

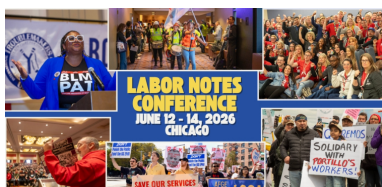
<https://internationalviewpoint.org/Four-Thousand-Worker-Activists-at-Labor-Notes-Conference-Plan-to-Fight>



USA

Four Thousand Worker Activists at Labor Notes Conference Plan to Fight

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More than 4,000 worker activists gathered in Chicago from June 12-14 for the Labor Notes Conference where they discussed the challenges facing unions and workers, shared experiences, and planned for the fights of the future. They came from across the United States and some from countries around the world. The conference began with and was permeated with a commitment to strengthen unions, to stand up to the corporations and the government, and to improve the lives of working people.

At the opening session, Labor Notes staff member Barbara Mandeloni opened the conference on a serious note: "We live in deeply tumultuous and dangerous times." And she listed the wars in Iran, Lebanon, and Palestine, the attacks on immigrants and their defenders, and the broader general assault on workers. "As someone said recently, 'Trumpian fascism is the management style of contemporary capitalism.'... So we're here to learn from each other how to organize, strategize, fight collectively and win."

In the conference workers participated in some 300 educational workshops. At the heart of the conference were discussions of contract bargaining, preparing for and conducting strikes, and workers' health and safety issues. For example, one workshop dealt with "Lessons from Health and Hospital Strikes," Another, titled "Beyond Bread and Butter" dealt with expanding what unions bargain for.

Historically Labor Notes avoided partisan politics because American workers were divided between Republicans and Democrats, this year it was hard to avoid the fact that many of our fights are against President Donald Trump. So for example, one workshop dealt with Trump's "Biggest Union-Busting Effort in U.S. History: Federal Workers Fight Back."

The conference's opening panel heard from union activists who had been involved in the struggle against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) which, as Mandeloni said, "have been kidnapping workers and breaking up their families. Eva Lopez, president of 8,000-member Service Employees (SEIU) Minneapolis Local 26 explained how the union had been involved in organizing with a coalition called Monarca that had trained 50,000 people to participate in rapid response networks to resist ICE.

Immigrant workers, Lopez said, had been terrorized, but they decided, "It was better to raise our voices together than to be terrorized at home." As they organized the movement grew. "Little by little, stores, schools, museums announced that they were joining us. We were not alone." Eventually 100,000 came out to march on January 23, 2026 and she estimated that 340,000 people had supported the strike. She pointed out that afterwards, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino had resigned and that two ICE agents had been arrested for their violent behavior. In many cities ICE was still kidnapping immigrants, but she said, "The power of the workers is greater than that of Trump and ICE."

The conference was not without controversy. Labor Notes had excluded Colleen Donovan, a member of the Teamster Mobilize network, apparently because her group has been critical of both Teamster President and Trump supporter Sean O'Brien and of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, which is allied with O'Brien. But Kieran Knudson, President of Communication Workers Local 7250 and Minneapolis activist, raised the issue in workshops, calmly stating that worker activists should not be excluded.

This largest Labor Notes Conference was focused on future action against the corporations, the billionaires, and Trump. May Day Strong, a coalition of unions, human rights organizations, and community groups, took advantage of

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the opportunity to work on organizing for a national general strike in 2028.

15 June 2026

PS:

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