALEA workers on a picket line. He contacted AAWL to gather solidarity.
- An international airlines campaign was developed and participants met over Skype regularly.
- Representatives from AAWL, PALEA, Hava Is, the Canadian Autoworkers Union, the Korean Federation of Public Services Union, and others participated over the course of the three year campaign.
- Other labour organisations from India, Australia, Germany and the Middle East indicated their support, but weren't able to make it onto the calls



# Connecting the workers

- Throughout the campaign, workers and their unions from around the world sent solidarity greetings to each other. The solidarity messages boosted the morale of workers of PAL and TA in particular.
- There were many solidarity visits by workers themselves.
- PALEA visited Australian unions a number of times, and they in turn visited the solidarity camp outside PAL headquarters in Manila. Korean unions visited Australia and PALEA visited Korea.



# The solidarity actions

- In 2012, on the first anniversary of the PAL/PALEA lockout, an International Day of Action was organised where actions occurred in 20 different cities in support of airlines workers.
- Towards the end of 2012, in response to a sharp increase in the legal pressure on PALEA members, workers took part in two days of coordinated leafleting at airports worldwide. Twelve cities participated. After that, there were another two coordinated leafleting actions involving multiple airports.



# The results

- After 26 months on the picket line, and nearly a year of negotiations, a settlement was reached in late 2013 which promised PALEA members a return to regular employment.
- A year and a half after the 305 TA workers were sacked, Hava Is reached an agreement that saw their reinstatement on 3 January 2014. They defeated proposed legislation banning them from taking strike actions.
- Qantas management managed to achieve many of its restructuring goals resulting in job losses.

Many factors contributed to these results, including local organising, the tenacity of the workers, union leadership and effective strategy. The ITF participated through campaigns with Hava Is, PALEA, Qantas, and rallying international ITF affiliates.



# What did we learn?

- The effect of international solidarity cannot be underestimated. The actions organised through the international airlines campaign connected on-the-ground union activists with one another and built the overall message that this is one struggle.
- Solidarity visits by workers to workplaces and the personal sharing of experience from worker to worker were some of the most powerful tools



# GPL Scenarios

- In these scenarios you will get a chance to discuss and map out how you would organise a GPL campaign.
- Each scenario is different and will have its own characteristics
- The goal is not to get the 'correct answer' but to practice a global organising model to develop the skills and tools that you can then use in your own workplaces and with your comrades in other disputes.



# What can you do?

- Build your union
- Map the companies
- Strengthen your links
- Stand together
- Connect the struggles
- Coordinate the actions



*Use AAWL's mini news list to stay connected and advertise actions*

# Where to next?

## How do we campaign for global standards on:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Wages
- Hours of work per day/week
- Annual leave provisions
- Secure employment & against casualisation and precarious work



How are we going to achieve this?

How do we build new links/structures across countries that connect workers and labour activists directly?

**GLOBAL STRUGGLE  
GLOBAL DEMANDS  
GLOBAL PICKETLINE**

**Thank you**



*Presentation by AAWL Secretary  
LabourStart Conference  
Toronto, Canada  
May 2016*

Australia Asia Worker Links  
PO Box 45 Carlton South Victoria 3053  
Australia

T | +61 3 9663 7277  
E | aawl@aawl.org.au  
W | aawl.org.au  
f | FB.com/aawl.solidarity  
t | aawl