

# Opinion: Understanding the roots of labor in the U.S.

To the community,

When I heard of the general strike in Oakland, I thought of Harry Bridges who led the general strike that shutdown the city of Seattle.

The U.S.A. has a bloody history, maybe the bloodiest labor history among the Western nations. In May 1886, the Haymarket Massacre occurred in Chicago. Seven police died. Seventy were wounded. Seven labor leaders were sentenced to death.



Bill Crawford

In 1892, the Homestead Massacre occurred. It was a steel workers strike for the right to organize. The strike was broken by the company hiring 300 Pinkerton detectives. Seven died. Finally, the state militia (Pennsylvania) was brought in and stayed for four months. No effective steel union was organized until the 1930.

On July 14, 1892, martial law was declared in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Silver miners were on strike. Federal troops were dispatched to the area.

In 1894, the Pullman strike occurred. President Grover Cleveland sent federal troops in.

Much of the "unrest" centered around labor's attempt to

organize and bargain for a 40-hour work week and to get a national holiday, Labor Day.

May 30, 1937, the Memorial Day Massacre occurred. Steel workers were demonstrating in South Chicago. They were fired upon by the police. Four were killed, 84 injured.

Presently, organized labor's numbers are shrinking. There are right to work laws in some states. In an industrial economy, if labor isn't organized, who will represent the working man and woman? Who will speak for those on the bottom? And as the middle class continues to shrink and sink to the bottom, we are regressing to the day when working people will be reduced to chattel. And the too big to fail banks, etc., will be masters over a nation of Winston Smiths.

**Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe**