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PERSPECTIVE

## The key to resolving strike woes

### GUEST COLUMN

By Angela Reddock-Wright

Earlier this month, members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees voted almost unanimously to authorize a strike against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers. Cinematographers, food workers, makeup artists and others in the industry sent a message that they wanted to see what they believe to be long-overdue changes in pay, benefits and working conditions in Hollywood and other filming locations.

A day after the IATSE vote concluded, Midwestern members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union hit the picket lines against Kellogg, threatening the nation's supply of some of its favorite cereals — Rice Krispies, Raisin Bran, Froot Loops, Corn Flakes and Frosted Flakes. Cereal workers were protesting Kellogg's threat to reduce worker benefits and export jobs to Mexico.

Without a doubt, a reduction in some of our favorite breakfast cereals will definitely inconvenience consumers. However, an IATSE strike, should one be called, will absolutely impact people, and it will be felt far and wide. Consumers of films and video — just about everybody — could immediately see a drop in studio offerings. The public outcry could push studios toward a quick resolution of the parties' dispute.

The film workers' action is shining a glaring spotlight on a worker-activism movement that has been taking shape across this

country, over multiple industries, for some time. Well before Hollywood focused the public's attention on challenging workplace issues, employees in a range of jobs and positions have been advocating for a fundamental shift in the workplace dynamic. The IATSE strike vote is merely emblematic of

harassment against women in the workplace. Similar protests have happened at companies such as Facebook, Uber, Amazon and Wayfair.

Workers — especially those who were required to put in long hours working from home this past year — know that they wield considerable power, and they expect their

together at the bargaining table to have a serious, long-overdue conversation about bridging the divide.

The pandemic changed attitudes about work, but the IATSE union's demands, as well as those of the BCTGM, are not new and this will not be the last time we see such strong worker activism. Successful companies will be those that seriously listen to worker concerns, factor in public perception, and respond with meaningful changes that balance their bottom line needs with what they've learned about remote work and flexible scheduling. For many industries, including film and theatre, the answers won't be simple, but the effort to find those answers will pay off.

**With a record number of job openings nationwide and more employees quitting their jobs, wages have actually increased recently across all sectors of the economy. The workers in these two cases were also protesting what they viewed as unacceptable employer incursions into their quality of life.**

what has already been taking place at workplaces across the country.

The post-COVID "mass resignation" has been something of a surprise to businesses, but even before the pandemic workers were pushing for better work conditions, to have more time off, and to be given a greater say in how they did their work. In recent years, companies have faced increasing challenges from workers to address not just workplace matters but also broader social, cultural, and moral issues.

In July, employees at the Irvine campus of Activision Blizzard, the maker of such popular games as "Call of Duty" and "Candy Crush," walked off the job to protest what they saw as the company's insensitive response to a state lawsuit charging it with discrimination and

employers to do the right thing. Employers who fail to recognize this and to respond appropriately could see higher rates of attrition among workers who no longer see their jobs as a lifetime commitment and are open to changing jobs. Today's job market is one in which employees can afford to shop for what fits them best.

For an increasingly vocal and activist contingent of workers, the biggest question is whether they can feel good about the companies for which they work. These workers are signaling a desire to hold employers to a higher standard and to work for companies that are more closely attuned to their need for quality of life and are better aligned with their mission and values. Now is a perfect time for employers and employees to come

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