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New Survey Of Online IWW Sign-Ups: A Wake-Up Call 3

Baltimore Jimmy John's Workers File ULP Lawsuit 5

Review: Wobbly Poet Keeps Tradition Of Labor Poetry Alive 8

Sharing Lessons With Comrades In The FAU 12

IWW UPS Workers Organize Against Police Brutality

By Screw Ups

Starting on Friday, Aug. 22, IWW workers at a United Parcel Service (UPS) sorting facility in Minneapolis began organizing against their labor supporting the ongoing police violence against the population of Ferguson, Mo., in the aftermath of the murder of Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old black man. In a series of actions aimed at a local company shipping questionable shooting-range targets to law enforcement agencies nationwide, workers stood up to the idea that they should have to support racism, brutality, or murder in order to make ends meet. This action was organized in conjunction with, and under the banner of *Screw Ups*, a rank-and-file newsletter which has been published by IWW workers at the facility for the past year.

Shortly after the murder of Michael Brown and the deployment of militarized police and national guardsmen to Ferguson, IWW workers and in-shop allies began researching Law Enforcement Targets, Inc. (LET), a company based in Blaine, Minn., which produces shooting range

targets and holds hundreds of contracts with police departments, federal agencies, and military branches across the United States. The company has held at least 10 contracts with federal agencies in Missouri, and far more with county and local police departments and other agencies. They sell product lines like "Urban Street Violence," featuring photos of stereotypical "thugs," and previously were forced to withdraw a line of targets called "No More Hesitation," featuring pictures of gun-wielding children, pregnant women, mothers, and elderly people, all as if to say that you should consider everyone you see as a threat to be gunned down. Their products are shipped through the UPS sorting facility in Minneapolis every day.

After discovering what products LET shipped, and to whom, a group of UPS workers decided they would not be silent about the connection between their work and murders, such as that of Mike Brown. Some workers removed targets from trailers that would deliver them to law enforcement agencies, while others stood in solidarity and decided not to

ferry these packages to their intended trailers. Those who were uncomfortable or unable to directly engage in these actions posed with a sign reading "#handsupdontship" in order to speak out. Actions like this took place in various work areas across the building, and were taken by people with a variety of job positions. The following Monday, several workers continued the action, setting more targets aside for the second consecutive shift. This small group included both workers of color and white workers, both IWW members and not. It was agreed that this protest would be publicized online through the *Screw Ups* newsletter.

For just over two years, the IWW has actively been organizing workers committees within the UPS hub in Minneapolis. One of the main outgrowths of this campaign has been the publication of *Screw Ups*, which is handed out by allies outside the building to workers who are on their way to clock in. This newsletter has consistently raised issues of



UPS workers display signs opposing police brutality. Photos: Screw Ups

Continued on 6

The 2014 IWW General Convention: Learning From Our Mistakes, Moving Forward



Delegates and members at the 2014 IWW General Convention. Photo: D.J. Alperovitz

By Maria Parrotta

This year I had an opportunity to join fellow workers from all over the IWW for the 2014 General Convention. The jovial Wobblies I knew and loved have been infected with the frustration, defeat and collective burnout that could have been this year's unofficial convention theme. As a delegate representing the mumbling voice of the Washington, D.C. General Membership Branch (GMB), it was my duty to defend the positions we spent five whole minutes crafting in a meeting that barely reached a quorum. I arrived at the convention concerned that our union was falling into a rut, but I left afraid that we are just falling apart.

Our first order of business became a battle between members of our dysfunctional and slightly intimidating host branch and almost everyone else. The delegates voted to remove a Chicago branch member from the convention due to very

serious accusations that kept other fellow workers from participating. Supporters of the accused stormed out in a whirlwind of obscenities as the convention hall fell silent except for the scattered slap of hands meeting foreheads.

The Chicago split faction ruled that the primary legislative body of the union did not have the right to decide who could be present for their session. They proclaimed their authority as the chosen Complaint Committee tasked with determining the safety of this member's actions. They claimed that since they had not yet reached a conclusion on this case, the convention should have continued as if no question of safety was ever raised, and the delegates traveling from all over the world to serve this union were just going to have to take the risk of sitting next to a dangerous person, because procedure.

I am a big supporter of following the
Continued on 6

A Labor Day Weekend For The Unseen Laborers

By Kaia Hodo

At around 3 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 30, a group of four exhausted Wobblies from Arkansas did our best to fall asleep in a Chicago multicultural center, all the while being serenaded by jam bands who probably didn't sleep at all. By about 9 a.m., we had already left for a union hall, where we would spend the rest of our day meeting with other IWW members from



Members of IWOC meet in Chicago. Photo: Lenz

across the country (Illinois, Minnesota, California, Missouri, Alabama and Ohio, to be specific). The purpose of the conference, a two-day set of meetings of people who had mostly only spoken over the phone

up to this point, was prisoner organizing.

Just to give a brief overview, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, passed in 1865, abolished slavery and
Continued on 7

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In November We Remember

Send in your announcements for the annual "In November We Remember" issue of the *Industrial Worker* by Friday, October 3, 2014. Celebrate the lives of those who have struggled for the working class with your message of solidarity. Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to:

IWW GHQ, P.O. Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, United States.

- \$12 for 1" tall, 1 column wide
- \$40 for 4" by 2 columns
- \$90 for a quarter page

The IW Should Be Encouraging Organizing

Dear Editor,

I am so very disappointed in the June 2014 *IW* article, "Worker Cooperatives: Crashing In The Same Car," by Ogier (page 4). It starts off with information and facts about a worker-owned cooperative store. The job sounds better than any working-class job I have ever heard of in the United States. The workers cooperatively found ways to be able to build much better lives for themselves. The second part changes away from facts to a list of complaints based on Ogier's guesses, one out-of-context sentence he disliked from one moment with one worker, and then goes into a classic right-wing attack on the left.

The whole point of the IWW is to build toward a cooperative society run by workers that gives us a much better life. While we work toward that goal, many of our best, most active Wobs are earning their daily pay in worker-owned cooperatives,



Graphic: stickerkitty.com

from Just Coffee to the Sisters' Camelot strikers who have formed a new co-op, the North County Food Alliance. The North County Wobs sent \$300 for solidarity on the first day of the strike of the Citizens Co-op Wobs in Gainesville, Fla. I wish the rest of us could be that strong in our solidarity. Why can't the paper report on positives like those more often?

This article in the *IW* will only deny, degrade and disrupt the best efforts of the IWW and our allies. This style of a story is the opposite of the organizing and recruiting tool the *IW* used to always be. Please try to have reports that educate, and organize our people, not show some immature ultra-leftist who thinks he or she is a perfectionist and everybody else is wrong, especially our most successful people.

Best wishes for the future *IW*.

**Tom Keough
Brooklyn, NY**

Read & Contribute To A New Wobbly Blog!

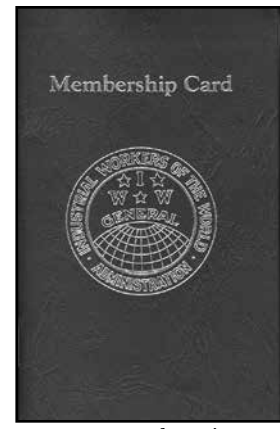


Photo: iww.org

IWW membership card. "Getting your second five-year card," "Wildcat political strikes," a report from the 2014 IWW General Convention and an ongoing series called "Taboo Marxist of the Month."

I invite my fellow workers to check out the blog, and to consider writing a guest submission. The URL is: <http://lifelong-wobbly.wordpress.com>.

One class one enemy,
Brandon Oliver

Readers' Soapbox continues on page 11!

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IWW Organizing

New Survey Of Online IWW Sign-Ups: A Wake-Up Call And Call To Action

By FW db

An IWW intern recently did a study of online IWW sign-ups, receiving 38 responses, and I hope we take a moment to seriously consider what was learned, and what this means. Here are some highlights of the study:

- Around 70 percent who signed up online were 18-35 years old, 20 percent were 36-55, and 10 percent were 56-75.
- 92 percent of the respondents identified as male, 2 percent identified as female, and 5 percent otherwise.
- 63 percent of respondents identified as straight, 35 percent as queer in some way; 10 percent preferred not to say.
- 95 percent of respondents identified as white, with a 2 percent response rate for Black/African American and from Asian descent, and 5 percent response rate for American Indian, Arab, and Latino.
- 95 percent of respondents had spent some time at college, 63 percent held a bachelor's degree, and 36 percent held a master's degree or Ph.D.
- 95 percent claimed fluency in English, 8 percent in Spanish, and 2 percent in French, Czech, and German.
- 42 percent identified as atheists, with a majority in the theist choices.

Ok, wow. Who is coming to the current idea of the IWW?

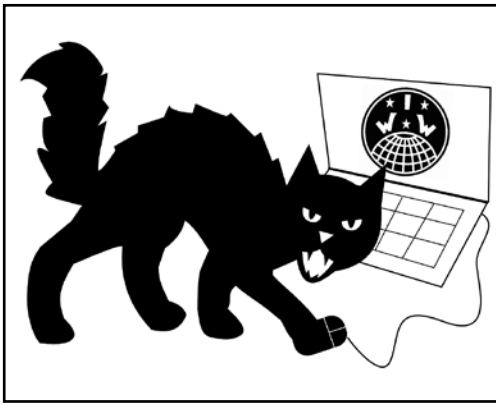
Let me say it this way. A revolutionary movement that is about liberation must, by its nature, be made up overwhelmingly of those who have a direct personal stake in revolution. As such in the United States, this must be overwhelmingly by people of color, immigrants, people with little formal education, a majority of whom are women, with over-representation from queer communities. Well, fellow workers, we got the last part, the queer part, though that too needs to be assessed by economic, racial, and educational background.

Right now, the IWW is projecting, via all our work—in-person, online, and so forth—that we are a primarily white, male,

young, college-educated union. This is the scary reality our online sign-ups are showing us. And I say scary because I've been to college and know what happens when you're around a bunch of white dudes when they're drinking. Or in any setting for that matter.

I've also been around the IWW and know the predominance of this as a reality, and the way that this silences people of color, women, and people with low socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. It also makes conflicts about any of these lines of oppression—sexual assault for instance—worse, because the demographic realities and previous silences make such incidents all the more painful. I have been told it feels very different to be a woman or a person of color when surrounded by men or white people, including a rapist or a bigot, than when the demographics are more reflective of our revolutionary class. The point is, not only is an unrepresentative membership a barrier to changing our demographics, but it can also make the inevitable behavior of some of our members worse.

I hope this survey is a serious wake-up call. Personally it makes me seriously question how I am going to move in this union that is attracting 92 percent men from online sign-ups. To be clear, this is not an argument for quitting. I have put too much time and know too many god damn good organizers to quit right now. But if we don't see people get moving, and with the fierce urgency of "this is really important; let's slow down and figure this out without quick fixes or token gestures," then maybe I will start thinking about it.



Graphic: X378461

Yes I fit all of these demographics, and yes I can do something about it.

How can we change the idea and the reality of the IWW?

First, I think we need to get out of the mindset of quick fixes even as we should be seeking strategies and tactics that fix things, even though quicker would be nice.

Second, if your branch or work committee has more than two people and is predominantly white or male you are probably doing something wrong! This may be hard to hear, and as someone who has done lots of work in all-white or largely male committees it is hard to say. But it is also true. In writing this I also got this suggestion for the union from a right-on IWW organizer who has walked the walk: "If you are organizing in food and retail where the majority of workers are women of color, then your committee MUST be predominately women of color or it will no longer be seen as an IWW-sponsored campaign. It will not receive the support of the IWW or its resources. We must be much more selective of who we spend time developing into leaders and recruiting as members." Can you say this about your campaign? About your branch? Where do we step to make this different?

Third, I think we need to realize that the best advocates for these changes are already in the IWW—committed organizers who already are or are trying to expand the idea and reality of the IWW beyond the current pale reality. Are you a good organizer? Support these organizers in their efforts by committing your first priority time to helping their projects grow. This also applies to branches as a whole. This

is how we start branches or campaigns or committees right, and set them up to grow into something actually important and potentially revolutionary. If we don't do this I'm not convinced we are doing much more than talking a big game. Focus on the Food Chain and the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), in all their questions and imperfections, are both examples of this. And both focus exclusively on one of the most oppressed, revolutionary, and active sections of the working class. It should also be pointed out that for our all radical talk, most poor people, regardless of race and gender, are actually far more militant than the average IWW member, and if we can't differentiate between talk and action, they sure as hell can. That is something we need to chew on when we talk about the IWW. And think about who are future leaders should be.

Fourth, we have got to start running events and actions and pamphlets and campaigns on issues that don't impact middle-class white men, like police brutality, like patriarchy, like not having documents, or having a felony conviction, or being pregnant. And we have to be careful that a bunch of middle-class white men who have good things to say about such things do not come to the committee meetings or events, and sometimes even actions, until we have a vast majority of those who are directly linked to the diverse struggles at hand. Yet we should make sure that this diverse new leadership is being mentored and funded to the best of our abilities, because they are our future, and our future leadership. What is more important?

Fifth, our website, newspaper, and social media should look as diverse as the revolution we want to be a part of. When IWOC launched we were like "Shit! Do we not have ANY black (or Latino, Native, or really female) people or ideas on our website, anywhere!?" We have all of these types of people in this union presently and historically, and we use abolitionist language in the Preamble for Christ's sake. Can we please work on this? And in the pamphlets we create or reprint from other sources? And in the graphics we use? Now? This we have no excuse for and should change in every next thing we ever do. Always.

Sixth, I think we need to critically consider the truly toxic impact a small amount of problem causers and gatekeepers are having on individual branches, committees, and organizing campaigns, that keeps them from growing. It only takes one person to create these problems. And we are all capable of it. I've done it before. Let me strongly encourage preventative measures, early intervention, and the willingness to say that no one is bigger than this union and our revolutionary mission. Not you, not me.

Finally, I want to point out how, if we improve how we treat each other, we will all benefit! This applies to the religious/spiritual members—a majority of online sign-ups!—who don't need to be looked down on by our atheist members. Creating a welcoming and aware culture for low-income people or women supports people of color stepping into leadership, and vice versa. It is not anti-male to be against patriarchy. It is not anti-white people to be against white supremacy. It is not anti-middle class people to be against capitalism! Nor does an acknowledgment of patriarchy silence the trials, including horrific ones, that men face, including with individual women. Freedom from oppressive systems betters us all; emancipation is about all of us. Yet we will not free ourselves if the least among us do not become the first among us in the struggle, because if we do not free ourselves we are not free.

There is no time like the present to make real steps towards become a more truly revolutionary organization.

Thoughts? Email me: db@riseup.net.

IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially—that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.

I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.

I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

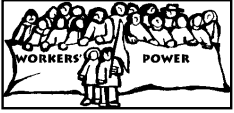
City, State, Post Code, Country: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the **Industrial Worker**.



Preventable Mistakes

By Juan Conatz

A lot of the knowledge and skills we pass down in the IWW are the basics, the initial steps, the first things you do. We try to institutionalize this stuff so members learn and then build off them. Rather than leaving people to themselves, making it necessary to reinvent the wheel every time, we promote member education through programs like the Organizer Trainings 101 and 102. The idea is that once you become familiar with what needs to be done, you'll do those things automatically. And as you get better, you can assess how you've done or whether the steps and skills handed down need to be altered or improved in some way. But even those of us who know better make mistakes.

Like FW db said in his article "Toward A Union Of Organizers," (July/August 2012 *IW*, page 3), there are certain things that are good to do regardless of whether or not a Wobbly plans to organize at their workplace. Maybe organizing isn't in your plans now, but those plans could change. Plus, sometimes situations arise and you need to react. Just such a situation happened to me recently, where simple mistakes and lack of preparation hurt my efforts.

At a warehouse on the south side of Minneapolis, I was employed at a small company that specialized in buying overstock and customer return loads from large online retailers. For a good part of the day, we would break down the pallets from these loads and sort through the items. While sorting one of these loads, a co-worker made a joke about taking a PlayStation 2 home with him in front of the warehouse supervisor. Such jokes were common, even by the supervisor, but this time it was different.

The next day, the owner of the company was in the building, and there were rumors that there were items missing from the load. This was actually pretty common. The packing lists rarely matched what actually came off the truck. Sometimes there were things missing, sometimes there was extra. This was known by everyone, including the owner.

Regardless of this fact, my co-worker who had cracked the joke was fired within the hour. Three years working at this com-



Photo: ufcwest.org

pany and he was out the door because of an offhand remark. Pissed off, two other co-workers and I confronted the warehouse supervisor about this. We quickly picked up that personal reasons between him and the fired co-worker were the root of all this. All eight of us on the floor were mad and very little work was getting done. A few hours later, the owner called a meeting, where he tried to explain why he fired the guy and why we should understand it. This ended with the two co-workers and I getting into a shouting match with him.

Tempers were flaring and you could cut the tension in the air with a knife. This was now a "hot shop." I never planned on organizing there, but that was now irrelevant. We had to try and get this guy's job back and to establish some meager concerted activity protection for the two others and I who stood up. I tried to push that anger toward a conversation later, rather than loud complaining that would eventually dissipate and collapse into hopelessness. After texting the fired co-worker, we agreed to talk on the phone after work. With another co-worker I set up a one-on-one meeting for the next day, so we could talk about our options and so I could get contact info for everyone.

There was a preventable mistake with the planned one-on-one though: no firm date and time. As we got off work and entered the New Year's Eve break, no one would get back to me. The timing was off, but my failure to do a simple thing like agree to a specific date and time led it to not being a priority on a busy holiday. If I had better prepared by sticking to what I've been taught and know how to do it, things may have turned out differently.

In the end, a few of us ended up quitting and finding other jobs, a Band-aid solution that solves nothing but transferring our misery to another low-wage job.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 76

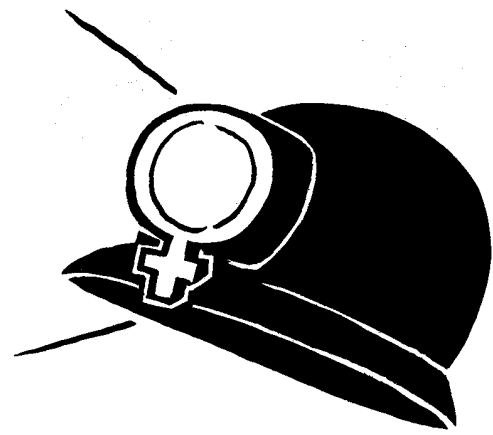
Miners Rebel

A crisis in the mineworkers' union led to the formation of a new, progressive union at a Pittsburgh convention on Sept. 9, 1928. Taking their place at the founding of the National Miners' Union were 42 women representing women's auxiliaries.

Miners in Indiana, Ohio and western Pennsylvania had undergone long bitter strikes in 1927-1928. The women in the mining communities had been at the heart of those struggles. Many of them had braved (and in some cases beaten up!) Coal and Iron police, company thugs and state troopers and had withstood jail and tear gas.

Mrs. Ora Boyce, a black woman who represented the Indiana women's auxiliaries, became part of the new union's National Executive Committee.

"The NMU organized the women in the coal towns as well as the men," writes historian Philip Foner. "Women's auxiliaries played an invaluable role during strikes, and women were given a voice in formulating strategy."



A female organizer, Frieda Trugar, was assigned to set up women's auxiliaries in mining camps in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. The auxiliaries campaigned for a program that included: the abolition of company stores; free medical and maternity services for miners and their families; and sanitary conditions in company housing.

In strikes, like the strike wave that swept through hundreds of northern mines in the summer of 1931, the NMU women's auxiliaries were a crucial component of the miners' struggles.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

It's Time To Organize The Rustbelt

By Martin Zehr

"Every union should have a vision of the future," stated Jock Yablonski as he announced his candidacy for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) presidency in 1969. "What good is a union that reduces coal dust in the mines only to have miners and their families breathe pollutants in the air, drink pollutants in the water, and eat contaminated commodities?"

Rallies held on July 31 in Pittsburgh focused on new regulations by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on emissions from power plants. The UMWA organized a rally to protest these regulations at a hearing. "The UMWA estimates the rule could take as much as \$208 billion out of coalfield communities over the next 20 years," reported West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

These new regulations are certainly an indication of the profound character of the steps being taken against working people. These measures have no systematic approaches that establish compensation for workers' jobs and families impacted. Even during the Rustbelt shutdowns, when steel mills closed down throughout the northeastern United States in the 1980s, at least steelwork-

ers were provided a modicum of support from the Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) for retraining and income support due to imports.

Since that time and because of the transformation of unions into company unions, today union leaders are promoting corporate profits as their job programs at the expense of the health and safety of working people. So steelworkers rally in Munhall, Pa., with U.S. Steel and promote fracking and the Keystone XL pipeline and then not even a month afterwards, U.S. Steel shuts down National Tube in McKeesport. Rural communities bear the price of contaminated spring waters caused by fracking, while Texans come in and take the jobs. There's not even a correlation between fracking and the local economy that demonstrates more jobs for local people.

As mountaintop removals continue in West Virginia and the UMWA loses members, the impact continues to increase exponentially. Likewise, the political domination by corporations has already resulted in the contamination of the water for 300,000 West Virginians along the Elk River. The plunder is not simply to pump up corporate profits, but it is also to keep workers having from any say in regards to their own lives. The same Jock Yablonski

quoted at the top of this article was murdered in 1969 by Tony Boyle, who was then the president of the UMWA. Yablonski dared to demand that unions defend the rights of miners and all workers to a decent life. He dared to confront the coal bosses and the hacks killed him for that.

This is not a debate about climate change. This is not about environmentalism or even reducing greenhouse emissions. This is about the price being paid by ordinary working folks for the benefit of the world's biggest corporations.

This is about a government that continues to tax the poor to support the rich. The burden carried in working-class communities is that we are told to accept the contamination of our air and water so that the rich can get richer. The taxes we pay for agencies that are supposed to oversee public health and safety is being squandered by the domination of government. Eugene Debs said it succinctly: "The class which has the power to rob upon a large scale has also the power to control the government and legalize their robbery."

The fact is that coal mining currently employs 120,699 in the United States



Jock Yablonski talking to miners, 1969. Photo: explorepahistory.com

today, which is down 15 percent from 20 years ago, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. Much of the new employment is centered in open-pit mines of Wyoming. That's not happening because of EPA regulations. It is time we speak up for ourselves and stop letting so-called "leaders" speak for us. If we really want to fight for jobs, it's time we do it together. No pain, no gain. Spittin' in the bucket won't give us water to drink. We've got to go to the well. Let's make sure that spring isn't contaminated by false leaders and corporate polluters. Let's organize where we are for One Big Union.

Wobbly & North American News

Baltimore Jimmy John's Workers File Lawsuit

By Mike Pesa

The Baltimore IWW filed six unfair labor practice (ULP) charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) against Jimmy John's Gourmet Sandwiches, Dolchin Pratt LLC, on Aug. 22. Jimmy John's workers, organizers, and supporters marched on the boss to make the announcement, temporarily stopping work at the Pratt Street store in Baltimore's bustling Inner Harbor.



Jimmy John's workers and supporters. Photo: Baltimore IWW

"We informed the owners when we went public that we expected no retaliation against us," declared Jimmy John's worker and union member Brendan Camiel. "If they continue to fight us, we'll continue to respond with escalating actions. I hope we've made it clear today that they won't get away with intimidating the workforce."

The charges accuse Jimmy John's franchise owner and general manager Mike Gillette of illegally retaliating against workers who engaged in protected union activity by interrogating workers about their involvement in the union, recording workers without their consent, disciplining workers for issues that have never previously warranted written disciplinary action, and threatening to discipline a worker if he did not remove an IWW pin from his uniform. In the weeks since the Pratt Street workers announced their membership in the IWW, management has become much more strict about enforcing rules that they had not observed in the past. Managers have bluntly admitted to the workers that this crackdown was a direct response to union activity.

Only a few days after the announcement of these new charges, the NLRB ruled in favor of the IWW Jimmy John's Workers Union in an older case stemming from a 2011 action in Minneapolis that demanded paid sick days. Jimmy John's had fired six union members in retaliation for that action. In the recent decision, the court upheld an earlier ruling, declaring

that the firings were illegal and ordering Jimmy John's to reinstate the workers with full back-pay.

This victory has further emboldened Jimmy John's workers in Baltimore, who have been gaining national attention since announcing their membership in the IWW on Aug. 9. Since that time, the union has engaged in a tip cup action, two national "phone blasts," informational pickets, and the aforementioned march. On Labor Day, Baltimore Jimmy John's workers participated in a national day of action along with IWW members and supporters across the country.

The workers' demands are centered around a five-point program that includes fair pay, consistent scheduling, paid sick days, driver compensation and safety, and a harassment-free work environment. Since the Pratt Street store is located in a building owned by the Hilton hotel chain, the union is also insisting on wage parity with Hilton workers who have equivalent job descriptions. This would raise the average Jimmy John's worker's wages by more than \$3 per hour.

The ULP charges are only one component of a multi-pronged strategy by the Jimmy John's Workers Union to win better wages and working conditions and more power on the job. Regardless of the outcome of this case, workers are determined to keep the pressure on the company to meet their demands. As the next few months unfold, there may be more surprises in store for Jimmy John's.

Strike At Seattle Restaurant Over Tip Theft



Strike at La Lot restaurant on Aug. 14. Photo: libcom.org

By John Kalwaic

The wait staff at La Lot, a Vietnamese restaurant in Seattle, went on a brief strike because management was stealing 60 percent of their tips. Management would also often verbally abuse the underpaid staff, whose need for a job made them afraid to speak out. Many of them had no idea how the labor laws could work to their advantage. Hien, a worker at the restaurant, realized the exploitive nature of the restaurant's working conditions and began to organize her fellow workers.

Hien approached her manager and asked about the tip situation. The manager agreed to let employees retain a greater share of their tips. When her schedule

was reduced to only one day a week, she knew that the manager was retaliating against her. One of Hien's co-workers, Jeff, joined her in investigating options to redress their grievances, including contacting the Washington State Department of Labor. However, the system for filing unfair labor practices (ULPs) seemed slow and would take much more time than they could afford. Hien and Jeff then turned to the Seattle Solidarity Network (SeaSol) for support. On Thursday, Aug. 14, Hien and Jeff marched on La Lot restaurant with 50 supporters from SeaSol. The other workers at the restaurant were too scared to go on strike. Because of the action, they successfully shut down service at La Lot twice. In an about-face, the owner of La Lot agreed to their demands, including fair tips and restoring Hien's schedule to normal.

With files from Seattle Free Press and Libcom.

Boston Wob Battling Leukemia Needs Your Help

By Geoff Carens

IWW member Chris "Max" Perkins has been diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia. An experienced journeyman carpenter (and apprentice plumber and electrician), Max now undergoes chemotherapy. He is disabled from working due to symptoms and side effects like joint pain, nausea, lethargy and sleeplessness. He has spots on his lung and recently underwent a brain



FW Max Perkins at a rally. Photo: FW Le Le Lechat

scan. Max's very small income means he urgently needs support with housing costs. His friends in the Boston IWW General Membership Branch (GMB) appeal to all Wobs who can contribute any funds to please consider supporting Max in a difficult time.

Max is an activist of long standing in the struggles for environmental, workers' and animal rights, and anti-fascist campaigns. Max remembers that "the police did nothing," when neo-Nazi skinheads marched in Germany and England in the 1980s. He helped organize counter-demonstrations, enduring tear gas, broken bones and hospitalization in his zeal to shut the racists' rallies down. As a member of the Hawaii Carpenters' Union, Max took part in strikes over wage theft and the use of scab labor, and fought corruption in his union local. At Occupy Long Beach, Max helped organize a protest against police brutality when cops attacked a veteran of the Iraq war, choking him unconscious for no reason. Max explains, "I spent three months in Lincoln Park in Long Beach during winter in a tent," facing down police harassment. "I had a place I rented, but I chose to be in the park." Max recalls, "I fed the homeless and helped mentally ill people. The cops bussed people out of county jail, sent them to Occupy to try to make it impossible. I know first aid, and as a former EMT [emergency medical

technician], I know de-escalation techniques," he said. These are skills which were in high demand in the Occupy camp. A Wobbly for many years, and now an active member of the Boston IWW, Max is a fixture at pickets by the Wobs and by other unions. In recent years he's marched for Harvard workers exposing racial discrimination on the job, helped local Wobblies invade the Flagship Gap store in touristy Faneuil Hall to protest factory disasters in Bangladesh, and helped bring the noise to many raucous night-time pickets during Boston's *Insomnia Cookies* strike (which ended with offers of re-employment and cash settlements for Wobblies fired for striking).

Max has been a musician since he was a teen, and has performed with anarcho-punk acts including *Radical Apathy*, *Plain Truth*, *Threatening Gesture* and *Napalm*. His sadly-disbanded group *Radical Apathy* toured a number of IWW branches just a few months ago. Scraping by on a meager disability check, Max had a place to live in September, but still needs housing for the coming months, and has little ability to earn income.

Wobs who want to support FW Max can send a check, made out to "Chris" Perkins, to Boston IWW, P.O. Box 391724, Cambridge, MA 02139. All proceeds will go towards Max's housing costs and living expenses.

Upstate NY Wobs Picket Baseball Hall Of Fame



FWs Rochelle Semel & Paul Poulos. Photo: Greg Giorgio

By Greg Giorgio

The Upstate New York Regional General Membership Branch (GMB) of the IWW went to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and museum in Cooperstown, N.Y., on June 16 to conduct an informational picket which called on Major League Baseball (MLB) to guarantee the same rights for garment workers that exist in their own players' collective bargaining agreement. Wobblies set up a small literature table with several issues of the *Industrial Worker* available, as well as copies of the latest edition of the anti-sweatshop newsletter produced by the GMB, called *Black Cat Moan*. This action was conducted in conjunction with a petition drive put together by the IWW International Solidarity Commission's Bangladesh Working Group. It calls on outgoing MLB Commissioner Allan Huber "Bud" Selig to implement standards in the garment industry from suppliers in Bangladesh, Guatemala, Cambodia and other countries to provide for collective bargaining, overtime pay and paid leave for garment workers.

The Upstate New York GMB has been

involved in actions at the Baseball Hall of Fame for over a decade. And while the Hall of Fame is not owned or operated by the MLB, the owners are closely tied and sell the sweatshop-produced, licensed logo gear in their gift shop as a foundation of their income. It is difficult to get baseball fans who are coming to the hall to divert their attention from their adulation of their favorite players and teams. But the idea is to engage the curious ones about the contradictions of a league that promotes itself to youngsters in the United States and Canada, yet exploits them to produce profits from sweatshops elsewhere.

"Get the kids out of the factories!" shouted Fellow Worker Martin Manley after about 40 minutes into the hour-long demo. He said he had an epiphany while handing out copies of the flyer and petition as hundreds of young boys and girls were streaming into the museum from baseball junkets they attend around the area. Hundreds of youth league teams come to Cooperstown to tour the shops and the Baseball Hall of Fame while they play in tournaments which attract them from all over the United States. The other Wobblies in attendance couldn't ignore the stark irony that we can celebrate our youth and the baseball culture here, but in places like Bangladesh, some children are killed in factory disasters to produce some of the garments the kids here are wearing!

Petitions from this action and efforts in Pittsburgh and other Wobbly areas were mailed to Commissioner Bud Selig's office in early July. No reply was received at the time of this writing.

Front Page News

IWW UPS Workers Organize Against Police Brutality

Continued from 1

management harassment, speed-ups, sexual harassment and sexism, racial discrimination on the shop floor, and more, while soliciting contributions from other workers via email. The newsletter has educated workers about their rights on the job and called out the exploitation of workers by both UPS and the Teamsters union, which is happy to collect dues from the half of UPS' workers working in sorting hubs while forcing concessionary contracts onto the rank and file, preserving poverty wages and sweatshop conditions for those of us whose labor makes UPS a multi-billion dollar company.

However, the newsletter has only been one part of the IWW activity at the hub. IWW workers and others have frequently confronted management on issues of safety, harassment, and more through collective actions. CB, an IWW organizer, noted, "We all know that conditions at our work are unsafe. We all know that we work too hard for too little pay. We know

that the Teamsters either can't or won't do anything to fix these issues. And we know that we're going to have to fight to change things."

The IWW has always refused to restrict itself to issues of wages and conditions and has encouraged workers to fight against exploitation and oppression both on the shop floor and off it. Unlike other unions and workers' organizations which see things such as police brutality as "outside issues," the IWW has a long history of fighting against the ways that workers are forced to uphold systems of oppression. "The rules say you have to do what you're told at work. Doesn't matter what you're shipping, what horrible things are being done with them, UPS doesn't care, so you don't care," said J.B., another IWW worker. "Luckily, breaking the rules is what the IWW does best."

He further added, "We don't want to take the place of the Teamsters here. What we want is for workers to have an organization that can fight for—and win—meaning-



Fellow workers stand against police brutality in Chicago.

Photo: Diane Krauthamer

ful, concrete improvements in our work and in our lives. We need an organization that isn't afraid to stand behind workers when we confront management and isn't interested in some long, drawn-out bureaucracy. If they want to keep doing that, good for them. That's their game, but it's not ours."

IWW workers at the Minneapolis hub have stated that they are committed to continuing to organize with their

co-workers in order to directly fight against management abuses and other issues workers face. They are also working with UPS workers in other hubs to help them form similar committees and organizations, and are happy to talk to anyone interested in doing so. They urge any interested UPS workers to email the committee at screwups@riseup.net, and add this message to fellow workers: "Don't wait, organize!"

The 2014 IWW General Convention: Learning From Our Mistakes, Moving Forward

Continued from 1

rules, but the intent of the procedure is violated when it gives anyone control over another person's safety or if it in any way adds to the trauma of victims and survivors who are seeking our support. If the complaint procedure can be used to make our convention a forum where those who speak out for justice or cry out for help are voiceless and hidden while the accused remorselessly claims our space as his procedure-given right, we need to fix that process. Our constitution did not come from some god's fiery hand engraving "whereas" statements on stone slabs. Our union wrote this constitution, and it belongs to each and every one of us to interpret and change. If you demand that people adapt to your rules rather than adapt your rules to the people, you are doomed to dogmatic, self-righteous isolation until you are eventually reduced to peddling poorly-assembled newspapers at every political demonstration like the revolution depended on it. Just trust me on this one.

So many of these conflicts are the direct result of a union that is unable to keep cohesion among its members and an internal culture that is completely clueless about how to conduct union business. At any given point you could step outside the convention hall and find at least one disgruntled Wobbly smoking cigarettes and soapboxing about the IWW's shortcomings. You would hardly recognize that soap-boxer as the bored delegate doodling through the endless dissection of each word in a resolution that probably won't pass anyway. That delegate will not stand up and say what they really think because every word will somehow be taken as a personal statement. The IWW culture does not communicate a clear border between union business and personal relationships, and it's starting to put a strain on both.

Fortunately, the rest of convention was walkout-free after the Great Schism of 9:30 a.m., but the lingering effects of such unexpected hostility gave the proceedings on the convention floor a particularly meek and disoriented tone. Nervous Wobs spoke with extra delicate language, passively dancing around anything resembling confrontation. While we made the right decision on the Chicago question when a vote was put in front of us, our self-conscious, evasive response to conflict does not inspire confidence in a union. The convention did not feel like the annual assembly of radical labor; it sounded more like the first meeting of a student organization where people only show up for the free pizza.

Confronting difficult problems within the structure of a business meeting is such a struggle for us because we can not seem

to leave our social lives outside. So many arguments on the floor were inflated with niceties and indirect, apologetic explanations that it was hard to understand what anybody really meant. Nobody wants to be rude or make their friends feel bad, but we can't overthrow power when we're running around a maze of social dynamics every time we need to make a decision. Business meetings are there to get things done, and that means being decisive and direct with our ideas knowing that our fellow workers understand that everybody is there to do what is best for the union. In the end, we should feel comfortable accepting the result of our democratic process and picking up friendships where we left them before the meeting.

One of the most striking impressions I got from the convention is that, like the seams on our members' unwashed pants, this union feels like it's held together by a few worn threads and some haphazard stitches of dental floss. It made me uneasy to watch all the work of hosting a convention fall on the exhausted shoulders of the few solid local Wobs. Most delegates I spoke to were irritated by the consistently poor planning and lack of communication. We heard nothing about our housing arrangements until the very last minute, when most of us had already either made alternate plans or were considering pitching a tent in the park again. We got an inside look into our administrative failures, and to quote one fellow worker, "I knew it was bad, but it's so much worse." We also got an inside look into the Chicago GMB, and I completely understand that good help must be very hard to find. Still, there's only so much a person can take, and some people were expected to take much more than that. It was a relief to make it to the end of convention with both our union and our General Secretary-Treasurer's (GST's) sanity still mostly intact.

Unfortunately, when our union is barely holding together, we are barely holding on to our principles. On the night of my arrival, amidst friendly chats with fellow workers, I was approached with a comment about how it would be a wise strategy for the union to sexually exploit me for their organizing efforts. Since nobody ever takes the good advice of shutting their mouth when they say the words "so this is going to sound really sexist..." I should be carrying ear plugs as harm reduction.

Announced sexism was kept to a minimum at this year's convention, but there were so many blatant acts of misogyny that I wish were all prefaced with a warning. That way I could get enough ear plugs for everybody. One fellow worker observed that the delegates were respectfully attentive during every man's report, but as soon

as a woman was giving a presentation, there were several full volume side conversations in the room. This is unfortunately a common pattern.

At a point in the day when I really thought I had seen it all, I decided to get up and speak about a resolution. As I was explaining my position, several fellow workers started yelling their counterpoints over me with arms waving. Their urgently disruptive outburst made me think that, in my sleep-deprived fog, I was looking at the wrong page and I was up there defending something we were never talking about. I handed over the microphone in embarrassment and sat down. After asking everyone around me, I was convinced that I was on the wrong page, or that the sound system was so bad that all of us in the back were hearing it wrong. I tapped one of the flailing fellow workers on the shoulder to ask if I was on the wrong page or if they were just heckling me. "You're on the right amendment. No, we weren't heckling you, we were telling you [your opinion is wrong because x, y, z...]."

These everyday aggressions, some more subtle than others, almost always go unchallenged. They form tiny cracks in our morale, our dedication and our solidarity. The tiny cracks build up until the whole structure, while appearing intact, is so weak that if you keep putting pressure on it, it will crumble faster than you expect.

We're starting to see the real effects of our waning faith in the IWW. According to the GST's report, our dues income was \$20,000 less than expected for the year. We pay our dues directly instead of by check-off specifically as a way to show our level of involvement and satisfaction with the union. So when the membership is withholding \$20,000 worth of dues in a single year, it is a flashing sign of disapproval. Considering our relatively low budget and small membership, \$20,000 is way too much money to be coincidental. In fact, if those missing dues came out of the union's pocket every year instead of just never going in to begin with, it would be one of the biggest expenses in our budget, a close second to GST and staff wages. I am hardly surprised that our finances reflect such a lack of confidence in our union. It's time we stop tiptoeing around the elephants in the room and start facing our union's problems with honesty and concern. Why would anyone trust us to build a world free from oppression and exploitation when we are either too indifferent or too afraid to confront these issues in our own organization?

I see this time as a crucial turning point for the union: our membership is growing, our tensions are high, and our reliance on friends and good intentions has produced total stagnation. We have

outgrown our shell. The casual, undisciplined structure that was a good fit when the IWW was just a handful of members is getting too hectic for an active, growing union.

I think that now is the perfect time for an IWW revival; in fact I think the labor movement is waiting for the IWW to show up. I've read mainstream news talk about wildcat strikes, minority unionism, and direct action as the organizing tactics that will define labor struggle in this low-wage economy. We should take the hint. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) has been out of touch for so long that their horrible attempts at making cat memes and using Twitter is only showing the world that they are obsolete. Change to Win and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) got their modern updates, but they are gaining a reputation as fast-talking organizers who will put so much energy in a campaign only to abandon it when the money runs out. It's time for us to jump in, but we need a union that can handle it. We need rapid communication, organized administration, solid strategies, disciplined tactics, committed members and serious attitudes. We also need to address our internal problems as serious threats to organizing.

Many of us throw our hands up and concede that we will always have our problems and if we just stop making such a big deal about it, we can get to work on the real issues. If we accept hostility and injustice as inevitable, we are no more revolutionary than the Democrats or the Mr. Blocks of middle management.

Of course there will be conflict, but the struggle is not about expecting a perfect world. It is about fighting for a better world. Contentment only drives stagnation by claiming that this is the best we can do, we are not capable of anything greater, and if we are, it is not worth the hassle. I am not content because I carry a card that says I am committed to forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old, and if the union how it stands now is what the new society looks like, the revolution would hardly be worth the bullets. If we ever want the IWW banner to see the end of capitalism, we have to believe that this union is worth fighting for. We need to rededicate ourselves to the One Big Union because when we took a red card we vowed to build a new society, and every stamp represents our renewed pledge. We can let capitalism grind down our bones until we have no more profit to give and we are buried in the earth our bosses own, or we can inspire each other and fully engage ourselves in the only work in which profits are ours and ours alone: the struggle for the emancipation of the working class.

So pay your damn dues.

Front Page News

A Labor Day Weekend For The Unseen Laborers

Continued from 1

involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. It is now 2014, and most prisons are filled with minor offenders serving double-digit sentences, working and producing goods for 75 cents an hour if they're lucky. Incarcerated people are forced to work in incredibly unsafe conditions with little to no safety training around heavy industrial equipment. Combined with environmental conditions that put certain people (people of color for the most part) on track for incarceration from an early age, we have what is called the prison industrial complex, one of the most brutal intersections of racism and capitalism in the modern age.

It's not unusual for me to lean on the Marxist concept of self-criticism a little too heavily, so that may have colored my initial feelings about the conference. For the first few moments, radical change within

and against the prison industrial complex seemed like an unattainable ideal, but I didn't carry that with me when I left. There is no criticism of the IWW Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) that I could make that wasn't made within the group, and beyond that, given concrete ways to overcome those weaknesses. For instance, we found that meetings consisted of a group that was somewhat small in number and mostly white. Instead of trying to deny that that would be less than beneficial to us as organizers focusing on American prisons, by the end of the weekend IWOC members in attendance had drawn up a plan for outreach focused on those most affected by prisons and created a structure for organizing across the nation in a way that would allow regional groups to organize however works best for them while being supported by a national network. Additionally, we explored poten-

tial core conflicts that could arise, given the nature of the work—such as whether prisons are necessary at all and what kind of time frame people will come to find prisons obsolete, if ever. The objective of these discussions wasn't to come up with a specific stance on any of those items, but rather to put any sort of ideological differences on the table. Thus we will have a better understanding of what the makeup of our group really is and this will help keep those conflicts from building beneath the surface.

It would be a little ridiculous to try and claim that the group of about 15 people from across the United States could do what IWOC plans to do on our own, but that won't stop me from saying that, based on what I saw, the right people are involved to help start a movement that can. Between the formerly incarcerated members with an in-depth knowledge of

prison culture next to their almost encyclopedic knowledge of radical concepts and the organizers with experience on the outside, whose energy for the work is only matched by the varied skill sets they bring to the table, I can't find a weak link. Additionally, a 15-minute presentation which included IWOC's five-point platform elicited a standing ovation from the IWW General Convention. Shortly after, a delegate from Milwaukee reached out, asking for more details and any ways that he can help.

So what I hope, and it's a hope that feels justified, is that the One Big Union will become a bit bigger by extending its hand to incarcerated people, and those people will not find themselves attached to a bureaucratic and capitalistic structure that is unaware of their existence, but instead will find the tools for their own liberation, and from there, do what they will.

Wobbly Art

Olas Del Caribe

Below is a morsel of South Florida history and its visceral connection with the Caribbean. South Florida IWW member, Monica Kostas, gives us an illustration called "Olas del Caribe" and tells us a bit about what inspired her drawing.

By Monica Kostas

Lately, I've been researching the buried radical labor history of Florida, particularly South Florida. Today we look around us and the level of political activity is less than lively. However, there's obviously a context—our conditions are inseparable from the larger socio-economic situation of the United States and the world at large. The economic crisis of 2008 has rippled beyond its foreseeable scope, leaving the general population stumbling through a scarcity of jobs, rising debt, and continuing repercussions of the mortgage crisis. Inevitably, the climate of South Florida is no stranger to these ill consequences symptomatic of capitalist workings. But this goes back before the crisis, speaking more specifically about work. The lack of political turbulence points to the ever refinement of the boot that quells resistance through various ploys: atomization of work, labor bureaucracy, exploitation of immigrants, to name a few.

Nevertheless, the crushing step of the sole was not always the same; there were times in Florida history when rebel workers scared the crap out of bosses and capitalists. Let me explain. Digging a bit below our feet, there isn't only the sand upon which we build but also the waters

that take us all around the Caribbean and back, the same waters that many organizers and activists from the islands used as an escape route to evade repression.

It is incredible to think that Key West, today a capital of bros, beers, and spring break, was the center of political turmoil at the turn of the 20th century.

As the southern tip of the southernmost state of the United States, the piece that hangs off so fragilely like an extended hand that bridges the Caribbean to the land of blank slates, or as some of us would say, the land that allows *un buen borrón y cuenta nueva*, Florida was not only a new horizon for people in search of work and a more comfortable life. These shores were also seen as uncharted territory for fleeing Latino socialists and anarcho-syndicalists who thirsted for new land to spark revolutions. Dreams of a better future were not only reserved for utopians however—capitalists who wished to expand business in the Caribbean but did not want to deal with bureaucratic guidelines from Spain also bet on their future in the Sunshine State.

In the late 1800s while the cigar industry sprouted (and boomed explosively) in Key West with a wave of Cuban immigrants, strikes and labor unrest soon caught up as well. As tycoons the world over started to get familiar with the popular Havana cigars, their hopes to open up factories in Key West were soon halted as they heard the news about factory workers being too unruly to deal with. The discord carried out by the organized workforces of Key West chased businessmen north to the city of Tampa where they were forced

to build Ybor City as a cigar town where they could set the guidelines and play by their own rules.

Because of the proximity of Florida to Cuba, workers in these new factory towns in the United States were able to follow closely the labor organizing happening in Cuba. One such event, for instance, was the victory of a prolonged cigar strike in 1902 that

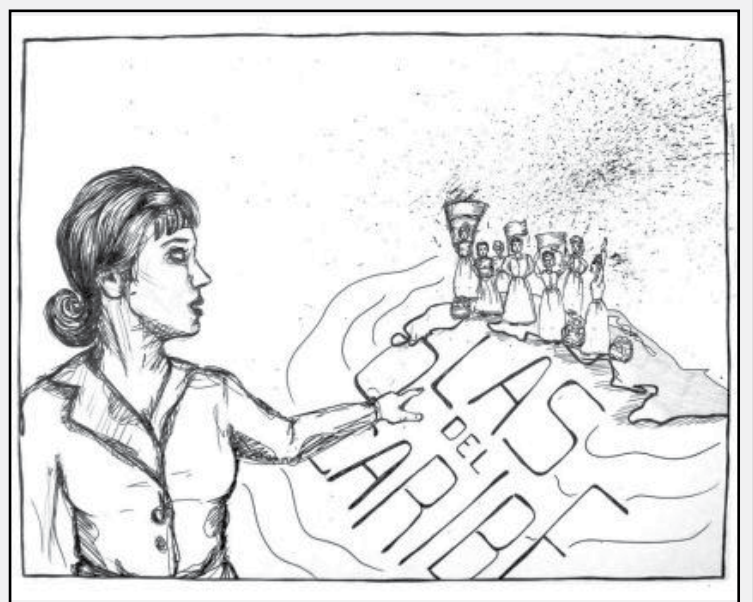
sparked a multitudinous parade of thousands of Latino workers marching from Ybor City to West Tampa where celebrations erupted.

Two years later, the first labor walk-out among Havana laundry workers was organized in Cuba, solely by women who were mostly Afro-Cubans. Many of these brave women were arrested when police suppressed the strike.

"Olas del Caribe" aims to depict this relationship; in particular this dialogue between the women laundry workers in Havana and the women in the cigar factories in Tampa. *Las olas* that rippled from the island to the mainland carried with them the wisdom, inspiration, and militancy that influenced an important

facet of radical labor history in Florida. In turn, the woman in focus cyclically points back to the island for her *compañeras* to look at the laundry workers as a way to incentivize their own organizing efforts. The drawing thus tries to grasp an emblematic instance of the ceaseless exchange that weaves indivisibly the shores of Florida to the Caribbean at large.

For more information on this subject, you can check out: "The Immigrant World of Ybor City" by Gary R. Mormino, & George E. Pozzetta, "Southern Discomfort – Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s" by Nancy A. Hewitt and "Miami's Hidden Labor History" by Thomas A. Castillo (published in *The Florida Historical Quarterly*).



Graphic: Monica Kostas

Participate In The 2014 IWW Organizing Survey!

The IWW Survey & Research Committee (SRC)—part of the Organizing Department Board—has just launched our 2014 member survey at: <http://bit.ly/Yg2SwA>. We hope you can take 5 to 10 minutes of your time to complete this survey and to share it with as many of your fellow workers as possible. Paper copies are also available upon request.

The information you share with us is vital to moving forward with organizing efforts around the world. This year, we are especially focused on understanding where fellow workers are organizing, as well as past efforts and future goals. The more comprehensive this survey is (i.e. the more people who respond!), the better we will be able to plan strategically and provide necessary trainings and resources.

If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback about the survey or are otherwise interested in the work of the SRC, please contact us at src@lists.iww.org.

For the One Big Union,
The IWW Survey & Research Committee



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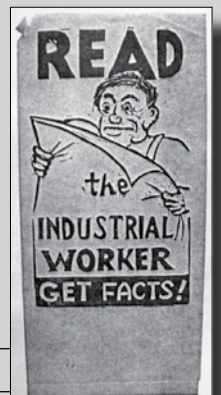
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Reviews

Wobbly Poet Keeps The Tradition Of Labor Poetry Alive

Wayman, Tom. *Built to Take It: Selected Poems 1996-2013*. Spokane, WA: Lynx House Press, 2014. Paperback, 180 pages, \$19.95.

By Don Sawyer

Whether as song lyrics or verse, poetry has always been a part of the labor struggle, amply displayed in “IWW Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent” (a.k.a. “The Little Red Songbook”), a constant best-seller since its introduction in 1909. In a time when literacy was marginal and the struggle brutal, rousing labor hymns, often using well-known melodies but featuring very different lyrics, were a vital part of the movement. Many Wobbly greats such as T-Bone Slim (Valentine Huhta), Ralph Chaplin, and Joe Hill were as well known for their verses as their direct action.

With the loss of labor militancy and a society more attuned to the songs of “American Idol” contestants and Justin Bieber, the poetry of work and workers largely disappeared. But not entirely. Both in North America and especially Chile and other South American countries, writers have kept the tradition of labor poetry alive. (Check out the work of the 50 “poet laborers” who are part of the Poetic Labor Project: <http://www.labday2010.blogspot.com/2014/05>).

One of North America’s outstanding work writers is Canadian Tom Wayman, who, according to “The Canadian Encyclopedia,” “has a unique voice in Canadian poetry as an ardent spokesman and advocate for the workplace.” Wayman has been at it for a long time, penning his earliest work in the 1960s while active in southern California and Colorado chapters of the Students for a Democratic Society, and later spearheading the resuscitation of the Vancouver (and Canadian) IWW. With this new collection of his work, “Built to Take It: Selected Poems 1996-2013,” we are treated to some of Wayman’s latest—and arguably best—poetry.

Recognizing that while we are all workers we are also lovers, sons/daughters, grievors, observers, “Built to Take It” not only provides the reader with a nice sampling of poems dealing with all aspects of work (among other jobs, Wayman taught writing at several universities, and his takes on this peculiar workplace are often hilarious), but also just generally being human. Wayman is known for his wry humor, and much of his writing is softened by self-deprecating wit:

(from “Teaching English”)

*Can I convey anything
to help English function better
where it earns a paycheck
or during intimate encounters?
I regard it, scratch my head.
It stares back at me*

*while it sits,
headphones on, ear-
buds pumping
music directly into
the auditory nerve,
vocabulary shrink-
ing
along with
cognitive ability –
consequence of too
much television
before age three,
perhaps, or excessive
cellphone use
– eyes blank
as a missing comma.*

Wayman’s more political poetry is refreshingly radical, drawing on the IWW’s anarcho-syndicalist tradition, practice and principle:

(from “Anthem”)

*I, too, would say We’re built to take it.
My perspective, though, is rather
along
the lines of
the factory adage: “If you can run that
machine,
you can wreck it.” I’d argue
since we make it all, we can take it all.*

Clearly Wayman has been there—besides teaching, he worked in construction and on a truck assembly line—and his writing reflects his understanding of the realities of the workplace, which he powerfully captures:

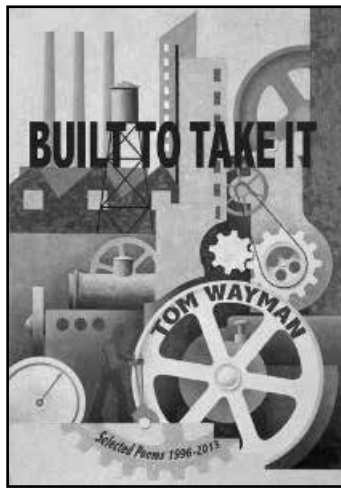
(from “May Day 2001: Negotiating a New Collective Agreement”)

*We slide a sheet of green paper
across the table. The three people
who face us
regard the page with distaste
or fear or contempt. In their eyes
a small animal – gopher, squirrel –
frantically tests the confines of a trap,
claws clinging to walls, ceiling, wall
once more.*

Wayman is a realist, yes, but he never abandons the ideal, the principles of a just and fair society; it’s just that he knows how hard it is to create that world:

(from “May Day 2001”)

*In 1905 the Wobblies said
one class, one enemy, one union,
and that a contract is only a negoti-
ated truce
in an ongoing war. All of which I
believe
but I also see one species
blundering ahead through the ages,
ever uncertain if each individual
alone should take care
of himself or herself,*



Graphic: amazon.ca

*or if a family or town,
nation or oc-
cupational group
should help bear
this responsibility,
or whether none of our
separate lives
can tangibly improve
apart from all the lives
around us
– that being the effect
of sharing
a location and clump of
years with so
many other souls.*

One of Wayman’s trademarks is his blending of prose and poetry and imagined interactions with historical—and current—figures.

(from “Exit Interview: Utah Phillips [1935-2008]”; after his death, Utah responds to a question about new media by explaining):

*The rulers of this life are happy to
have you shut yourself off
pushing at buttons on a computer
keyboard
– thus giving the powers-that-be a
free ride
in the real world. You can exchange
virtual information by the hour
or hit “send” to add your name to
another online petition
or denounce anything in your blog.
That sound you faintly hear in the
background
is the chortling of the ruling class:
they’ve got you
exactly where they want you.*

Further on, the interviewer asks Phillips about his legacy, and here we see Wayman’s ability to weave Wobbly wisdom and philosophy into his writing. The poem has Utah say:

*The Wobblies – the Industrial Work-
ers of the World –
knew back in 1905 that your life
doesn’t change for the better
because the team you root for wins,
or because you buy something
you don’t really need. Your life is
improved
when your working day changes –
when there’s a real turnabout in
the power relations at your job, when
there’s a real change
in the impact the goods and services
you create each shift have
on other people and our planet.*

And the late folksinger/activist adds:

*I like to imagine we could be ahead of
the curve for once.*

*In one way, we are: the I.W.W. said
in 1905 that world labor needs
a world-wide union. That was think-
ing “globalization”
long before the capitalist conceived
of the term.
But the bosses are far ahead of us
when it comes to
putting the concept into practice. I
don’t doubt we’ll get there eventually.
I just wish we weren’t so damned
slow.*

Any parting advice?

*If you can get out into the countryside
away from the smog and the noise
and the money pollution,
you’ll observe in the nighttime sky the
three shining stars of the I.W.W.:
Education, Organization, Emancipa-
tion.
Back in the city, if you look real hard
on a clear day,
you can see those same three stars.*

Where do you think you’re going now?
*I believe I will permanently achieve
what for so many years on tour
I demanded of my hosts who billeted
me:*

*a bed
in a room
with a door
that closes.*

Tom Wayman is the rare poet who has the ability to put our lives into verse in a way that helps us see ourselves and others with greater compassion and clarity, and while he does tread the poet’s usual turf—“love, nature, death” as he describes it—he finds poetry in the everyday, and particularly in our daily work. “No human emotion is absent from the worksite,” Tom writes in the introduction, “since a place of employment is where human beings not only gather, but where they contribute for good or ill to the daily re-creation of the community.” And the undemocratic nature of most workplaces and their domination by “unelected authorities, who control not only our work but also the uses to which the wealth generated by our work are put” shapes who we are: “The schizophrenic existence of daily shuttling between the status of an obedient, unquestioning employee and that of a critically thinking, free citizen of a democracy—essentially, between being regarded as a child and as an adult—influences our behavior toward every relationship we have: family, intimate, peer, workmate, community.”

This is a remarkable collection of poems by a poet whose work is not just compelling because of the sweep and power of his language, but because of his insight into the joys, realities and challenges of being human.

Wobbly Photography

It’s Sunday In Colombia

Miami IWW member AB Kunin took this picture (on the right) during his trip to Bogotá, Colombia. It was taken during the recent election on Sunday, May 25, 2014. He was taking a walk to an outdoor market in an affluent neighborhood that’s only open on Sundays, when he took this image. Overall, it is a great photo that displays a nice contrast between the militia and the older gentleman, which highlights the political tension that persist today in Colombia. Not only that, he also wrote an amazing anecdote (located below) of how he took this image. It is an exciting piece to read.

By AB Kunin

There is quietness in the streets as we pass through them searching for the market. It’s Sunday, May 25: election day. A new president will be selected in

Colombia. People are out to vote. You can smell and feel the pollution lingering. It’s as thick as the eerie silence that is waiting to be broken. From street corner to street corner, Policía Militar shuffle back and forth with their military grade weapons. I, on the other hand, come prepared. For this time I do my own dance, moving side to side, a little bit up and a little back, I lift my hands, point and as the man with his high-powered rifle looks into the distance, I pull my trigger. Boom! Hands down, eyes forward and continue on. The officer never knew what hit him. Eyes unceasingly moving left, right, up, down, searching for something new. I turn left at the corner. There is an older gentleman graciously drifting through the streets with his hand behind his back. He takes this wonderful form as he walks. Boom! Click! Hand back in bag. I move on.



Photo: AB Kunin

Reviews

The ABC's And Beyond: Building Blocks For Revolutionary Unionism

Brill, F.N. The ABC's of Revolutionary Unionism. Available online: <http://www.iww.org/about/official/abc>.

By Transcona Slim

"The ABC's of Revolutionary Unionism" by F.N. Brill, part of the IWW's "official literature," purports to be an "introduction to our union [which] will inspire you to join with us." As I understand it, an "ABC's of [something]" is a way to put to paper, in the most basic way, the foundations of a theory or organization. As such, it seems the intent is to give this pamphlet to individuals who want to know the basics of the union's theory, principles and tactics to encourage them to join. If that is the case, then I do not think that the "ABC's" best represents or gives a clear understanding of the theory, principles, and tactics and does not mesh with the organizational strategy the union has developed since this was written. I will explore this idea by surmising the pamphlet and discussing the things that I found problematic and useful within it.

The pamphlet is laid out in four different sections: an introduction, "Principles," "How the IWW Organizes," and "Methods and Tactics." The introduction discusses the growing wealth disparity in the world (which continues to grow) and the environmental, cultural, and human impact that comes with the drive for profit.

Principles

The "Principles" section starts off with the full IWW Preamble as "our basic statement of principles." As Wobblies, we recognize the central role of the Preamble as a statement of principles. With that being said, without any context or explanation, the Preamble can be a lot to digest at once. The author just pastes it there as our principles without an explanation of what any of it means. To some, the 19th century language can be off-putting. Our Organizer Training curriculum argues that we shouldn't lead with the Preamble for this very reason. For an introduction of the Preamble, it would be more useful to start with Tim Acott's "Annotated Preamble to the IWW Constitution," which explains the Preamble in more modern language than how it is presented here.

The section titled "To Emancipate the Working Class" is about the goal of the IWW to abolish capitalism. It makes the point that the IWW is radical with comparisons that the IWW is "as radical as a scientist in her laboratory, as radical as a surgeon planning the removal of a diseased growth, as radical as a teacher must be to tell the truth." I think a better understanding would be to say that we mean radical as in "to the root." We are looking at the root causes of social, economic, and political inequality and have come to the realization that "capitalism has created an unhappy world that poisons our dreams, our families and the world itself, all so

the rich can become richer." Although well-written, this section does not properly explain why the IWW opposes capitalism.

The next part of the "Principles" section is "The IWW is Non-Political." It explains that the IWW is "non-political and it does not interfere with political beliefs or activities of its members." It is correct in saying that "whoever holds economic power also holds political power" but to frame it in the language of being "non-political" is problematic. You cannot declare that the IWW is revolutionary and anti-capitalist and at the same time say that it is "non-political." The abolition of the wage system is a political goal, and, while it is true that "whoever holds economic power also holds political power," that only means that economics are political in nature, that there is no separation into simple boxes where "economics" is over here and "politics" is over there.

Trade unions generally have social-democratic politics: they organize on the basis of support for capitalism, social partnership with bosses, representation of workers, and top-down bureaucracy; they aim to get the best deal within the limits of the established order.

On the other hand, the revolutionary unionism that we advocate for is based on revolutionary anti-capitalism. We want to organize using direct action, self-organization, and rejection of capitalism, which we aim to replace with a cooperative commonwealth of all labor.

This is a case of using terms in anachronistic ways. In 1905, politics meant something else; specifically, politics was the term used for activity in the electoral arena. Politics is no longer used in this way anymore—there has been recognition that politics goes beyond simply electoralism and now has a much broader understanding. As such, the phrase "the IWW is non-political" is one which needs to be replaced with an understanding that the IWW is non-electoral or anti-parliamentary. The IWW has its own politics that it expresses in the workplace and won't interfere with your right to vote (or not vote) for whichever party you want, so long as you don't try and use the IWW to further the goals of your political party.

The next part is a brief section on the lack of religious bias in the IWW, pointing out that the IWW wishes to extend freedom (including religious freedom), not restrict it. I really don't understand why this is a point to make. Of course we are non-religious, we are a union; we organize all workers even if they are religious. This point can be better made in a "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)" rather than a pamphlet that presents itself as the basics of revolutionary unionism.



Photo: libcom.org

How the IWW Organizes

The next section, "How the IWW Organizes," begins with a discussion of industrial unionism and about being One Big Union, recognizing that we organize into one union because we all have common interests. This is only one sentence, and it does not really explain the idea of One Big Union at all. I think that these two concepts (industrial unionism and the idea of One Big Union) could have been merged into one section.

Industrial unionism is not explained well. I know people I've worked with who, when told about industrial unionism, have said, "My job isn't an industrial job; I work in fast food." This doesn't help explain that common misunderstanding that "industrial" is not a term to reference a type of workplace (most commonly perceived as "heavy manufacturing") but rather component parts of an economy grouped together as wider "industries."

Moreover, if one doesn't know the significance of "craft" or "trade" as descriptive nouns, he or she may not understand what makes the IWW different. Trade unionism is not as significant of a force as it used to be. Most mainstream unions can now be described as "general unions." Due to the decline of unionism in North America, all unions are looking to take whatever members they can, rather than splitting them up into smaller bargaining units, guilds and crafts.

The next three points are about where the IWW organizes. Locally the IWW is organized into Job Branches, Industrial Union Branches, and General Membership Branches. Regionally the IWW is organized into Regional Organizing Committees, which coordinate activities in wider regions and nations. Worldwide, IWW members are recognized as such, whether they are in Portland or Sierra Leone.

The "worldwide" section discusses the way decisions are made in the IWW as well as the different internationally elected positions of the IWW. It rightly stresses the importance of protecting democracy and limiting the growth and development of a bureaucracy. The real problem with this section is that it's easy to get lost in this bombardment of structural acronyms: ROC, GEB, GST, IWW. Talk about attack of the acronyms!

Methods and Tactics

The section entitled "Method and Tactics" begins with the bullet point "Flexible Tactics," which discusses that workers are the ones who make the decisions about how to struggle for better conditions, and the IWW is flexible in terms of what kind of tools it has at its disposal.

I don't think that flexibility is the right way to put it. There are things that the IWW is inflexible about when it comes to its methods and tactics, such as being opposed to dues check-off and no-strike clauses. There are times when workers may want to agree to dues check-off or no-strike clauses in collective bargaining agreements, but, as the IWW, we've agreed that those methods and tactics are not something we should be flexible with, as in the long-term they do not move us toward democratic workplaces, but rather away from them.

This is also the only section where the concept of direct action is mentioned. The idea that workers making decisions as workers about how to fight is better explained as direct action, not under the framework of "flexibility." Moreover, "direct action" itself is a far greater ABC of revolutionary unionism than "flexible tactics."

After flexibility is a point about "solidarity." I wonder if this section is better fitted in the "Principles" section rather

than under "Methods and Tactics." I don't really see solidarity as a method or a tactic, as it is fundamental to the basis of our union and the labor movement as a whole. If the IWW's tactics are "flexible," does that mean we are flexible about the method of solidarity? I know the business unions talk of solidarity while throwing others under the bus, but, as the radical wing of the labor movement, we should hold ourselves to a higher principle.

The "Solidarity" section goes on to explain how the employing class separates us on a variety of lines in order to weaken us but that we can, through solidarity, cross those lines, join together, and stand up for our common interests and for a better world. This is probably the best-written section and best explanation of the concept of solidarity and the kind of movement we want to build.

The section called "We Are All Leaders!" connects with the understanding of rank-and-file control and democracy explained in the section about the worldwide reach of the IWW. It discusses the fact that there are those capable people who grow within the ranks of the IWW because they are able to present ideas and map tactics to fit the conditions around them. I wouldn't call these folks leaders, but organizers. This is the goal of the IWW and the Organizer Training program—to develop each and every member to be an organizer, to make the idea of "we are all leaders" a reality.

The "Non-Violence" section is the most problematic within this group. While it is correct that violence has always been the first strategy of employers against strikers, and that workers have a right to defend themselves, the problem lies when it abstracts any lessons of the end of the Communist Bloc. It argues that "Those states collapsed when people of all classes refused to participate in them" and connects that to a potential non-violent general strike, where "workers refuse to participate in Capitalism."

This is a very simplistic and class collaborationist understanding of the dissolution of the Eastern European police states. It wasn't simply people's non-participation with those states but the active movement of different strata of society against those states, each with different and competing interests.

In 1905, one could have argued that a general strike could be a non-violent, peaceful transition to a post-capitalist society. From where we are now, it seems like a naïve wish that we can simply strike and those in power will just give up if we wait long enough.

"The ABC's of Revolutionary Unionism" ends with a quick call to membership and a link to the IWW website. It seems like this pamphlet came out of a time when the IWW was growing but didn't have an organized, unified strategy like we have now. If this pamphlet is an explanation of the basics of revolutionary unionism in a way that everyone can quickly understand, I don't think it succeeds. The concepts are often masked with leftist talk and not fully developed in a way that regular people not within the socialist milieu could quickly gravitate to. It does get something right in some places such as "flexible tactics" and "non-violence." I think some of this is not necessarily the basics of revolutionary unionism but rather F.N. Brill's projections of what the basics of revolutionary unionism are.

As I understand it, "official literature" means that the IWW endorses the ideas of the pamphlet, and it is part of furthering our education about the means and tactics of the union. I think "The ABC's of Revolutionary Unionism" reflect a time in the union and as such people should read it, but only to understand where the union was in terms of principles, theory, and tactics in the 1990s. I don't think it should be on our list of "official literature."

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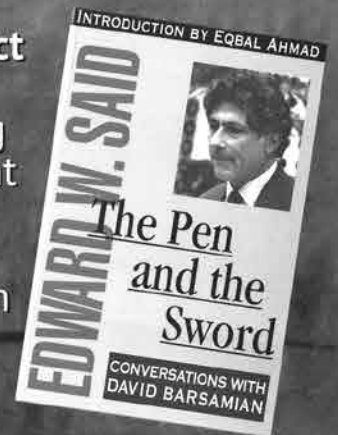
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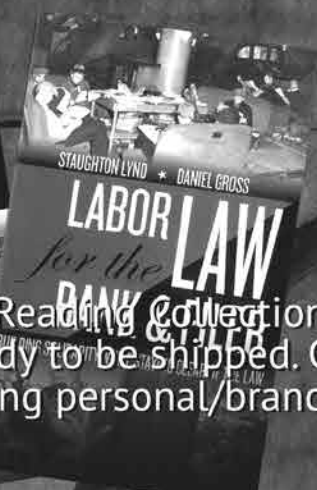
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Abandon Marx—Really?

By Blaise Farina

In a play called “Marx in Soho” by Howard Zinn, Karl Marx, having convinced the “afterlife authority” for an opportunity to clear his tainted name, enters a New York City stage and addresses the audience:

“Good of you to come. You weren’t put off by all those idiots who said: ‘Marx is Dead!’ Well I am and I am not...They are proclaiming that my ideas are dead!... These clowns have been saying it for more than a hundred years. Don’t you wonder why it necessary to declare me dead again and again?”

Zinn’s Marx asks a reasonable question! Some answer by arguing there is not much market for abstruse texts like Marx’s. Others contend Marx overlooks the slew of more significant issues of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, not to ignore sexuality, terrorism, and the environment. Still others maintain Marx (and the inseparable Friedrich Engels) offer no insight for today’s daily working-class struggles.

Such a dismal view of Marx is promoted in Benjamin Ferguson’s “Easy On The ‘Capital’-ism,” which appeared on page 2 of the July/August 2014 issue of the *Industrial Worker*. Ferguson notes he enjoys some of Marx’s “musings” such as “if you tell a capitalist you are going to hang him, he’ll try to sell you the rope” and “I am not a Marxist.” He also likes that Marx “wrote words which the IWW would include in its Preamble.” But Ferguson’s convulsive rejection of Marx is remarkable. “[I]t seems like a shrinking faction on the left will forever wave Karl Marx’s ‘Capital’ like Cotton Mather waved his Bible,” charges Ferguson. “Yet we are never treated to anything exciting by those who think our anti-capitalist actions will improve vastly from yet one more dead white European...And drone on about the value of labor and commodities, but those of us who are actually working have a good idea of what needs to happen...A strong campaign doesn’t need its workers gnawing on [a fat stifling book like] ‘Capital,’ but instead feasting on a serving of syndicalism and a delectable dish of direct action.”

Ferguson’s charges are catchy. But they might be dutifully called into question. Why is Ferguson’s piece problematic? Why do anti-capitalists such as Wobblies and Marx clash? Why is Marx still significant today?

Readers may be amused by Ferguson’s remarks, but I wonder whether we should want to know better than the legendary Caspar Milquetoast, who believed whatever he read. Something must be noted, then, about Marx’s supposed “rope” statement, which is a dubious factual statement probably not made by Marx. I do not presume the error implies the propensity to deceive; nevertheless, we might ponder Ferguson’s gist. Of course, we do not need Marx to inform us about the experiential world within our phenomenological reach, which involves struggles between bosses and workers. But if we truly seek revolution against world capitalism, then Marx can certainly inform us that whatever workers experience directly on the shop floor itself is not enough to comprehend the contradictory processes of capital circulation and accumulation, commodity production and exchange that pervade every corner of the globe and presently pump the petroleum that enlivens the fabric of our daily lives.

Ferguson claims that Marx denied being a Marxist because he knew his disciples would get it wrong—and, as it turns out, Ferguson asserts, “no revolution which claimed to follow his ideas attempted to abolish the wage system.” Has Marx been misinterpreted? Consider that when Marx wrote “this much is certain...I myself am not a Marxist” he was referring not to long-run revolutionary ideas but rather to how he felt his sons-in-law, Paul Lafargue and Charles Longuet, had been misrepresenting his ideas on the local politics of radical French workers, according to Franz Mehring’s “Karl Marx” and “Karl Marx: The First International & After,” edited by David Fernbach. Consider that although Marx envisaged the withering of the state, he repudiated speculative forecasts on both socialist economics and classless utopian society; and so, the legacy he left to his successors on the question of revolution remains unanswered. Consider, moreover, that Marx espoused a version of materialism rather than something like crystal ball spiritualism—and, as the historical sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein puts it in his book “Historical Capitalism,” “[Marx] knew, as many of his self-proclaimed disciples often do not, that he was a man of the nineteenth century whose vision was inevitably circumscribed by that social reality...Let us, therefore, use his writings in the only sensible way—that of a comrade in the struggle who knew as much as he knew.”

Probably Ferguson’s discontent echoes the general theoretical and practical discrepancy between Wobblies and Marx (and even many Marxists). At first glance, Wobblies and Marx appear to share common rhetorical ground. From Engels’ March 1883 speech at Marx’s graveside at London’s Highgate Cemetery, we read (in “The Marx-Engels Reader,” edited by Robert C. Tucker) that Marx was “before all else a revolutionist” whose “mission in life was to contribute...to the overthrow of capitalist society and [its] state institutions...[and] to the liberation of the modern proletariat.” From a revised Preamble to the IWW Constitution, found in “The Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood,” we read that “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. Between [them] a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth...and do away with capitalism.” Besides their shared rhetorical repudiation of capitalism and mutual conviction that the proletariat would be the primary revolutionary agent of historic change and worker emancipation from capitalist domination, something else might be added: Wobblies spurn political and parliamentary affiliations, and (according to Eric Hobsbawm’s “How to Change the World”), Marx himself (though he engaged in writing political tracts, advising radical political party leaders, entertaining state theory) neither belonged to a political party nor believed the state represented more than the “executive committee of the ruling class.”

So wherein lies the grand clash? The answer deserves a far more nuanced treatment than the simple yet suggestive sketch I can provide here. Clearly what distinguishes the two perspectives are their dissimilar strategies on the problem of the

most effective scale at which revolutionary class struggle and opposition should be executed. Both Wobblies and Marx advocated activism, but where the Wobblies agitated daily for immediate gains exclusively in the fields and factories where they longed to organize workers into One Big Union, Marx (although focusing more heavily on historical capitalist development than on working class politics) considered practical class politics crucial because he believed the proletariat was destined at an unpredictable moment to assume political power and prompt the state’s revolutionary transition. Both championed the goal of revolution, but where the Wobblies engaged in the sort of direct agitation at the point of production that might precipitate a general strike across an industry, Marx devoted himself to crafting a powerful theoretical critique of bourgeois political economy and contends (in “Capital,” Volume 1, Chapter 32 of “Collected Works,” Volume 35) that capitalism’s contradictory character would steer the transition from world capitalism to world socialism and communism.

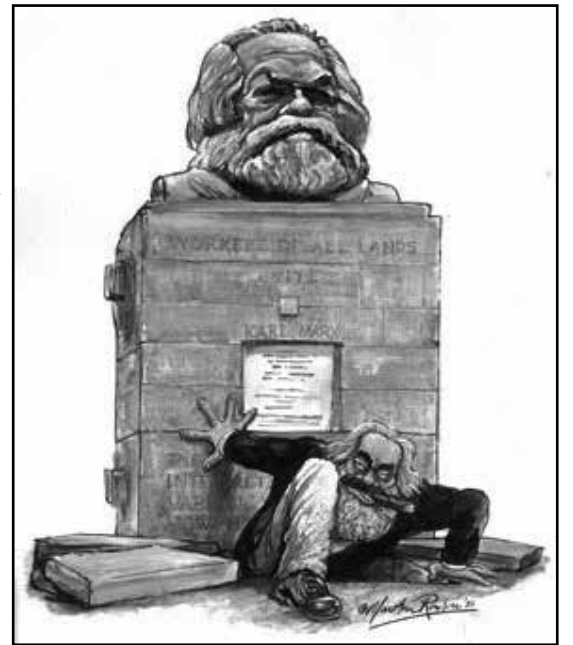
Speaking at Marx’s graveside, Engels stated that although he had witnessed Marx’s death, “[Marx’s] name [and work] will endure through the ages” (“The Marx-Engels Reader”). Why should this be so? Does Marx’s work do more than empty-mindedly “drone on about the value of labor and commodities”?

It is unnecessary to wave Marx’s texts like Mather waved the Bible in order to appreciate how conceptually rich and inspiring Marx’s work is. Marx made mistakes. But Marx was a fastidious scholar, whose cascading energy prompted him to pen intellectual thought that fit no single conventional academic category. Unlike bourgeois thinkers who construct fragmented pictures of social reality and knowledge, Marx apprehends the world not as a collection of preordained, discrete things but as a historically-specific totality where everything is dialectically related. In so doing, he perceives not the relations of everything under the sun but rather an evolving global ensemble of exchange relations—international capital circulation and accumulation, uneven geographical developments, and the political mediations greasing the affair—as a structured yet contradictory social whole. If anyone bothers to notice, the globalized capitalist world we think we know today is uncannily similar to the predatory capitalist world Marx sketches in “The Communist Manifesto.”

For Marx, capitalism is not a thing; it is a dynamic historical process of the production and reproduction of socio-ecological life through commodity production and exchange in which we are heavily implicated. When Marx writes (in “Capital” Volume 1 of “Collected Works,” Volume 35) that “a commodity is a mysterious thing,” we should not shrug him aside. I am inspired here not to discuss Marx’s complex analysis of the commodity as the embodiment of value, use value, and exchange value (except to note his analysis is fundamental to a comprehension of class relations under world capitalism and world capitalism itself) but rather to underscore that the mysteriousness of commodity exchange derives from its sinister concealment of labor conditions throughout the circuits of the capitalist market system.

Marx explains the commodity’s mysteriousness and suggests some ensuing implications:

“...because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social rela-



Graphic: pinterest.com/wendyphd

tion, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses...There is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.”

“This,” Marx declares, “is what I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities” (“Capital” Volume 1 of “Collected Works,” Volume 35).

Marx professes commodity production and exchange transforms social relations of production between humans into relations between things, which appear to possess lives of their own, so much so that what was once workers’ control over their own productive activities has insidiously and increasingly become the exclusive preserve of the capitalist class. While commodity production and exchange stifles workers’ control, it also fosters dehumanization and enfeebles working-class consciousness.

Listen to the cultural critic Fredric Jameson, who uses the concepts of fetishism and reification interchangeably to provide insight in his book “Post Modernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”: “The transformation of social relations into things... suggests the... guilt people are freed from if they are [unable] to remember the work that went into their toys and furnishings... For a society that wants to forget about class, reification...is very functional indeed;...this...‘effacement’ is surely the indispensable precondition on which all the rest can be constructed.” And as geographer David Harvey puts it in “The Condition of Postmodernity”:

“The conditions of labour and life... that lie behind the production of commodities, the status of mind of the producers, are all hidden to us as we exchange one object (money) for another (the commodity)... We cannot tell from contemplation of any object in the supermarket what conditions of labour lay behind its production. The concept of fetishism explains how... under conditions of capitalist modernization we can so objectively depend on others’ lives and aspirations remain so totally opaque to us. Marx’s meta-theory seeks to tear away that fetishistic mask and to understand the social relations that lie behind it.”

None of what I have been arguing should suggest I am discouraging a propensity for direct action or syndicalism, so long as pains are taken to avoid the sort of grossest of fetishisms foolishly undertaken by the Luddites. As for Marx, he is both dead and alive, and his work, while it need not be considered anything like dogma, might be considered conceptually rich, morally inspiring, and useful. So abandon Marx—really?

The **Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC)** is now organizing prisoners for IWW membership and direct action.

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World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

Sharing Lessons With Comrades In The FAU

By Levke Asyr

The Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union (FAU) is an anarcho-syndicalist union in Germany, and a part of the International Workers Association (IWA). Fellow Worker (FW) Chris from Hamburg and I were elected by the IWW's German Language Area Membership Regional Organizing Committee (GLAMROC) to represent the IWW International Solidarity Committee at the annual FAU conference held this past June in Germany.



The FAU Congress in July.

Photo: FAU

The FAU was founded in 1977 and has syndicates in almost every larger city in Germany. The FAU follows the same principles of syndicalism and grassroots democracy as the IWW, favoring direct action and struggles for a future without wage labor. Due to this, the IWW and FAU have in general a friendly relationship to each other. For example, we have some dual-carders and this past July, members of the FAU supported the European Work People's College with a workshop on their strike experiences in Dresden (see "Work People's College Europe: A Huge Success," September 2014 IW, page 1).

The FAU conference went for three days and members from almost every FAU branch attended. Besides us, there were guests from the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) of Spain, the Sveriges Arbetare Centralorganisation (SAC) from Sweden, Confédération nationale du travail France (CNT-F), the Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) from Italy and an anarcho-syndicalist initiative from Croatia. We were welcomed warmly by everyone and all international guests did not have to pay for food or accommodation.

I would like to mention three things we found remarkable about this congress and the work of the FAU in general:

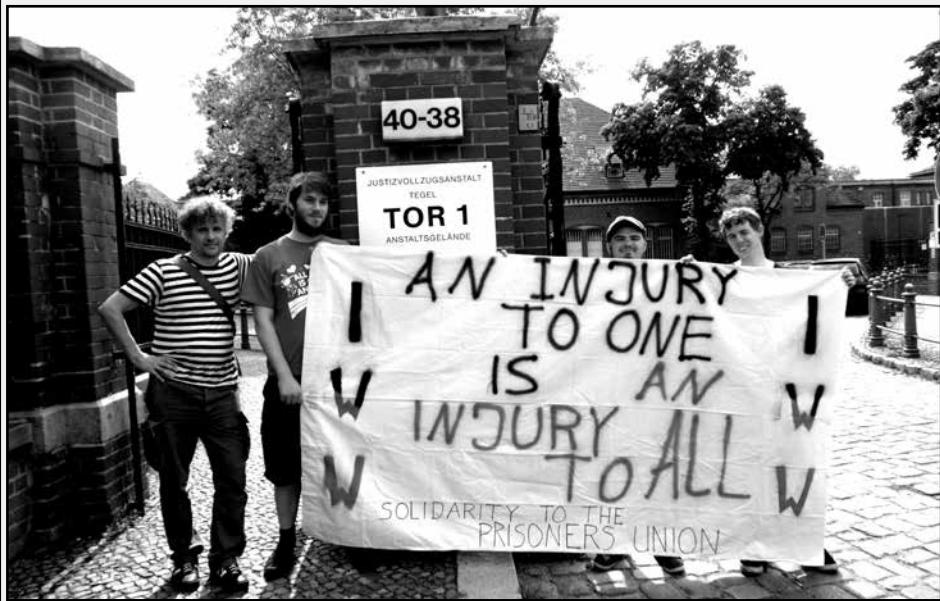
First, all guests were allowed to attend all meetings, the workshop and the final referendum (decisions affecting the FAU as a whole are made once a year during the congress). This form of transparency gave us deep insight not only into internal structures of the FAU but also into the po-

litical factions and discussions. Especially interesting was the intense debate about leaving the IWA, which has tried to restrict the FAU's cooperation with other unions over the last few years. Although the motion failed in the end, the FAU members decided to go on with their international work as they think it is necessary and to take the risk of being excluded from the IWA.

Secondly, the FAU has internal structures that work very well. Without going into much detail, we were impressed not only by how well-attended the congress was, but also by the massive turnout in referendum (every syndicate turned in their votes). Also, in Berlin the FAU is particularly strong and has a relatively big "foreigners section," which tries to support foreign workers by giving advice on work and social rights.

Third, in general the FAU looks for closer cooperation with the IWW—both at an international level, but especially with the GLAMROC section there is great interest in the IWW Organizer Trainings, in the work of our Anti-Patriarchy Committee, and in the coordination of working together, and learning from each other regarding organizing in specific sectors (health care being one of them). At least FW Chris and I think cooperation would in fact be fruitful, especially in learning more about the FAU's well-working inner structures. At the writing of this article, two IWW members from GLAMROC planned on attending the next regional conference of the FAU as well!

Solidarity With The Prisoners Union, Tegel!



IWW members show solidarity outside Tegel prison.

Photo: Monika Vykoukal

By Monika Vykoukal

At the close of Work People's College Europe this past summer, fellow workers showed solidarity outside Tegel prison in Berlin with the Gefangenen-Gewerkschaft der JVA Tegel (prisoners union of the JVA Tegel prison), founded there at the end of May with the involvement of our

incarcerated fellow worker Oliver Rast.

The prisoners union needs solidarity now.

Write to the speakers of the prisoners union:

Speaker: Oliver Rast, Deputy: Attila-Aziz Genc, Seidelstr. 39, 13507 Berlin, Germany.

Argentine Workers Occupy Factory



Workers' occupation. Photo: revolution-news.com

By John Kalwaic

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, the illegal closure of a graphics and printing factory by RR Donnelley left over 400 workers jobless. The workers of RR Donnelley responded by launching a factory occupation on Aug. 12 and putting the plant back into production under workers' control. Workers called for a general assembly outside

the factory gates and set up roadblocks on the Pan-American Highway, close to where other protests were going on around the factory.

According to *Revolution News!*, "After making \$218 million in 2013 at a world level, the company presented a financial insolvency application in order to sack the entire workforce. The workers not only demonstrated that this company is not in crisis, but that it has also been carrying out shameless maneuvers in order to empty the factory and divert production to other printing companies. Now it is engaging in a new maneuver by filing for a fraudulent bankruptcy in order to intimidate and threaten the workforce, with the aim of implementing its plan for mass lay-offs."

With files from Revolution News!

Casino Dealers In Macau Take Action

By John Kalwaic

On Saturday, Aug. 30, approximately 1,000 casino dealers in the Chinese province of Macau showed up late or refused to work overtime at casinos owned by SJM Holdings. The company is owned by family of former Macau king pin Stanley Ho. Casino dealers refused to work overtime because they were unhappy with their wages and benefits. According to the *Japan Times*, "Macau is the only place in China where casino gambling is legal. The special administrative region boasts 35 casinos and relies on gaming taxes for more than 80 percent of government revenues."

SJM Holdings promised that if the workers returned to work they would



Dealers march.

Photo: japantimes.co.jp

compensate the workers three times their salary. Since strikes are for the most part illegal in China, workers must sometimes find ways like coming in late or refusing overtime as a means of protesting wages or working conditions.

With files from the Japan Times.

Indian Workers Beat CEO To Death

By John Kalwaic

In the city of Kolkata, in the West Bengal state of eastern India, an angry mob of 200 workers beat a CEO to death with iron rods and stones at the North Brook Jute Mill in June. The dispute came after the CEO, H.K. Maheswari denied the workers' demands to work and receive wages for a 40-hour work week instead of the normal 25 hours per week. The CEO also proposed closing the jute mill three days a week to curb financial losses.

Angry mill workers threw stones at Maheswari's office. When the startled CEO looked out the window to investigate and two stones struck him, knocking



CEO killed by workers. Photo: indiaindian.com

him unconscious. According to a report from the *Montreal Gazette*, workers then stormed Maheswari's office and beat him with iron rods. He later died of his injuries. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee blamed the murder on unions and opposition parties even though they denied responsibility for the attack. The IWW does not condone this type of violence; however, it is important to keep in

mind the terrible conditions

workers live with in this part of the world in order to understand what leads these workers to this course of action. The West Bengal state of India has a lot of violence by and against unions.

With files from the Montreal Gazette.

French Railway Workers Clash With Police



Train workers and police clash. Photo: presstv.ir

By John Kalwaic

In June, the French government decided on a reform bill to privatize its rail system, a move which would result in hundreds of workers being laid off. Rail workers' unions came out in fierce opposition and decided to strike on June 10. The mainstream media reported that the French public was against the strike; possibly in an effort to turn people against the strike which affected many railway commuters across the country. French President François Hollande reversed many of his previous promises to end cuts to public infrastructure projects and welfare benefits. Hollande is backing down from those promises and placing

many austerity measures on the French people. His government has intervened against the strikers, and Hollande has condemned the strike.

The striking rail workers clashed with police on June 17 as the strike rolled on to its second week. Police used tear gas against demonstrators as striking workers blocked traffic and threw bottles at police.

The railway strike ended when the French parliament voted to amend the reform bill that started the dispute, though many strikers remained divided as to whether to continue the strike despite this concession. Parliament amended the bill to provide job protections for workers and to give travel cardholders 10 days of free travel in compensation for the strike. The leadership of the main union, Confédération générale du travail (CGT), voted to end the strike, while the more radical Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques (SUD) wanted it to continue in order to press for eliminating the privatization bill entirely.

With files from The Daily Telegraph, Press TV and <http://www.english.rfi.fr>.