

**Opinion**

# Labor Day recalls blood shed for rights

by Jeremy Smith

*"A working class hero is something to be." – John Lennon*

Holidays, by and large, are days of remembrance and commemoration. Aside from the parties, celebrations and general enjoyment those days give us, at their heart lies something more.

Memorial Day brings us parades and fairs, but also the somber thought of bloodshed and the military sacrifices of our veterans. The Fourth of July brings fireworks and cookouts, but also a time to remember the celebration of the birth of modern democracy and true rule of the people, essentially ending the era of the divine right of kings. And certainly, aside from the presents and holiday feasts, Christmas time brings about the true nature and feeling of the peaceful spirit of man and enduring tidings of goodwill (whether religious in nature to you, or just celebrating the solstice).

Indeed, ask any average American about any major holiday we celebrate, and more than likely they would be able to tell you the true meaning behind the holiday, its history and the somber meanings behind why we celebrate, but what of the holiday currently upon us this month—Labor Day?

What would the average American have

...I would ask you all to remember the violence and bloodshed that spanned decades here in this country that were done for nothing more than to make capitalism be a more equitable economic system to those who drive the economy for those at the top.

to say of this particular holiday and its purpose and history? Is it more than just a day that is meant to mark the end of summer, and time to stop wearing linen (and seersucker if you are brave enough)? The origins of Labor Day go back almost 130 years. The Gilded Age of the late 1800s was a time of progress and tremendous industrial achievement, but not without a large level of economic inequality and exploitative demands placed on average workers.

During this time, 12-hour/six-day workweeks, unsafe working conditions and pay that generally could not pay the rent were the norm. As a result, workers began to ask for changes to these conditions to improve their quality of life. The ownership class would not consent to these changes easily or voluntarily, and as government intervention in the marketplace in the form of regulation was non-existent at the time (except to break strikes), workers had to organize and fight for these improvements on their own.

The result of this decades-long fight was large levels of internal violence, conflict and even bloodshed. Of all the strikes and labor struggles of that time, the Pullman Strike of 1894 is one of the most remembered. One hundred and twenty-five thousand railroad workers walked off the job and struck to protest wage cuts and the union busting tactics of the Pullman Railroad Company. Deeming this a threat to national safety and an interference with U.S. mail delivery, President Grover Cleveland ordered in 12,000 Army troops and U.S. marshalls to break the strike.

In the ensuing violence, 13 strikers were killed and 57 wounded. Around this time, Labor unions had already started the tradition of a Labor Day celebration with demonstrations and parades (the first being 1882), and with a growing national concern for worker conditions and rights reaching its peak with the Pullman Strike and its tragic outcome, Congress made Labor Day

a federal holiday in 1894. By doing so, President Cleveland and congress were not only attempting to show sympathy for the tragedy, but also to concede to the growing power of organized labor.

In this current era of 30-plus years of Reaganomics, outsourcing, downsizing and free trade, the roots of Labor Day and its purpose—securing decent wages and working conditions for the average American—can easily be forgotten. So I would ask you all to remember the violence and bloodshed that spanned decades here in this country that were done for nothing more than to make capitalism be a more equitable economic system to those who drive the economy for those at the top.

The benefits of this struggle—and why we celebrate Labor Day—continue to be seen today in things such as the minimum wage, 40-hour workweeks, eight-hour work days, and workplace safety—many things we take for granted. This is the serious side and underlying meaning of Labor Day. I would hope everyone who reads this takes a moment to reflect on that, much in the same way we take time for a few moments for serious reflections on other holidays in between the parties and the fun.

*Jeremy Smith is a member of International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 8.*

## Eviction of Webster's results in victory

by Carol Gold and Jo Dumas

How can an eviction be victory in a socioeconomic environment that measures success and failure in \$ signs, profits and acquisitions? Certainly Webster's recent eviction from 128 South Allen St. was not a victory, but the story of the nearly 4,000 supporters, individuals, families, organizations and businesses who paved the way to the new temporary location of Webster's now open at 121-123 Fraser Street truly is a victory. And, we look forward to the next victory of a larger, more permanent space for Webster's in the com-



ing months.

The who, what, when, where, why and how of it should be shared widely for the hope it offers our community and communities beyond our valley, state and country. For the past month local news sources have told how the landlords refused to accept further rents from Webster's. Also loyal Webster's patrons responded with poetic



praise songs of "What Webster's means to me," action planning meetings, blogs and facebook pages to brainstorm solutions to the unacceptable loss of Webster's—our "community gathering place."

Most of us heard around July 6 that the landlords had asked Elaine to vacate the Allen Street space by July's end. A meet-

ing was called that night and 90 people attended.

We began to share ideas about how to keep our public sphere alive and well through whatever transition transpired. Petitions were drafted, circulated and signed. All supporters were encouraged to write the papers and deliver to Elaine written letters or emails articulating "What Webster's Means to Me." A "Friends of Webster's" email list was compiled from the petitions. Facebook

see Webster's, pg. 30

# BP is a destructive institutional juggernaut

“Spill is ‘worst U.S. eco-disaster’”

This BBC news headline appeared on my iGoogle homepage one morning in May. Sure. I get it. It’s bad. Since the BP Horizon oil rig collapsed in April, I have found it easy to reach new levels of despair and panic. Tragically, so have others. In June, a charter boat captain involved with the Gulf clean up efforts committed suicide in response to his own desperation.

But is this oil spill the “worst” ecological disaster in United States history? And how should we respond to such disasters?

The “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico well predates the BP oil spill. Could this not also be considered an eco-disaster of similar magnitude to the current oil spill? At some 25,000 barrels a day since late April, the flow of oil from the collapsed Horizon rig may very well augment the size of that dead zone. Or take one of the leading polluters of land, air and water in the United States: industrial agriculture. Is this not an eco-disaster as disastrous as the BP oil spill? Or take our own bodies, with ailments, like asthma, related to the pollutants we encounter on a daily basis. Is this not a contender for the worst U.S. eco-disaster in



history?

The BP oil spill is only one high-profile ripple in the pestiferous wake of a destructive institutional juggernaut. BP and the federal government’s callous disregard for life, the latter in the form of the Minerals Management Service, is only one example of the behaviors that drive that juggernaut.

As I and many others see it, the first and most immediate challenge posed by the BP oil spill is containing and minimizing its negative environmental and economic effects. Since April, this challenge has been confronted with a consistently ineffectual combination of human energy, imagination and technology. To date, the well has been capped, but oil is still leaking from the sea floor.

The second and more profound challenge posed by the BP oil spill is understanding what it teaches us about the relationship between our lifestyles and our global envi-

ronmental wellbeing.

In short, our lifestyles depend largely on pollution and environmental exploitation. That I, for example, drive a car, or that I eat primarily within the industrial food system, means that I am culpable in the chain of events that led to the on-going BP oil spill. My lifestyle creates a demand for oil, and that demand makes deep-sea drilling potentially profitable for corporations like British Petroleum.

In response to this awareness, we must work collectively to increase the mutually beneficial relationships between human beings and all that our life-activity depends upon.

For some of us, this conclusion was made long before the BP oil spill occurred. Some who have not yet drawn this conclusion, may still not draw it.

But this last observation should be of little concern to those of us who are committed to positive social change and real hope for the future. No majority of the general population, as near as I can tell, has ever struggled for democracy or aspired to “beloved community.” Rather, it has only been effectively organized minorities that

have done, and continue to do, so. So keep the faith, and keep to the work.

The faith is an awareness that more sustainable communities are possible. The work is making such a community real. Across the United States, communities are organizing for sustainability, and State College is no exception. From downtown gardening to supporting local farms, there is a strong local commitment to this work. State College recently became the 63rd Transition Town initiative in the United States, which gives us an opportunity to organize around specific, local sustainability issues.

In the wake of environmental disasters like the BP oil spill, whose effects seem incomprehensibly destructive, I feel that the best course of action is to re-focus on the local. The wellbeing of the planet is shaped by an agglomeration of millions of locals, just like ours.

The local is all that our minds and spirits can ever truly touch.

*Zachary Bullock earned teacher certification at Penn State and will teach for the Montgomery County Schools in Virginia.*

## Whitey Blue expounds on the state of downtown State College

I was talking the other day to Whitey Blue, longtime Centre Region resident and hard-nose.

Whitey, we’ve discussed this before, but don’t you have any regrets about reputable downtown places like bookstores having to close their doors and more booze joints moving in?

“Hey, this is a college town! The students get all the ‘book-larnin’ they can handle in their classrooms.”

But more and more beer and booze spots and fast-food joints are replacing the worthwhile places!

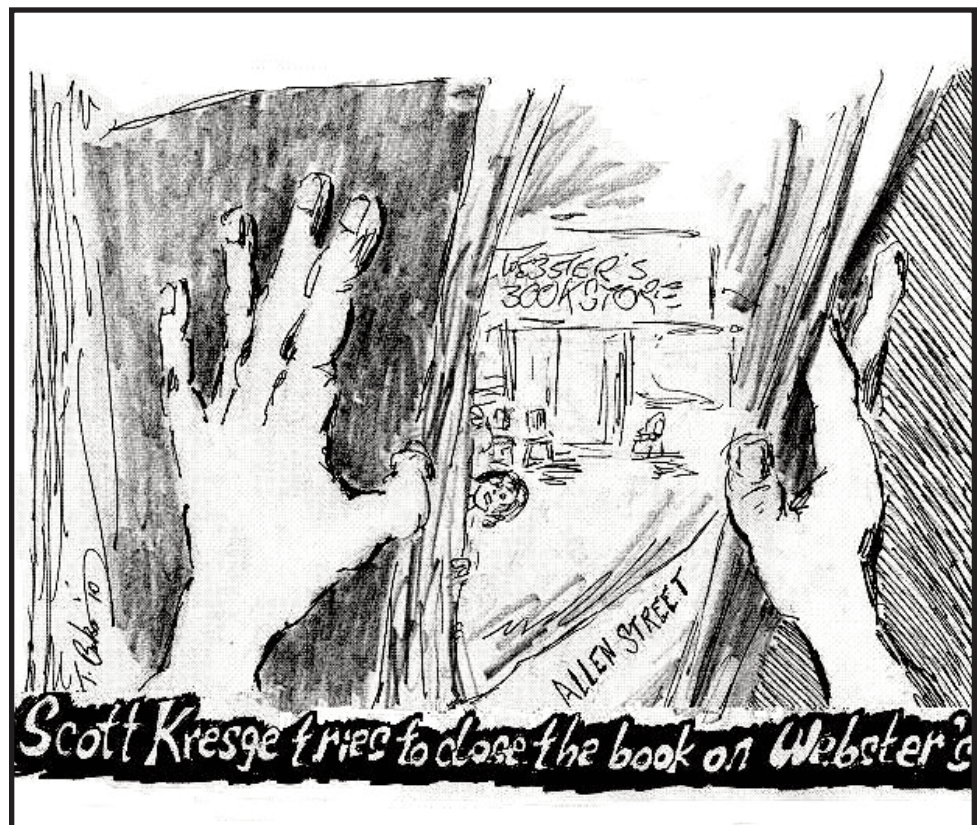
“That’s the attraction of a college town to the students. Drink-up and Chow-down! If people want bookstores let them open ‘em in these old fogley living communities. As I said before, students get enough reading in class and doing their assignments. They want to live it up when they’re in town!”

These elderly living communities are not downtown. How are people going to get to them?

“Drive or take the bus. Some of these old fitness freaks could walk to ‘em.”

David M. Silverman

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5	9	7	6	4	1	2	8	3
6	1	8	5	3	2	4	7	9



*Scott Kresge tries to close the book on Webster's*

## Letters to the editor

### Gas drilling shows corporate tyranny

Like rapidly growing numbers of Pennsylvanians, my wife and I now have a second full-time job. Lately, we've spent every free moment combating frackers' blitzkrieg, totalitarian assault on our communities.

"Totalitarian" is just the word. Give these drillers an inch, and you've lost a region you love. You simply surrender all say over safe air and water, traffic volume on roads, our rural landscapes' charm, the dollar value of homes or drug abuse and crime in your community. Any wonder Pennsylvania's finest citizens—some quite literally—are "up in arms"?

It'd be nice to say our U.S. and state reps were battling at our side. In fact, they simply macadam roads for these liberty-trampling huns. They ease their Nazi march with bills on forced pooling or eminent domain, or pulverize our last defensive bulwarks with bills gutting town supervisors' sway. In a nation founded to fight "taxation without representation," its tyranny is imposed on us daily. Presumably for our own good.

The idea of dictating to people—never asking—what's for their own good conjures up Leninist Russia. Our state and U.S. reps

now strut like the vanguard of some glorious "clean gas" future, which we poor benighted proles must swallow whole, though we'll hence build heroic statues to our wise "people's commissars." In fact, they're just the vanguard of a deranged status quo, and their dangerous coup against our water, air and lives must end as badly as the Bolsheviks'.

Already, an independent Cornell study shows that "clean gas," factoring in its extraction, is a dirtier greenhouse fuel than mountaintop coal. And for THIS we're ceding basic rights?

Tyranny has a dismal history, and corporate tyranny might prove the worst of all. It simply hands our government's command powers and planet-threatening technologies to those with vested interests against the common good. Support for a moratorium on fracking—ASAP—should be the acid test for which of our reps support corporate tyranny. And free citizens, who possess both polling booths and civil disobedience—and failing both, the Second Amendment—should then know what to do.

Patrick Walker  
Factoryville

### Thanks for excellent article on Lyme disease

I want to thank you for your excellent article by Suzan Erem in your May issue exposing the politics and misunderstood hidden symptoms of Lyme disease. Never have I read such a good article on the subject! Your article exposed the terribleness of Lyme disease through touching stories of the people affected by it.

I requested several copies of your May

issue and have given several of them out to people who work outside or have the potential of risk for Lyme Disease through their outside activities. I will continue to do this until I exhaust the supply of copies I have. Thank you for reporting on this topic.

Take care and God bless!

Mary K. Wharton

Warriors Mark

### from Webster's, pg. 28

pages were set up with news of progress and announcement of events. Two benefit concerts and a silent art auction were organized with generous donations from area artists and collectors and raised much needed cash for the move. The store closing caused a cash flow cessation, which was addressed by a creative business approach from Cogster.com for patrons to commit funds that would be up to double value in store coupons for the reopened store. Elaine was in constant consultation with organizers and we shared a strong faith a new Webster's would open.

On Sunday, Aug. 1 volunteers moved Webster's from the old into the temporary new space at 121-123 Fraser Street Plaza, recorded for posterity with Jeremy Wright's wonderful time lapse photography. The eviction was a challenge. The victory was the community coming together to meet the challenge. Through all of this, we realized that Webster's is

Webster's is more than a business; it is a community center, the heart of State College, where people of all ages and persuasions may enjoy face-to-face connection with others.

more than a business; it is a community center, the heart of State College, where people of all ages and persuasions may enjoy face-to-face connection with others. "Friends of Webster's"—continues in gratitude, readiness and constant vigilance, and looks forward to the next move to the more permanent new Webster's.

*Jo Dumas is a Senior Lecturer in the College of Communications, Carol Gold is a Senior Research Associate at the Gerontology Center, the College of Health and Human Development*

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**peace** 

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Saturdays, 1:30-2:30

and in Millheim on Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00

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# ASK Cosmo



Dear Cosmo,  
Pat Toomey looks like such a nice guy, and his family, too. Can such a smiling human be so misguided just by being funded by Wall Street, Halliburton, the oil and gas industries, and foot soldiering for Grand Old Propaganda? And more importantly, what is his record with dogs?

Signed, No Pat To Me, Thanks.

Dear Frontal Nopattoomey,  
I don't know whether he has a record or not...I don't know of any convictions, other than being convinced that the early bird will be elected chief worm. His ads indicate he believes that Nancy Pelosi is running for office in Pennsylvania, even though she's actually from California. His ads paint her as some kind of Svengali, and his opponent is some kind of zombie incapable of resisting the instructions of his evil controller.

Fox News strums that same guitar, which attributes all things liberal and evil to Pelosi's absolute lock on power. All those other, poor, victimized branches of government, and Congress, seem unable to escape her wicked grasp. I haven't seen such Sith-like powers attributed to the Speaker of the House since Newt Gingrich warmed that seat. Fox would never bark up that tree, though.

Part of the partisan rap centers around spaying the "typical liberals," who rabidly oppose trimming expenses. "Out of control spending," could also apply to TV ads running in July for an election in November. Even though it looks like he went cheap and just recycled the ads from May's primary, those air time fees still stack up. I have to wonder who's footing the shill.

I see three outcomes. Toomey's going to spend so much, so far in advance, that his opponent won't stand a chance, because the well-hypnotized public will regurgitate at the polls what it's been hearing all summer. Or, given his premature ejaculations of campaign rhetoric, he's going to shoot his entire wad long before the November climax, and the whole advertising plunge will shrink to a flaccid fizzle. Or, he'll have to tool up the thinking efforts and crank out some intelligent discourse. Then the "guilt by associa-

tion" tactic can be replaced with discussion of the non-Pelosi issues actually affecting Pennsylvania. A dog can dream, can't he?

Right now, it seems like he's banking on the intellectual laziness of voters to bring him out on top. And sadly, that strategy sometimes works pretty well...

Dear Cosmo,

One of our management people is driving the rest of us crazy. It seems like all they do is go to one management meeting after another and then complain about how busy they are. I never see them do any real work. Then again, they wouldn't have the first clue how to do any of our jobs. The place would go up in flames. They've also got this attitude that they can't talk to anyone who is "beneath" them. They complain that there is no one around who is "working at our level." They also refer to us as "worker bees." I've been at other places where bosses have called their folks "worker bees," but at least they've said it with some respect and admiration. Good bosses know they need the workers to get the job done. However, our manager says it in such a snippy way that there's no way it's a compliment. Our workplace probably isn't any different than anyone else's, I suppose. Any advice to at least make it more tolerable? Signed, This Worker Be Pissed

Dear Bee Pee Spill,

It may be that the only way you can change your boss is to change jobs. So the best way to make your present situation tolerable is for you to try to become more tolerant. Just what you need—another job duty. That doesn't mean your power-drunk boss will be magically transformed into someone less annoying; it just means you quit giving them the power to annoy you.

Ever notice that little yappy dogs can boss around the big ones? That's just the big one's noise-abatement, hassle-reduction strategy by letting the little dog have its day. Do you ever

## Campus and Culture from the Canine Perspective

see actual fear in the eyes of the big dog? More often it's a look of resignation to the effect, "Yeah, I know I could cut this barking mop down to size in no time flat, but what's the point? I'll just get in trouble for it. Better I just let the little yapster get on the nerves of someone who really matters." See how much more serene he is when he tells himself, "I should just stop and smell the cat turds. I have more important fish to roll in."

I'm not sure what "working at our level" means at your workplace. Is it a level of competence or just some level on the organizational chart?. It sounds more like your bosses' level of arrogance rather than excellence. But they probably view themselves near the top...at least in the little corner of the chart showing what's below them in their little fiefdom, rather than what's above them in the rest of the kingdom.

Some bosses can make managing a fast food restaurant sound like they're splitting the atom, or make waxing a floor seem like brain surgery. As the anointed leaders, they make it sound like supervising employees is on a par with parting the Red Sea and leading their underlings to the Promised Land. They carry around the company's strategic plan as if they personally carried it on stone tablets

from Mt. Sinai.

Some people luck into their jobs, while others "skill" into them. Some may just be pranks from a malicious god. Others may get promoted by human agency to one notch above what they are capable of performing. They may try to convince others—and themselves—of their own importance by denigrating others. It's ironic that their demand for respect is based on a lack of respect for others. That's a lack of self-esteem thing.

But if the employees are the worker bees, what are the bosses? Thinker bees? Decider bees? Planner bees? Queen bees? Does your boss realize that all worker bees are females who lack full reproductive capacity and who usually live for only six weeks during the summer? That could be grounds for a sexual discrimination complaint. If you're a guy, maybe it would be more accurate, but no less hurtful, to call you a drone... And the horsefly you rode in on, and your little dog, too.

People like that don't say "thank you," or if they do, they posture themselves by stooping to "thank all the little people" who made their success possible. So if you're a little person, just keep chanting, "Follow the yellow brick road!" But be careful, Flying Monkeys are little people, too.

### Instructions:

Fill in the grid so every row, every column and every three-by-three box contains the digits 1 through 9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reason and logic.

Thanks to Peter Morris for contributing this puzzle.

The solution to this month's puzzle can be found on page 29 of this issue.

## Sudoku

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Visit a functioning farm run on the basis of Jewish principles. A no-cost trip, but seating is limited.  
For registration, see Web site below.
- **November 7, 3:30–5p.m. - Pasquerilla Spiritual Center.** Fall Workshop: "Farming in Biblical Times"
- **December 5, 3:30–5p.m. - Pasquerilla Spiritual Center.** "Biblical Food Theology" presented by Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology, Duke University, and author of *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*.

This program was made possible by the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project, directed by the Association for Jewish Studies(AJS). Support for the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project is generously provided by Legacy Heritage Fund Limited.



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