

# The De-Capitalization of Fall River

*Mural Dedication Speech by Mike Alewitz*



(The following are edited remarks, delivered to a crowd of trade unionists at the building of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) on July 30, 2001, in Fall River, MA)

Some of you probably don't know who Carlo Giuliani is. He was a young Italian activist shot down by a cop while demonstrating in Genoa. After they shot him down they ran over him with their jeep. He was the first to be killed on one of these demonstrations, but he probably won't be the last. There is no important struggle that has not been won at the cost of our blood. In addition to murdering Carlo, many others were beaten and jailed. Millions of dollars were spent to isolate the government representatives from the people's demonstrations, but it didn't work. Wherever they go they are met with protesters. The officials announced at the end of the meetings that they had been traumatized by the demonstrators. They were victims, not Carlo. They are going to hold their next meeting out in a remote area of Alberta, Canada to try to avoid protests. The WTO is going to meet in Qatar for the same reason. Of course they can go hide out, but the demonstrations will continue.

What we are seeing is the birth of an important new movement. It's made up of trade unionists, environmentalists, anarchists, socialists, indigenous people, human

rights activists and many others. It is a movement for global economic justice. What does that have to do with a mural in Fall River? Everything. When you drive into this city and look at those stone mill buildings sitting empty, it is a scene repeated in hundreds of cities and towns across the country. You cannot begin to deal with the question of the de-capitalization of this town without confronting the realities of the new global economy. They took the industry and left. They went somewhere else because their profits are more important than the welfare of the workers. There are two kinds of people in this world: those who work and create wealth, and those who don't work and take the wealth. That is what we show in the mural. And that is a very frightening idea to some people.

Why did the Mayor of this city try to stop this mural? It's not only the specific image, it's that we are saying we have our own voice. We are workers - we aren't supposed to be telling our story on the walls. We're supposed to shut up and work. But whenever workers begin to get in motion, they immediately turn to the arts. When the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) knew they might be getting arrested, they would learn different poems to recite to each other in jail. When the sit-down strikes took place in Buffalo, workers formed an orchestra to serenade the masses from the factory rooftops. When textile workers struck in Paterson, NJ, John Reed organized New York artists to create a great pageant of the strike performed in Madison Square Garden. We have created this mural in that tradition, because we are looking to the future - to a revitalized labor movement that extends the hands of solidarity to our brothers and sisters - wherever they may be.

We are part of a movement demanding that the obscene profits of the rich - which get greater every day- be used instead for the betterment of humanity. The protestors in Genoa and Seattle are fighting for such a world. I am therefore dedicating this mural to Carlo Giuliani and the new movement for global economic justice. They represent the future.