

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER



OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

January/February 2015 #1771 Vol. 112 No. 1 \$2/ £2/ €2

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## Anti-Police Brutality Protest Shakes Things Up At The Mall Of America

By X378436

On Saturday, Dec. 20, 2014, a protest organized by Black Lives Matter Minneapolis aiming to shut down the Mall of America took place. The demonstration was part of the ongoing movement against police brutality and structural racism in police departments nationwide. Thousands of protesters crowded into the rotunda of the largest shopping mall in North America with banners proclaiming solidarity with Ferguson and “black lives matter.” Chants of “Hands up, don’t shoot!” and “No justice, no peace, no racist police!” echoed through the mall and sometimes got loud enough to shake the windows. Protesters who showed up a little late were greeted by members of the Bloomington Police Department dressed in head-to-toe riot gear and plainclothes mall security guards. Several members of the Twin Cities IWW were present and a few were arrested when

they tried to break through these police lines set up to block protesters’ access to the rotunda and the other half of the mall. An entire section of the mall was entirely shut down, with all the shops closed. Many food court workers walked off their jobs and stood with their hands up while still wearing their Auntie Anne’s Pretzels or Dairy Queen uniforms. Employees at the animal-friendly cosmetics shop, Lush, stood outside their store with their hands up in solidarity with the protesters. Many employees who were trapped inside their shops by the barricades that mall security guards set up stood by the shop windows looking out at the protests and raised their fists in support.

For a few hours, the Mall of America was partially shut down and the people who worked there seemed totally fine with it, and even supportive in some cases.

Continued on 6



Lush workers walk out of the store in solidarity with Black Lives Matter at the Mall of America on Dec. 20, 2014.

Photo: Nick Kozel

## Strange Encounters: World Meeting Of Popular Movements In Vatican City



Meeting of popular movements.

Photo: Monika Vykoukal

By Monika Vykoukal

Attending a three-day meeting on poverty, capitalism, and workers’ struggles organized at the Vatican was not something I thought I’d experience as a member of the IWW. Yet, since we were invited to attend this three-day gathering through contacts made with Confederacion de los Trabajadores de la Economia Popular (CTPE) in Argentina and Movimiento de Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra (MST) in

Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanî (PKK, or Kurdistan Workers’ Party) leader Abdullah Öcalan, which set the tone for a journey of discovery into a world of people we might have more in common with than we perhaps like to admit.

In their invitation, the organizers, CTPE and MST, as well as the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Pontifical Academies of Sciences, laid out

Brazil, I found myself at the Salesian order’s complex, a seemingly vast, gated area surrounded by gardens with peacocks wandering around, just outside the city of Rome, from Monday, Oct. 27 to Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2014.

In front of the main conference space, all organizations could display materials. I added some IWW swag. Amongst the materials on offer there were Italian translations of the writings of imprisoned

their aims for the meeting. These included consideration of the social thoughts of the Pope and the relationship between popular movements and the Church, and also an analysis of growing social inequalities, and, as stated in the invitation, “popular alternatives to address the problems [of] Financial Capitalism (...) in order to build a global society based on social justice out of the workers contexts.”

The meeting brought together approximately 150 people from around the world, with many in particular involved in the organizations Via Campesina, Shack Dwellers International, Christian labor organizations, as well as clergy from the Justice and Peace Council, and organizations of informal, precarious workers—in particular in recycling and garbage collection. The meeting was organized around five key topics: housing, work, land, violence, and the environment. As described in the introduction by one of the organizers, Juan Grabois, co-founder of the Excluded Workers Movement (MTE) and the CTEP (Argentina), the meeting was organized with a methodology defined as the action

approach of “see-hear-discern.” The first day would thus be dedicated to analysis of the global situation of working people and capitalism, and the second day to hearing, with speeches by the Pope, Evo Morales, the President of Bolivia, and a range of other speakers. The third day would then be the day to develop collective action.

Monday morning started with panel discussions on land, work, and housing, with time for five people to put forward additional short statements and questions after each panel. The perspective of the first speaker on land, Pancha Rodriguez from Via Campesina in Chile, set the common tone for those that followed. Introduced by the panel chair as a fighter and feminist, she spoke of solidarity, caring for Mother Earth, and the ongoing expropriation and concentration of land and natural resources by the unbridled progress of capitalism, where states, other organizations, and the Church itself have accepted that common good is taken away from them (by the interests of multinational corporations). She continued that the ongoing expropriation

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Industrial Worker  
PO Box 180195  
Chicago, IL 60618, USA



ISSN 0019-8870  
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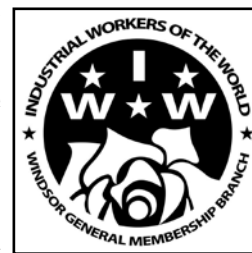
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## Windsor Wobblies Build Street Solidarity

By X35319

For the last year-and-a-half, the IWW in Windsor, Ontario, has been working on a campaign to organize panhandlers and buskers in the downtown core of this border city. The campaign started out as the Windsor Street Solidarity Committee and in late 2014 expanded to form the Windsor Panhandlers and Buskers Union.

In late November 2014 I had the pleasure of sitting down with Fellow Worker (FW) Richard from the Windsor General Membership Branch (GMB) and one of the main organizers in the Windsor Panhandler and Buskers Union. He explained how the campaign started: “At first we really just did what were basically patrols with branch members around downtown.”



Graphic: Windsor IWW

At this point they called themselves the “Street Solidarity Committee.”

“We would check in with people, help each other get in touch with people on the street and get them in touch with our organizers if there were any problems,” he said. Through their organizers on the streets and the patrols, they managed to recruit a handful of members who added numbers to their committee.

“Eventually we started dealing a bit with the police; if there was a problem with a member we would talk to the member and then the police, and then if a local business complained, we would speak to the business. Then we would try and work out a deal where the buskers and panhandlers could

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### Letters Welcome!

Send your letters to: iw@iww.org with "Letter" in the subject.

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### Get the Word Out!

IWW members, branches, job shops and other affiliated bodies can get the word out about their project, event, campaign or protest each month in the *Industrial Worker*. Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to:

IWW GHQ, Post Office 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

# Introducing The 2015-2016 Industrial Worker Co-Editors

Greetings fellow Wobblies and *Industrial Worker* readers! After being elected into this position following the IWW 2014 Fall Referendum, we are excited to announce that we are now co-editors of the *Industrial Worker (IW)*, the official newspaper of the IWW, for the coming 2015-2016 term.

Our commitment as editors will be the continued publication of high-quality and unique content that sets the *IW* apart from all other labor publications. Since there are two of us, we will work together to double the power of the paper—by not only maintaining the quality of the existing publication, but also developing its online presence and subscription base through an extensive overhaul of the current format.

Allow us to introduce ourselves: Nicki Meier is an experienced media professional and a committed Wobbly. In addition to a solid year of proofreading and regularly contributing articles and graphics to the *IW*, she has more than five years of experience in graphic design, including experience creating logos, t-shirt designs, and promotional materials for various organizations, events, and projects. She has helped with editing and design work

for IWW General Headquarters (GHQ), various branches and committees of the IWW and for fellow workers' projects unrelated to the union for the last year-and-a-half. Additionally, Nicki has years of experience writing for a number of non-profit projects.

Diane Krauthamer has served as the primary *IW* editor for the last six years and is committed to continuing her work for at least another two! In addition to editing the paper, she has been active in various labor media projects for nearly a decade, including her work in communications for a range of business unions in the United States, and most recently a freelance reporter for *Labor Notes* and a volunteer radio segment producer for the "Heartland Labor Forum," based in Kansas City. She has a strong proficiency in graphic design, newspaper layout, proofreading, writing, and a command of the English language. Diane holds a Master of Arts degree in Media Studies from the New School in New York City, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism/Media Studies and Political Science from Rutgers University in New Jersey.

We look forward to two years of



Graphic: Walter P. Reuther Library

### A 1961 issue of the Industrial Worker.

working with YOU in continuing the long-standing tradition of publishing our beloved newspaper. We will remain open to new ideas, critiques and suggestions. We encourage those with any questions, comments, pitches, submissions, photos, comics, poems, graphics, and anything else you would like to see published in the paper, to email iw@iww.org, and we will respond promptly!

For the One Big Union,  
**Diane Krauthamer & Nicki Meier**

## Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

ORGANIZATION  
EDUCATION  
EMANCIPATION

Official newspaper of the  
**INDUSTRIAL WORKERS  
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Globe Direct/Boston Globe Media  
Millbury, MA

**Next deadline is  
February 6, 2015**

U.S. IW mailing address:  
IW, Post Office Box 180195,  
Chicago, IL 60618,  
United States

ISSN 0019-8870  
Periodicals postage  
paid Chicago, IL.

POSTMASTER: Send address  
changes to IW, Post Office Box  
180195, Chicago, IL 60618 USA

SUBSCRIPTIONS  
Individual Subscriptions: \$18  
International Subscriptions: \$30  
Library/Institution Subs: \$30/year  
Union dues includes subscription.

Published monthly with the excep-  
tion of February and August.

Articles not so designated do  
not reflect the IWW's  
official position.

Press Date: January 12, 2015



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# The Centennial Commemoration Of Joe Hill

By Elmore Y., X359525

Singer, songwriter, and union activist Joe Hill was shot on Nov. 19, 1915. The centennial of this tragic and arbitrary case of state murder will lead to at least three events that are being promoted at the moment, with potentially more events being planned over the coming few months.

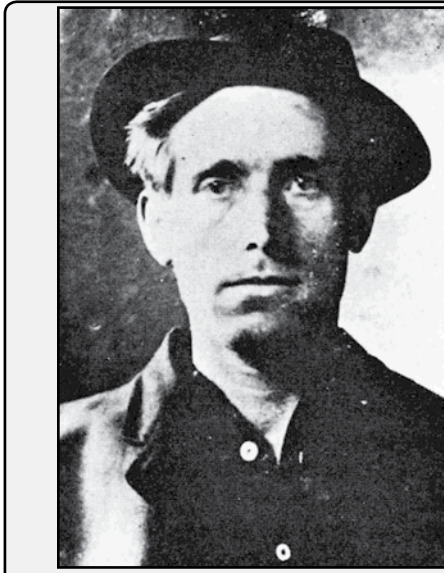
In Utah, a Joe Hill Organizing Committee was set up to prepare an all-day concert on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2015 (more information can be found at: <http://joehill2015.org>). In fact, Joe Hill did not want to be caught dead in Utah and his ashes were to be sent by the IWW to any place in the world but Utah. Catholic workers Amon Hennacy and Mary Lathrop founded the Joe Hill House of Hospitality for hobos and bums in 1961 to wash a little of the guilt from that bigoted Mormon metropolis of Salt Lake City.

Activists from the Bread and Roses Workers' Cultural Center in Denver, Colo., are planning an anniversary event. According to their website:

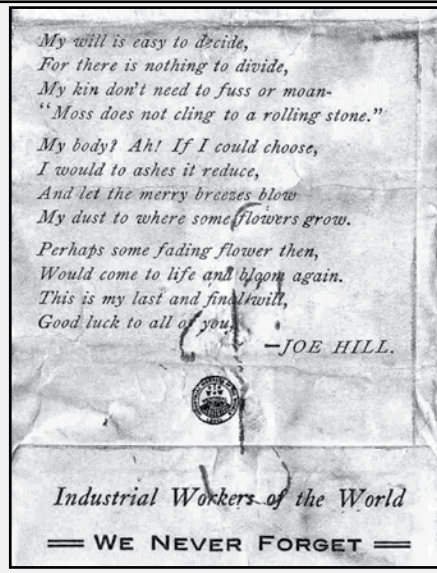
"We may have lined up a major promoter and thereby a major concert to go along with films, documentaries, perhaps a musical play, poetry and the book signing. We will need a great deal of help on this, especially publicity/media and outreach, and this may be an opportunity to raise significant funds to develop Bread and Roses projects in Joe's memory. This could be a corner-turner in making our Center a force for working class self-activity and development: join in!" (Contact: [info@workersbreadandroses.org](mailto:info@workersbreadandroses.org)). The Bread and Roses Center already held a two-day Joe Hill festival with folk singers John McCutcheon and Elena Klaver in August 2011. The Bread and Roses Center is currently closed and looking for a new location.

The Cologne IWW branch is preparing a concert with several bands in the Köln/Düsseldorf region, Germany. Contact [klarfall@wobblies.de](mailto:klarfall@wobblies.de) for more information.

There are some homegrown IWW-bands playing Joe Hill songs, such as the General Strike Band in Portland, the Over-



Joe Hill (left) and his last will (right).



Images: [rebelpress.org.nz](http://rebelpress.org.nz)

all Brigade from Cologne, and 12 Dead in Everett from Sheffield. Not to forget FW Tom Morello (a.k.a. "The Nightwatchman"), John Pietaro, and many others. But songs by and about Joe Hill have spread far beyond the IWW. They are part of the repertoire of famous musicians like Steve Earle ("Christmas in Washington"), Ry Cooder ("Three Chords and the Truth"), Anti-Flag ("1915"). Film score writer and jazz musician Wayne Horvitz wrote a 90-minute oratorio called "Joe Hill, 16 Actions for Orchestra, Voice and Soloist." It was premiered at the University of Washington's Meany Hall on Oct. 30, 2004, and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Strangely enough, companies like Standard Oil once made John D. Rockefeller the richest man in the world. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel & Iron Company was responsible for the Ludlow Massacre against striking miners on April 20, 1914. The music is good, though. History makes strange detours sometimes.

This leads me to the next point: A friend and fellow Wobbly from Berlin and I are preparing a documentary film called "The Ashes of Joe Hill." It will center on the year 1988, when envelopes with Joe Hill's last remains were accidentally found in

the U.S. National Archives and given back to the IWW. The film will chronicle the period since Joe Hill's death and go back to 1915, and maybe to 1969 when Joan Baez sang "I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night" at Woodstock. And of course it will present union struggles and feature rebel musicians and itinerant workers to answer the questions: Where has the Wobbly spirit of 1915 gone? Will the fading flower bloom again, as Joe Hill expressed his hopes in his last will?

We are urgently searching for interview partners and clues:

- Who discovered the remaining envelopes of Joe Hill's ashes in the National Archives in 1988?
- Who took part in the Joe Hill's Wake Bonfire in Michigan 1990? The event was reported by Carol Landry: "Joe Hill's Wake," *Industrial Worker*, December 1990, page 6.
- Who was present in 1989 when parts of the ashes were scattered in Lafayette, Colo., in remembrance of the Columbine Mine Massacre of 1927?

If you can contribute contacts and background information, or if you want to participate in this project, please email [joelittle@wobblies.de](mailto:joelittle@wobblies.de).

## We Need More IWW Translators

A letter to my fellow English speakers,



We are screwed if you only speak English and your aptitude for learning new languages is not good. I'm feeling pretty stuck in the English-speaking world and that is not okay. I joined the IWW to transcend language barriers and to be able to participate in events and actions with workers who speak all languages.

There are several things we can do immediately to improve our IWW translation programs and make better use our dedicated and weary IWW translators.

First of all, THANK YOU THANK YOU IWW translators. I know how much work it is, and I can see what you have to prioritize. Wobblies need you, even when we don't know it we need you profoundly, and we will try to protect your every step.

Let's have some translated conference calls that we plan in advance and where we have language support/translators on both ends—a Skype call with a nice speaker phone and a big screen.

Let's invite new translators and people with language skills we would like to access to begin by reviewing our Preamble in the language they speak and then maybe test their skills with a translation of some of Fellow Worker (FW) Tom Keough's cartoons.

My immediate translation needs are: there are a group of workers at Giant Eagle Store 47 and many other Giant Eagles that speak African languages. I don't even have an adequate list of what those languages are. I could use help providing them with some orientation to the union which represents them—United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 23. It would be nice to have a conference call with the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh. The logistics of this, especially the first time, require a lot of planning. FW Tom Keough's cartoons can be formatted to help us work with translators and have immediately useful translations that can be exchanged via PDF. Does someone want to help with that?

I don't know where copies of the IWW Preamble in different languages are located, whether they are in PDF format or who certified or accepted any of the translations as being official.

Locally, what's working is that the Pittsburgh IWW has a liaison to the IWW International Solidarity Commission. The branch has allocated \$50 to support new translation initiatives, and the editor of our new quarterly newsletter, Martin Zehr, is very focused on prioritizing Spanish language material for our newsletter. Thank you Martin!!!

If you can share information in English about translations or any of these initiatives, please call me at 412-512-1709.

Solidarity,  
**Kenneth Miller**

### 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**.

### Industrial Worker Subscriptions

**Reminder!**  
As per GEB motion JWS-09, the pricing for IW bundles is \$0.50/copy. Yearly bundle subscriptions (10 issues) are as follows:



- Monthly Bundle of 5: \$25**
- Monthly Bundle of 10: \$50**
- Monthly Bundle of 25: \$125**
- Monthly Bundle of 50: \$250**
- Monthly Bundle of 100: \$500**

Pricing has already taken effect as reflected on the store website and delegate forms. Starting January 1, 2015, any incoming renewal requests will be at the above rate.

To request a renewal or inquire on your subscription expiration date email [store@iww.org](mailto:store@iww.org). Please title your email "Subscription Inquiry."



## Marginalized Workers' Voices The Toughest Skin

By **Liberte Locke**

Being a woman means knowing mostly women will actually read this column.

As a woman who works in retail, I am making next-to-nothing for serving everyone.

I have always worked with my hands. I have used them to care of other people's children. I have used them to clean bachelor pads while men I don't know watch television and occasionally look me up and down when I know that this will not be a reoccurring gig. When men stay home to watch the housekeeper they

and hired from Craigslist for next-to-nothing, they were hoping to get more than their money's worth to watch a disenfranchised broke woman clean for them. I've been asked why I was wearing so much, asked how much I weigh, asked why anyone would hire me "looking like that."

I've been called every insult, been "offered" paid and unpaid sex work from complete strangers while selling them cups of coffee for barely over the minimum wage. And I have considered it.

I know touching a man's hand while giving him change makes for a 75 percent chance I'll get a tip. I know laughing when he asks if I'm on the menu means not being called "bitch." I'm called "bitch" often.

Being a large woman means that thin rich New York white ladies will almost always change their drink orders after looking me up and down to non-fat, no-hip, and sugar-free.

Being an injured woman worker wearing wrist braces on both hands while making drinks at neck-breaking speeds means undoubtedly that the few people that feign concern mostly want to waste my time telling me how I don't take care of myself, how losing weight will help my arms. They will make every assumption about me, my class, my life, and assume I somehow did this to myself and not capitalism.

Being a big, injured, openly-queer woman, exhausted, overworked, underpaid, almost bottom-rung worker at a

major corporate chain means that I'm on display constantly—for every judgment and every critique. Being confident means customers go out of their way to break me down because shit rolls downhill and their jobs suck too, but differently. Very differently.

I know being a woman organizer is breaking down from all the misogyny I experience daily, the ableism, the homophobia, the transphobia (from openly supporting and loving trans people, and admitting to being a bit fagboi myself), being truly working class—born and

bred—that male organizers will hear all that as counter-revolutionary complaining or "identity politics" for those with the time to be all academic about my reality. One such even said I wasted his time with it. Same such said I needed "tougher skin" for this work, meaning unionizing.

Being an injured queer fast food working woman who has always made her money through physical labor and knows homelessness, and knows need, and feels compassion for others' struggles...I know that means that I embody toughness; even through my tears, and even through my breakdowns. Even through my struggle with daily misogyny, fatphobia, homophobia and ableism, I keep on keeping on. I realize that I can defend my emotional state until I've lost my voice and broken my own heart but that true allies, true comrades, true Wobblies would never ask me to do such a thing.

I'm still fighting, I'm still breathing, and that's in spite of the haters and people who misunderstand me. This life ain't easy, and it ain't over. And I'm not giving up.

*"Marginalized Workers' Voices" is a new column for women, gender minorities, and any LGBTQ+ Fellow Worker. It's for Wobblies of color, workers with disabilities, and any other marginalized voice of the One Big Union. If you'd like to contribute, please send your article to iw@iww.org with the subject line "Marginalized Workers' Voices."*



Photo: unionsmatter.com

**"Workers' Power"** is on vacation this month. If you would like to contribute to a future "Workers' Power" column, email [cbossen@gmail.com](mailto:cbossen@gmail.com).



### Organizing

## Imagining An IWW Branch In Accra

By **Brad Laird, X374826**  
Indiana IWW GMB Member

In August 2014 my partner, five-year-old daughter and I packed up and moved to Ghana for the academic year. This is a time for us to experience the world through lenses of another culture. The many details of making sure the pets are cared for, the house rented, stuff stored, bills paid, mail forwarded, etc., left us dazed and a little worried that we had forgotten something important, some capitalist requirement in the fine print that will generate misery. We let the worry go as best we could, and took the plunge.

Ghana, which used to be called the "Gold Coast," is located in West Africa, an Anglophone country surrounded by Francophone countries. Ebola has not come to Ghana, although the international effort to deal with the West African countries it has ravaged is organized from Accra, Ghana's capital. We are here because my partner was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the University of Ghana in Legon, part of the Accra region. Ghana has over 100 ethnic groups and corresponding languages and dialects. Most adults speak several local languages and some English with varying proficiency. English is the common language—a legacy of British colonialism. Ghana was the first African country to gain independence from the

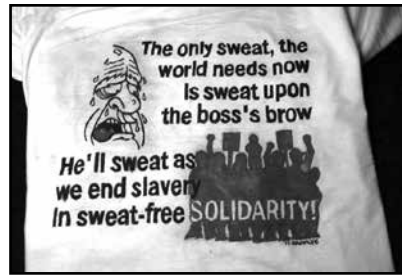
colonial powers, becoming independent in 1957.

Kwame Nkrumah was a Ghanaian nationalist leader who led the Gold Coast's

independence from Britain and presided over its emergence as the new nation of Ghana. He imagined a Pan-African, socialist future, with Ghana inaugurating an Africa free of the influences of colonial powers. In February 1966, Ghana's armed forces, with intelligence assistance and pressure from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), took over the government in "Operation Cold Chop," a *coup d'état*. The Cold War policies brought in the neocolonial era. Frantz Fanon's earlier descriptors during the colonial period remained true, and seems so still today: "the unemployed and the starving do not lay claim to truth. They do not say they represent the truth because they are the truth in their very being."

With this brief introduction to Ghana, here are four suggestions for what an IWW branch in Accra might need:

First, a branch will need to have one or more official linguists. This person could be a working-class person who speaks six or more languages—not an uncommon



Graphic: Gadflye

person to find here. Whether visiting a family because a member has died, or negotiating a contract, there is usually an identified linguist present to whom one speaks, and who relays that information to the other party. This is done even when all parties speak a common indigenous language or when everyone is fluent in English. This cultural norm will need to be reflected in an IWW branch.

Second, organizers can talk theory openly. Left ideology is generally a more comfortable fit in Ghana than in the United States. Even many fundamentalist Christians here wish Nkrumah's socialist plans in the country's structure would have continued, despite their unhappiness with his seeing Christianity as a disruptive colonial cultural import. Talking about Marxism, communism, socialism, or anarcho-syndicalism is not fraught with the red-baiting that some of us have experienced.

Third, we will need to find ways to develop the IWW's developing praxes regarding gender, with an eye to what is possible first without surrendering our commitment to radical gender inclusiveness and egalitarianism. The conversation

here is at a distinctly different place than those in the United States and Europe. At the Kotoka International Airport in Accra one is met by a sign that reads:

"Welcome!! ... Ghana does not welcome pedophiles and other sexual deviants. Ghana imposes extremely harsh penalties on such sexually aberrant behavior, and that if you happen to be one of these sexual deviants, then you should 'go elsewhere' for 'everybody's good.'"

We were told that discussing gay rights could get one lynched. A non-cisgender Ghanaian friend tells us that it is dangerous, but there is a large GLBTQI community here, and this community does do things out in the open periodically. I will do more research on this matter.

Fourth, and finally, Ghana does not need another American or European telling them what they should do. Fortunately, this is consistent with my understanding of what the IWW stands for: local determination of goals and objectives, local development of praxis within our overarching constitution and bylaws. I find Staughton Lynd's discussion of "Accompanying" to be helpful. He is specific about the how privileged persons can avoid being more of a problem than a help by accompanying others toward their self-determined goals and putting our shoulder to their tasks in solidarity.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

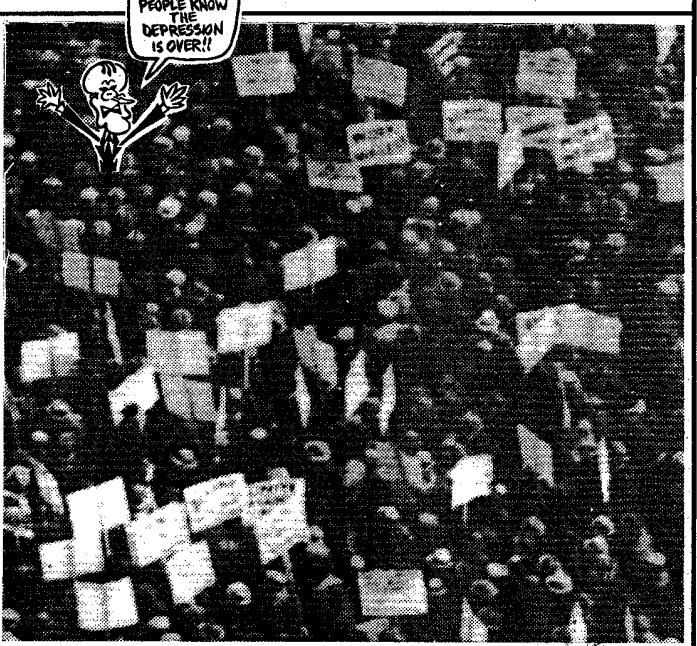
## WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

### Chapter 79

### Unemployed Fightback

**When the Great Depression hit, there was no unemployment insurance, no welfare. The unemployed faced grim and desperate conditions. Out of their despair came organization and a ringing call for change.**

**The fightback was signaled by rallies around the country on March 6, 1930. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers demonstrated in some 30 cities and towns; close to 100,000 filled Union Square in New York City. They were attacked by police; a witness reported: "Demonstrators and bystanders were slugged and kicked, blackjacked and knocked down by mounted police... Women were struck in the face with blackjacks, and many of the women were kicked as they lay on the ground..."**



**On July 4-5, 1930, some 440 women were among the 1,320 delegates attending the founding convention of the Unemployed Councils of the U.S.A. The Unemployed Councils called for passage of an unemployment insurance bill and maternity benefits, and opposed discrimination by sex or race.**

**Demonstrating with such signs as "Work or Wages," "Fight, Don't Starve!" and "United We Eat," the Unemployed Councils demanded equal unemployment insurance for single and married women workers, no dismissal of married women, free municipal lodging houses for unemployed women and free medical care for unemployed pregnant women.**

**In many cities, Unemployed Councils fought evictions with direct action. "We would move the furniture and people's belongings back into the houses emptied by the eviction notices," said Matilda Molina Tolly of Los Angeles.**



Wobbly & North American News

# Wobblies Keep Up The Fight In Scotland

By FW Keith,  
West of Scotland  
Regional Organiser

Scotland has experienced a turbulent time recently. Even though the independence referendum failed, the levels of political participation and discussion on alternatives increased dramatically. Parties that voted in favor of independence, such as the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Scottish Green Party, and the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), witnessed huge increases in membership after the poll, whilst parties against independence saw their poll ratings plummet.

Workers and students joined the Clydeside IWW branch, especially in the education sector. The branch profile has been raised at demonstrations and pickets, and the outlook remains firmly internationalist and focused on exposing capitalism for the flawed system it is. A major issue that has emerged and will produce cracks in the political landscape is fracking. Local community groups have sprung up in former mining areas in the Central Belt, from Bishopbriggs to Balingry.



Anti-fracking rally at Ineos plant Grangemouth, Dec. 7, 2014. Photo: WestScotRO

Earlier last summer and autumn, the branch held two public meetings. The first was in July with Immanuel Ness from New York on worldwide new forms of worker organization. In September, Dave Douglas from Tyneside spoke about the miners' strike 30 years ago, and the preparations the State took to defeat the miners' cause. In November, an IWW Scottish Assembly was held in Edinburgh. Over the course of eight months, three issues of the *Strike Back* newsletter have been distributed at events such as the St. Andrews Day anti-racist march and the John McLean Commemoration rally.

For more for information, see <http://iwscotland.wordpress.com>.

## NYC IWW Marches Against Police Brutality



Photo: Stephanie Basile

Members of the NYC IWW participate in the Millions March NYC on Dec. 13, 2014. About 25,000 were estimated to have marched that day against police brutality.

## Nurses Strike Against Ebola Readiness

By John Kalwaic

On the morning of Nov. 11, 2014, approximately 18,000 nurses went on a two-day strike at Kaiser Permanente hospitals and clinics in California. Nurses at other California hospitals went on strike as well. Some 400 newly-organized nurses in Washington D.C., who were seeking a first contract, went on a one-day strike the following day, and nurses held rallies, pickets, and candlelight vigils in 14 other states. This was part of a day of action aimed to raise the alarm that hospitals aren't prepared to safely care for patients with Ebola. It was coordinated by National Nurses United (NNU).



Photo: nationalnursesunited.org

According to *Labor Notes*, "the specter of workplace-contracted Ebola grabbed headlines this fall when two Dallas nurses who had treated an infected patient got sick themselves. Luckily, both recovered. But nurses from the affected hospital,

Texas Health Presbyterian, who are non-union, contacted the NNU about what had gone wrong." These two nurses cited concerns about working conditions, such as inadequate staffing and training that did not prepare them for fighting the deadly disease.

"Though the vicious virus, which can kill in a matter of days, engenders a particular horror, it's far from the biggest danger facing health care workers on the job, or patients in a hospital...Nurses say the same problems they're highlighting over Ebola—lack of supplies and training, for instance, and short staffing most of all—strike at the root of all kinds of safety concerns that health care workers and patients face, with understaffing as a top concern," wrote Alexandra Bradbury in *Labor Notes*. For more information, visit <http://labornotes.org/2014/11/nurses-strike-its-not-just-about-ebola>.

With files from *Labor Notes*.

## Valve Workers Strike In Ipswich

By John Kalwaic

On Nov. 26, 2014, machinists, welders and other workers with United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 279, held a strike against a North Shore manufacturing company in Ipswich, Mass. The workers, who make parts for the nuclear power and energy industry picketed Weir Valves & Controls, USA Inc., protesting what they said were management's efforts to increase their health care costs and change rules governing seniority, overtime, and hiring. The workers were strik-



Graphic: UE Local 279

ing in defiance of \$1.75 per hour cuts, as well as slashing of health care services after taking cuts from the company for years. The workers braved a snowstorm to come out to the picket line.

Kevin McPherson, full-time valve technician and UE Local 279 President, said "We have a lot of fun out on the picket line even though striking is not supposed to be fun," according to the *Boston Globe*.

With files from the *Boston Globe* and <http://www.ueunion.org>.

## Oklahoma IWW Solidarity With Students

By the Oklahoma  
IWW

Students at Norman High School in Norman, Okla., walked out of their classes at 9:20 a.m. on Monday, Nov. 24, 2014, greeted by hundreds of activists and supporters boldly standing with them in solidarity. Why?

Throughout the semester, an 18-year-old senior at the school raped three female students, publicized the rapes and humiliated the survivors. These girls were met with bullying and harassment, one being forced to leave the school because of constant hazing. Another was not even able to enter the school before being violently confronted by the rapist's friends. The third student retaliated when being harassed and was asked to leave the school for the remainder of the year until things "blow over." The administration punished the survivor for self-defense and has done nothing to address rape, sexual assault and harassment in their school community.

A brave group of students, supporters, and friends of the survivors decided to take action against this injustice. Following this, a core group of organizers met in coffeehouses and in supporters' homes, and brainstormed what they could do to force the administration to address this problem. Through cooperation with local activists and media, the #YesAll-Daughters campaign was born, gar-



Photo: Oklahoma IWW

nering almost 5,000 Facebook "likes" in two weeks, bringing media attention to the issue and rallying hundreds of students and supporters to stand outside the school on the morning of Nov. 24.

As a union committed to the abolition of patriarchy and all forms of exploitation, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) stands with these students in solidarity and was represented at the walkout. Christophe Parsons, a delegate for the Oklahoma IWW, was part of the core group of organizers. Parsons said, "Both as a friend of the survivor and as a revolutionary unionist committed to building a new world, inaction was not an option. I am proud of my fellow students and community supporters who have rallied around these girls, and I am proud of my union, which has showed incredible solidarity and support in organizing this event."

"Anyone who denies the role that patriarchy plays in oppression, anyone who will not practice gender equity and feminism, is not a revolutionary. The Oklahoma IWW will not stand silent in the face of such a blatant injustice in our community against our young people," Parsons added.

The Oklahoma IWW echoes the cries of the student-activists and stands alongside them in their struggle and the struggle of all victims of patriarchy.

## "Red November, Black November" A Success!

By The Organizer

November is a somber month for labor. The Haymarket Martyrs were executed in November. Joe Hill was put before a firing squad in Utah during November. Buenaventura Durruti was killed in November. The Centralia, Everett and First Columbine massacres all occurred in November.

It is for this reason that the Twin Cities General Membership Branch (GMB) of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) began to put together a yearly social event called "Red November, Black November" (RBNB). Recognizing the importance of this month to organized labor, RBNB is held to remember and reflect on both our own efforts, as well as those who came before us.

Nov. 22, 2014 marked the seventh time RBNB has been held. A \$10 ticket (\$5 for kids) bought you a *pozole* dinner with two beverages, along with a full program of reports, music, a kids' skit, a quiz, raffles and conversation with other IWW members. Although it was a Twin Cities focused event, Wobblies from Winnipeg, Toronto, Chicago, Salt Lake City and Indiana were in attendance. This year RBNB also coincided with an Organizer Training 102 that happened the same weekend.

After dinner, and interspersed with labor songs throughout, attendees heard reports from the outgoing branch secretary-treasurers. The two officers went over some of the better practices they had tried to establish in 2014, and announced the branch's move to a new, larger office in December.

Next were reports from campaigns that members have been involved in over the year. Among some of the campaigns discussed were: how the "Hands Up Don't Ship" job action came together, establishing contacts with prison laborers and activity from dual-carders in education. Extra time was set aside to watch a video greeting recorded by a branch member



Setting up for the "Red November, Black November" event in 2009. Photo: Erik Davis

currently in South Africa.

Moving on to perhaps the highlight of the night was the kids' skit. Organized by the Junior Wobblies with the assistance of some of their parents and siblings, the skit featured the kids poking fun at the campaigns and experiences of the Twin Cities IWW. As usual, it received a lot of laughter and a standing applause.

A staffer from General Headquarters in Chicago attended and gave a broad report of what has been going on in the union. This was followed by reports from the editor of our branch's newsletter, *The Organizer*, and the Junior Wobblies. This was the last of the reports.

The event then moved on to a "Trivia Pub Quiz" with the winning table getting an extra entry into the raffle. The raffle, which every attendee got at least one entry in, consisted of a number of prizes, including items from May Day Books, thought-crime ink, Recomposition and individual members. The last part of RBNB involved making toasts. Wobblies raised their glasses and saluted each other's efforts. It was a display of appreciation for tasks not always recognized. This concluded the 7th Annual Red November, Black November.

After the event, Twin Cities GMB member Emmett D. said, "It was a successful event that captured the energy and hilarity of our union. I think a lot of people left feeling energized and excited to see what we can accomplish in the year ahead."

## Front Page News

# Anti-Police Brutality Protest Shakes Things Up At The Mall Of America

Continued from 1

Whether or not food court workers who abandoned their posts and joined the protest could be called a “wildcat strike” is up for debate, but it certainly speaks volumes that this is an issue that resonates with so many. It resonates enough with people that they are willing to refuse to work and instead take action against a white supremacist police state. Previous Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area have linked the Service Employee International Union’s (SEIU’s) Fight for 15 and Fast Food Forward campaigns with the movement against police violence. McDonald’s workers, still in their uniforms, blocked highways and led chants of “Hands up, don’t shoot.” Some of them participated in die-ins on the highway or in the middle of busy intersections. The fact that many

people of color who experience the brunt of police violence also make up a considerable amount of those who work at low-wage fast food and service jobs speaks volumes about the white supremacist capitalist system that we find ourselves living in today. It is the hope of this Wobbly and many others within the general anti-police movement gaining traction that we can link direct action against bosses who exploit us for our labor and pay us menial compensation with direct action against a State which uses violence to enforce a white supremacist and patriarchal social order.

Actions like “Hands Up Don’t Ship” (a symbolic protest by rank-and-file workers at the United Parcel Service [UPS] hub in Minneapolis in which workers refused to ship packages from Law Enforcement Targets Inc.) and these spontaneous walk-

outs by food court workers at the Mall of America are just the beginning of what is hopefully a new movement: a movement which can begin to combat both the mistreatment at the hands of the employing class and the mistreatment at the hands of the police; a movement that can bring working-class people together regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation and fight for its emancipation. The Twitter personality “@zellie,” who has been extremely active in reporting what has been going on in Ferguson and also in New York in response to the murders of Mike Brown and Eric Garner, said “If you ever wondered what you would be doing in the Civil Rights Movement, now is the time to find out.” Let us all find out together. In the face of such blatant disregard for the lives of people of color in this nation by the police, inaction on our part is complacency.



Riot police.

Photo: Justin Rodin

The labor movement of the 21st century cannot avoid the presence of white supremacy or patriarchy in our society. It must combat them as well as combat capitalism. Then and only then will we begin to see a much less miserable world, one in which all of us will be free to carve out our own destinies free from the confines of wage labor, patriarchal subjugation, and white supremacist marginalization. Wobblies of the world, let’s get to work!

## Strange Encounters: World Meeting Of Popular Movements In Vatican City



Graphic: movimientospopulares.org

Continued from 1

and concentration of land and natural resources are processes of turning everything into capital. This includes pollution, hunger, and sickness itself; migration, indebtedness, consumerism, domestic and institutional violence, and drugs; and of how rights are now called “benefits.” After denouncing the declared and undeclared wars by regular forces, paramilitaries and drug traffickers in West Africa, Afghanistan, Mexico and elsewhere and concluding that food is not a business but a basic human right, she called for public policies and the right to self-determination. This pattern of a radical critique of capitalism, followed by a demand of rights, and occasionally, although not in Pancha Rodriguez’s contribution, followed by an appeal to the support of the Catholic Church, seemed to me the dominant type of speech delivered in the course of the formal part of the event.

The two further panels on violence and the environment, with speakers ranging from the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences to the President of the Turkish Peasant Confederation, considered climate change and unequal access to resources—including energy—as well as war and violence, as systemic problems stemming from the use of nature and other people for profit. During the last day’s proposals for action, Suha Jarrar of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, based in Palestine, provided an analysis of the colonial situation in Palestine with an unambiguous appeal to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.

In the course of the meeting, there were also denunciations of patriarchy, references to Marx and Gramsci and jokes about revolutionary expropriation. What could it mean if the Catholic Church

is open to those discourses?

At the crack of dawn on Tuesday, we all took a bus to the Vatican and had a mass at St. Peter’s, followed by a speech by the Pope, another panel, and another speech by Evo Morales. Pope Francis stressed the importance of solidarity, which he defined as “to think and to act in terms of community, of the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few,” as “a way of making history,” and to fight against the structural causes of poverty and inequality, “to confront the destructive effects of the empire of money.” He then addressed the key themes of the conference in turn, in relation to religion, emphasizing that “love of the poor is at the heart of the Gospel,” that this is simply “the Social Doctrine of the Church,” indeed that “idolatrous worship [is] rendered to money,” and that this is because the world “has become an orphan because it left God to one side.” We were invited, because movements from below, like ours, ought to come together to coordinate, and that “we must try to walk together.”

The afternoon brought a panel on “Pope Francis and Native People,” which the chair, Margaret Archer of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, introduced with the question of how a popular movement can be converted into a legitimate form of government of direct participatory democracy. Her remarks seemed to me to suggest that (especially with the concluding talk by Evo Morales, an armed guard in uniform standing right behind him throughout) this kind of feat was seen to have been accomplished in Bolivia with an economic order based on principles of cooperation, solidarity, and harmony with nature as touted by Morales (and lacking any acknowledgement of problems concerning the energy sector in relation to ecology and indigenous communities’ lands, for one).

The final day was intended to lead to action, with two parallel workshops: one

on the Church and popular movements, and the other to prepare a conference statement. The structure was again one of panels, followed by five speakers from the floor. It seemed everyone was tired, we were running late, and the schedule was changed. And again, I was not sure how statements actually lead to action or are further examples of local struggles as was the case throughout the first two days.

Appeals were made and essentially various forms of lobbying were proposed, despite the analysis of how governments, global institutions, and companies are profiting from maintaining the current situation of inequality, exploitation and oppression. Despite the critique of capitalism, the dominant term throughout the event was however, not “struggle,” but “inclusion.” A lot of speakers appealed to the Church for support, while conversely those speaking for the Church emphasized the self-organization and determination of “the poor.”

Other discussions of how we organize and our methods and strategies were absent. The focus was on public declarations, as well as—for the representatives of many organizations—to make sure they had room to speak on behalf of their group. Maybe this simply means that this is all that can happen, when an event is structured in this manner, with its strictures of time and need to finding common denominators between so many different groups who don’t all know each other.

Another conclusion would be that overall, this functions as a form of publicity for the institution, where the presence of our diverse expressions of struggling but self-organized and hard-working global poverty quite literally shows that the Church cares for us—while parties, governments, the traditional labor movement and other secular bodies clearly don’t. This critique is not entirely wrong, of course. Participants such as Judith Marshall, who recently retired from the Canadian Steelworkers Union, were aware of this failure, and articulated a critical need for labor to move beyond the limits of what is

commonly raised as a legitimate issue for a union to take on—for example, the false choice between jobs, wages and protecting the earth. This means, in their words, that we need to analyze neoliberalism also in terms of the relationships between governments, corporations and the upper structures of unions.

During the meeting one of the organizers of the event also suggested it was important to think about our own practices as popular movements and outlined four principles evoked by the Pope: time is superior to space, unity is greater than conflict, we need a global and collective approach, and reality is superior to ideology. Perhaps we can consider our involvement in this event, and relationship to it, in light of this last notion?

While it is obvious that we must aim to act and organize in solidarity with each other, including with our religious fellow workers, it is harder for me to see how the Church as an institution, with its hierarchies and rules, ordained from above, is truly compatible with the values of an egalitarian, emancipatory project. The moments that seemed to me rich in potential and learning were the encounters with many people who are organizing for themselves globally, and who I would be unlikely to have met otherwise. This included the lunch and conversation I shared with three women who were farmers in Mali, the Netherlands, and the United States, in which we spoke personally and clearly about our common circumstances and the global networks of capitalism.

As the formal meeting drew to a close on Wednesday, after the final statement was read out, I got a real glimpse of what kind of event we all could organize together when the speaker who was to give the closing statement was running late: the chair of the meeting at that moment started a song, others joined in to sing and dance, then another woman stepped up to sing a song from their country, again, with everyone joining in...and so on.

For more information on the meeting, visit: <http://movimientospopulares.org>.

## Windsor Wobblies Build Street Solidarity

Continued from 1

stay.” Richard described their interactions with the police as generally adversarial but not overtly hostile. Holding up two hands, he illustrated this relationship by lightly bumping them together. “We try not to run into each other too hard too often so that we can still cut a deal,” he said.

One of the problems Richard described was helping members deal with businesses that asked the police to remove the members from public property near their store. However, the Windsor Panhandlers and Buskers Union also have one larger campaign under their belt. In 2013, one city council member tried to bring in an anti-panhandling measure called “Care

Meters.” These are basically parking meters that collect money for charities. Usually they go hand-in-hand with restrictions on panhandling to certain parts of town during certain times of day.

Richard described how they tackled the issue:

“We decided to organize a public meeting on July 1, 2013, to discuss our side of the issue. We had some speakers talk about people’s rights, about police violence, and also about addiction issues.”

Before the meeting, the same city council member who was pushing Care Meters was confronted while harassing an IWW panhandler downtown. “Well, he just called the others in the union and we

had four Wobblies down there right away,” Richard said. The scene of the altercation just happened to be across the street from the *Windsor Star* offices (the local daily newspaper) and the event made the front page the next day!

“This brought a lot of attention to our public meeting and attendance was really good. We had people speak on addiction problems, on issues facing First Nations people, and accessing services for people on the streets,” said Richard.

When the city council met to discuss the motion on the Care Meters, the only speaker to the motion was the city solicitor, who told council members that the bylaw would probably be overturned

if someone brought forward a Supreme Court challenge. Richard was beaming when he told me this part: “After that you could hear a pin drop in the council chambers. The motion died on the floor with no one voting for it or even speaking to it.”

Now the Panhandlers and Buskers Union is back to building their membership up through smaller actions and building power on the street from what they describe as small victories. They hold a business meeting every two weeks to check in with each other and work on how they deal with the police and local businesses, and they even keep regular office hours. This is definitely a campaign worth watching.



Labor News From Around The Globe

# Austerity, Tax Deals, And Massive Protests In Belgium

By Alexis Merlaud

Over 120,000 people gathered in Brussels, Belgium, on Nov. 6, 2014, to protest against austerity measures of the new right-wing government. As could be expected, despite the fact that the demonstration was mainly peaceful, mainstream media drew the attention on the violent acts of a few hundred people. There is much violence in the austerity measures themselves, which follows a classical scheme: shifting the legal age of retirement from 65 to 67 years old; ending the automatic link between wages and inflation; and imposing massive budget cuts in research, culture, health care and development aid. One should note that some public investment seems safe: Belgium will buy new military planes for €6 billion. The huge demonstration of Nov. 6, the largest of its kind in almost 30 years, was part of an action plan organized by the three major unions together, which included rolling strikes across Belgium and a national general strike on Dec. 15.

By an ironic calendar coincidence,

Nov. 6 was also the day when the press released what was called “Lux Leaks.” This affair revealed an industrial system by which major companies like Coca Cola, Pepsi, IKEA, FedEx, or Amazon evaded paying taxes with the help of the “Big 4” audit firms: Price Water House Cooper (PwC), Deloitte, Ernst and Young, and KPMG. The system consists of putting the profits in the tax haven of Luxembourg, where the tax rate can be less than 1 percent. In Belgium, according to Lux Leaks documents, several large companies and also rich families used the Luxembourg trick to avoid tax. The loss for the country budget in Belgium accounts for several billion euros; the same order of magnitude as the government expects with its austerity policies. In fact, Luxembourg was already known for tax evasion before the Lux Leaks revelations. What is new is the extent of the system.

The audit firms, the multinationals, and Luxembourg authorities defend themselves in the same way: saying that the process is perfectly legal. The Euro-

pean Commission has promised to consider tax deals seriously. One can be skeptical considering that the commission is already paying PwC to study transparency policies for banks. Moreover, the president of the European Commission is now Jean-Claude Juncker, who was the minister for finances (1989-2009) and the prime minister (1995-2013) in Luxembourg. So far, the legal reactions to the Lux Leaks affair in Luxembourg has consisted in opening a case against the employee of PwC who had leaked the information on the tax scandal to the media.

The link between the multinationals and the super-rich hiding their money in tax havens, and the austerity measures of governments justified by the public debt, is rather obvious. But one can also consider that these practices are merely two aspects of the ongoing money transfer from the public to the ruling class. Our collective experience in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa shows that



Anti-austerity protests in Brussels on Nov. 6, 2014. Photo: Alexis Merlaud

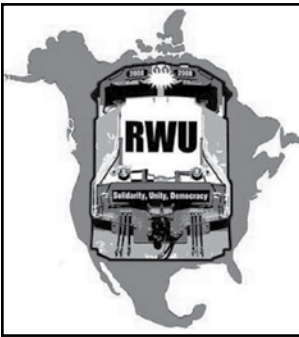
austerity does not improve the economic situation. According to an Oxfam study published in September 2013, austerity policies, if they carry on, will push 15 to 25 million Europeans to poverty by 2025. Oxfam also considers that the only segment of the population who benefits from austerity measures in Europe is the richest 10 percent. With austerity, in this case, one man’s meat is thus nine other men’s poison.

# Railroad Workers United To Co-Sponsor Railroad Conference

By Railroad Workers United

This coming March, Railroad Workers United (RWU) will co-sponsor two conferences: one in the Bay Area and one in the Pacific Northwest. Tentatively entitled “The Future of Railroads: Safety, Workers, Community and Environment.” RWU is partnering with the Backbone Campaign and other citizens’ and environmental groups to organize these innovative and cutting-edge conferences. The Bay Area conference will be held on March 14 at the Richmond Recreation Center in Richmond, Calif. The following weekend’s conference will be held on March 21, in Seattle; the location is yet to be determined.

In recent months, public attention has focused on the railroad in a way that it has not for decades. In the wake of the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster in 2013 and other derailments and resulting fires and explosions, the public is alarmed about oil trains and the movement of trains in general through their communities. Environmental activists are up in arms about the amount of fossil fuels being trans-



ported by railway. Farmers and other shippers are concerned about the congestion that has occurred in recent months, due in part to the oil boom. All of this attention gives railroad workers a golden opportunity to educate the general public about the railroad, its inherent efficiencies, its value to

society, and its potential. It also gives us an invaluable opportunity to inform non-railroad workers about the situation that we face on the job every day. The public generally has no idea what goes on daily on America’s railroads. At these conferences, we plan to talk about crew fatigue, single employee train crews, excessively long and heavy trains, draconian availability policies, short staffing, limited time off work and other concerns. These issues are of concern not just to railroaders, but to environmentalists, the community at large and society in general. Non-railroaders in attendance at the conference will come away with a deeper understanding of our workplace and a greater appreciation of the issues facing us. They will, without a doubt, become valuable allies in our future fights with

the rail carriers.

Tentative workshops and discussion topics include but are not limited to:

- Single-employee train crews, why they will not work, and the safety hazards they pose for workers, communities and the environment.
- Excessively long and heavy trains and their inherent problems and dangers.
- Crew fatigue and the need for adequate time off, proper train line-ups, and advance call times, call windows and all the rest to ensure well-rested, alert and safe train crews.
- Building worker-to-worker alliances along the supply chain of all transport workers.
- “Railroading for the General Public 101.”
- “Environmental Politics for Railroad Workers 101.”
- Ensuring safe track, bridges and rolling stock.
- The “Solutionary Rail” campaign and a vision for what a sustainable railroad of the future could look like.
- Building a labor-community alliance around safety issues.
- A history of labor-environment alliances and how to build one that revolves around the railroad industry.

For more information, check the RWU Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Railroadworkersunited> and the RWU list serve. To get involved in organizing either conference and to attend, contact Gifford Hartman at 415-410-9299 or [giffordhartman@gmail.com](mailto:giffordhartman@gmail.com).

# Rapid Progress Being Made With Prisoner Organizing

By X363375

The IWW General Executive Board (GEB), in response to the rapidly growing organization of prisoners,



Graphic: IWOC

recently assigned the Prison Industry Industrial Union (IU) 613. IU 613 is the first odd-numbered designation in IWW history and also the first IU numbering that does not end in zero.

Currently more than 250 prisoners are already seeking membership into the One Big Union (OBU). This is an exceptionally large number of Wobbly recruits in a comparatively short amount of time. Clearly, the OBU is the right place, and this is the right time, to help prisoners organize and make positive change happen through Wobbly unionism.

As this organizing campaign expands it clearly needs financial support from sponsors outside of prison walls. While for a limited amount of time, initiation fees and dues can be waived by the GEB, there is ongoing need for postage and office supplies to spread the word and to multiply our gains.

At the time of this writing, the unofficial vote just came in that IU 613 will be accepting new Wobblies with initiation and dues waived for 12 months! I truly hope that we can recruit 100,000 in the next year!

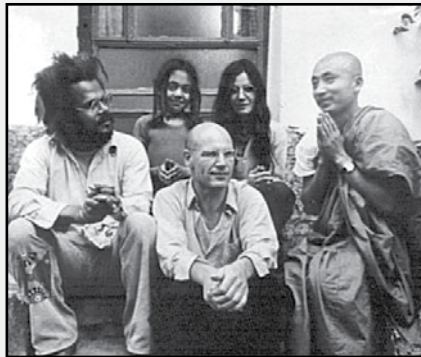
Cheers for the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee!

## Obituary

# Rest In Peace: Mathematician And Ecological Activist, Alexander Grothendieck (1928-2014)

By Alexis Merlaud

Alexander Grothendieck died on Nov. 13, 2014, at the age of 86. He is considered by many to be one of the greatest mathe-



Grothendieck in 1975. Photo: math.cnrs.fr

ematicians of the 20th century. He was also an avant-garde figure in peace and ecological activism. According to Grothendieck, his father, Sasha Piotr—a Russian anarchist—is one of the main characters in John Reed’s book “Ten Days That Shook the World.” Piotr fought in the Russian and Ukrainian revolutions and in the Spanish Civil War. Sasha Piotr was deported to Auschwitz in 1942, where he was murdered by the Nazis. During this time and until the end of World War II, Grothendieck and his mother survived in camps for displaced people. The following two decades he had an incredibly productive career—particularly in reshaping algebraic geometry. Apart from being a mathematical genius, Grothendieck was a radical pacifist opposing both American and Soviet imperialism. He refused to

receive the Fields Medal (equivalent to the Nobel Prize in mathematics) in 1966 because it was awarded in the U.S.S.R. In 1967, he delivered lectures in the forest around Hanoi, North Vietnam, while the city was being bombed, to protest against the war. Grothendieck started to distance himself from the scientific community when he discovered that his own institute in Paris was partially funded by the military. From then on, he started to consider that all scientific research helped the military-industrial complex.

He left his institute and founded the activist group Survivre in 1970 to campaign against militarism and ecological degradation. After some years of political activism, he left urban civilization to raise goats in southern France, in growing loneliness. Grothendieck, while rejecting science, stated that the ecological crisis will force us to radically change our way of life. Now, science is on the side of Grothendieck.

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## Reviews

# Doing (And Making) History From Below

Lynd, Staughton. *Doing History from the Bottom Up: On E.P. Thompson, Howard Zinn, and Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below.* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014. Paperback, 250 pages, \$17.00.

By Gregg Shotwell

The title, “Doing History from the Bottom Up,” not only defines the purpose and sets the direction; it lays down a challenge. The author, Staughton Lynd, uses the present continuous form of the verb “do,” which commonly means “to perform or carry out,” and which indicates that there is really no beginning or end. Lynd challenges us to act rather than ideate, and he demands that the action proceed from the primary source; that is, the “bottom.”

“Doing History from the Bottom Up” turns standard academic method upside down, but there’s another component as well. Lynd told me, “‘Doing history’ is a term I got from Edward Thompson. He didn’t think a person could ‘do history’ and ‘do politics’ at the same time. But I think we have to try to do both together.” In this sense, “doing” is the present progressive form of historical research. The subject is living, and the practitioners of this “guerrilla history,” as Lynd calls it, learn as they teach.

“Oral history, like every other form of American history, proceeds from elitist presumptions,” Lynd contends. As a result, “Existing histories of the recent labor movement tend to be both thin and misleading.”

We are led to believe that social movements start at the top and are entirely dependent on leaders. Such theories are convenient to politicians, a category which includes union officials, whose object is control and manipulation.

A former steelworker, Jesse Reese, who Lynd recorded in 1970, seems to de-

scribe our present labor malaise succinctly and to point toward a different solution:

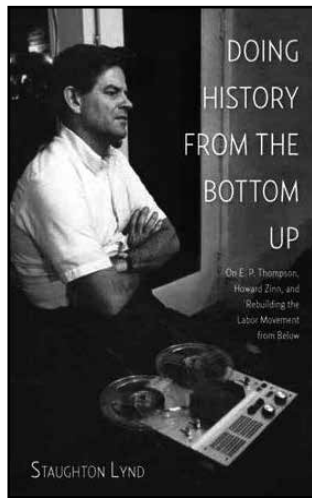
“Today we have in our unions a pet dog—what you might call a pet company dog—led by the caretakers; and the caretakers are the leaders of our union. And the dog is being fed red-baiting and his teeth have been pulled out (that’s the no-strike clause) and your dog don’t bark no more for you. So the only thing you can get to win now is a cat, and it’s got to be a wildcat, organized as a blanket mat-

ter. You’ve got to use blanket cover to keep from being exposed.”

The predominant union history lionizes leaders like John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther. The analysis of history from below, however, reveals a stubborn rank-and-file resistance to autocratic rule disguised as democracy and a preference for direct action.

Business unionism shackled the rank and file with two cuffs. First, the management prerogative clause, which gives companies the unilateral right to close a plant and move work elsewhere. Second, the no-strike clause, which prohibits strikes and slowdowns for the duration of the contract. Union officials stripped rank-and-file members of the power to challenge management. It is no wonder that the dog doesn’t bark. He doesn’t have the teeth to back it up.

A concerted effort by government, business, and union bureaucrats to throttle direct action has bought labor peace, but the price has proved too steep for workers. Urgent need demands action. We can’t prove that radical alternatives



Graphic: haymarketbooks.org

to business unionism will succeed, but the present course—two-tier, three-tier, and temp workers—is a social and moral disaster.

Lynd contends, “The structure of hierarchical unions will not change simply by electing new people to run them.” Solidarity unionism is the alternative he recommends, but it must “be distinguished from a merely tactical rather than strategic or principled argument for solidarity.” Lynd cites as example, “The Inside Game,” a pamphlet put

out by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which promotes the direct action tactics which built the unions in the 1930s. The pamphlet invokes rank-and-file resistance, but the goal is to persuade management that dealing with professional union reps behind closed doors is preferable to the rabble. This is precisely what John L. Lewis did when the CIO was organized. Once Lewis was in control, he got rid of the radicals who organized the union.

The alternative, solidarity unionism, would retain the radicals, never concede the right to strike, and soundly reject the assumption that labor and management have “mutually consistent interests.” Lynd cites a real expert—rank-and-file steelworker, Ed Mann:

“I believe in direct action. Once a problem is put on paper and gets into the grievance procedure, you might as well kiss that paper goodbye. When the corporations started recognizing unions, they saw this. They co-opted the unions with the grievance procedure and the dues

check-off. They quit dealing with the rank and file and started dealing with the people who wanted to be bosses like them, the union bosses.”

Business unionism was constructed to stifle and control the rank and file. In the new United Automobile Workers (UAW), which I am so familiar with, competitiveness—not solidarity—is the relevant buzz word. The labor-management relationship is described as a partnership and adversarial intonations are muzzled. The result is two-tier—the ultimate indignation to anyone who believes in solidarity.

If we want to seek alternative forms of unionism, we must be willing to do history from the bottom up, “to discern where solidarity unionism is beginning to happen, and to help it shape and sustain itself.” We will not recognize alternative forms if we continue to see the world from the prefabricated perspective of unions indentured to capitalism.

If we want to predict the future, we must study the past, and with the knowledge gleaned examine the present. If our information is limited to documents supplied by leaders and filtered through the perspective of top-down research, we will learn what they want us to believe. If we are never allowed to view the situation from a different perspective, it will appear that there is no alternative. Contrary to the pontifications of prevailing blowhards, the seeds of a new future may be found by doing history from the bottom up, by exploring the vital, living history that surrounds us.

I have work to do. I have to locate the old soldiers of solidarity and record their tales of shop-floor resistance, how they “trained the boss.” It’s not over. When we do history from the bottom up we will discover new alternatives. I’m excited. Things are looking up already.

## The F-Word: Why Feminism Matters



Students at Columbia University stand in solidarity with Emma Sulkowicz, a young “Third Wave” feminist, and her “Help Carry That Weight” campaign, which focuses on survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Photo: Jane LaTour

Dorothy Sue Cobble, Linda Gordon and Astrid Henry. *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women’s Movements.* New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014. Hardcover, 288 pages, \$25.95.

Rhodes, Deborah L. *What Women Want: An Agenda for the Women’s Movement.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Hardcover, 256 pages, \$29.95.

By Jane LaTour

Two terrific books arrive at the same time and serve as complementary entry points to a similar topic. “Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women’s Movements,” is the more accessible—a book in three parts, each by a different author. First, the historian Dorothy Sue Cobble tackles the period between what is often called the First Wave of the women’s movement in the mid-19th century—Susan B. Anthony and

her cohorts who struggled for women’s suffrage and more—and the Second Wave—the 1960s and 1970s women’s liberation movement that led the fight for equality. Cobble’s narrative documents what she calls “the other women’s movement” of the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s—those working-

class, trade union women and their allies who led the fights within their unions for equal pay and so much more. Cobble makes links and restores this lost history that adds so much to our understanding of how change takes place. Next, the historian Linda Gordon focuses on the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s—through a brilliant, detailed description that highlights the diversity of the movement—highlighting class, race and models of organizational approaches that challenged gender-based practices. The third section by the historian Astrid Henry looks at the “Third Wave”—as proclaimed by Rebecca Walker, daughter of author Alice Walker—the young women of the demographic cohort known as “Generation X” (born between 1964 and 1982) and the millennial generation (born between 1982 and 2000) and their contributions to the struggle for gender equality.

In preparation for writing this review, a random and unscientific sampling of

young women—a college student, a clerk, a postal worker and a podiatrist—were asked about the women’s movement and what feminism and the women’s liberation movement means to them. Their responses were unequivocal and unanimous: nothing. These individuals are the young women raised in the wake of the high tide of the women’s movement, told that they could do anything they desired—raised to believe they were equal. Deborah Rhodes, the author of “What Women Want: An Agenda for the Women’s Movement,” calls this the “no-problem problem.” Rhodes, a highly accomplished scholar and professor at Stanford University Law School, begins her closely argued and exceptionally useful book with her own compelling story of how she discovered feminism and the women’s movement and how it has shaped her career.

While Astrid Henry’s essay looks at the various ways young feminist activists have pursued their objectives, what she calls “intersectional organizing”—bringing together issues of class, race, economics and gender, Rhodes examines the issues facing women, young and old, that constitute the “unfinished” agenda for the women’s movement. Women who were part of Second Wave feminism had the benefit of living in a time when movements were part of the zeitgeist. Collective action was all around us. We had the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-(Vietnam) War Movement as beacons. Their lessons and their energy informed the experiences of the Second Wave of the women’s movement. Younger women face a different world. Yet, stories ripped from the headlines demonstrate on a daily basis that individually, women are confronting monumental issues that threaten their notions of equality, and oftentimes, their lives. Economic inequality; the disproportionate number of women and children

living in poverty; rape and sexual harassment; child care and the need for quality, affordable daycare; the lack of support for families; even pregnancy and the right of a worker to light duty on the job (an issue argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in December 2014); and reproductive rights—abortion and birth control, are some of the major challenges facing women in a very real way.

Rhodes parses each area of women’s lives—employment, work and family, sex and marriage, reproductive justice and economic security, sexual abuse, and appearance—and provides an agenda of reasonable goals for each. As someone who has spent her life teaching and thinking about these subjects, she is well-positioned to do so. In her last chapter, “The Politics of Progress,” she underscores the obstacles that are hampering the advancement of gender equality:

“More women need to be convinced that we cannot adequately improve the lot of women without challenging all the sources of subordination with which gender interacts...A second problem to be confronted is the lack of social consensus that there is a significant problem... To many Americans, the laws against sex discrimination and the presence of women in prominent positions look like evidence that the ‘woman problem’ has been solved. This ‘no-problem problem’ and the sense of complacency that it engenders have themselves become obstacles to broader change.”

Demonstrators in the streets marching against police brutality and the deaths of unarmed black men—and a child—are taking up an old chant from the 1960s: “The people / united / will never / be defeated.” Women would do well to remember this adage and apply it to achieving some of the goals of the “unfinished revolution.”



Wobbly Arts

# Stub Your Big Toe

By Peter G. Engstrom

Alabama is a "Right" to work state.  
 (Right to work ("in slavery") state).  
 Economic slavery exists in Alabama,  
 More widespread, accepted and imbedded in this culture  
 Than human slavery was as part of American Life in the South before the  
 civil war.

Back then people knew that slavery was wrong  
 And some tried to oppose it.  
 Today, we don't even know anything is wrong.  
 We are slaves and like it. In fact we love it.  
 Someone has given us a job!!  
 Nothing to oppose. What is the problem?

You don't like this job? Go find another one, right arm.  
 You can't say "NO." Don't cha know?

The machine will give you \$ 1 per hour next year, if you're the lucky duck.  
 You don't even know the pay is less than you made ten years ago. Doesn't matter.  
 There is no past history. Everything is what it is.  
 We are good here.

You need the money. You take the job.  
 Don't get stuck in traffic.  
 Don't be late. Drug test:  
 Can I check your urine, to see if you're stirrin'?

The poverty level pay  
 Is mean and hateful s \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Puts one on the dollar grind stone  
 (You better be grateful), you little twit.

How many jobs do you need to work full time?  
 50 or 60 hours per week? Two or three full time jobs?  
 Still not have  
 enough to put food on the  
 table or gas in the car?  
 No such thing as living wage.  
 Death wages is all. Enough to keep you scared.  
 You are in slavery to Mr. Man.  
 Whites, blacks, yellows, and greens,  
 We are all part of the machine.

In America we are free, don't cha know?  
 ("land of the free, home of the brave").  
 There is no safety net in the United States.  
 Go to poor house  
 see the hungry and the lines of feet



Graphic: Gadflye

# Been Workin' On The Railroad



FW John Paul Wright posted this photo on an early November morning from his job on the railroad. We hear the IW goes great with coffee!

Photo: J.P. Wright

loop around and wait :  
 rotten vegetables or bread to eat.

You are free to work (work hard and fast)  
 Until you drop (dead, slowly).  
 Over age fifty? What? You have no retirement money,  
 no income to play? Only  
 what you carry in your pocket,  
 What you make at the end of the eight hour day?

Stub Your Big Toe, can't walk or work?  
 No money. But am I such a jerk?  
 Bad person to not have cash?  
 A few cats in history didn't have much stash  
 but weren't too bad of characters  
 Its OK, Jesus was no Rockefeller.  
 (He couldn't manage his 401 K plan well,  
 don't cha know?)

In 2014, poor equals bad human being.  
 Bad to the bone. Not glad.  
 No food? No rent money?  
 No utility money, No medical insurance.  
 Too bad Mr. Poor Person. Get a life.

*Dedicated to Woody Guthrie.  
 And to the support of the  
 Commongood that is part of any definition of civilization.*

# Reasons Why I Admire Upton Sinclair

By Raymond Solomon

The book, "The Autobiography Of Upton Sinclair," demonstrates why Americans must always be grateful to him. I have some very personal reasons, and other very important reasons, for loving Sinclair. They include:

1. Sinclair was a favorite author of my father, Sidney Solomon, who especially loved "The Jungle," "The Goosestep," and "The Goslings."

2. Sinclair wrote and fought against anti-Semitism. He discussed anti-Semitic discrimination in American colleges and expressed his hope that the Jews would establish their own college that would admit all students except those with anti-Semitic prejudices.

3. **Most important for me**, reading Sinclair's book "The Cup of Fury" prevented me from becoming an alcoholic. Sinclair's father was an alcoholic and thus Sinclair did not drink. This brings me to an area where Upton Sinclair and George Orwell differed. In his essay "Reflections on Gandhi," Orwell judged Gandhi's abstinence from tobacco and alcohol and said that these two substances were things that a saint must abstain from but that sainthood was something humans must abstain from. Perhaps his addiction to tobacco was a contributing factor in Orwell's early death. Because I read "The Cup of Fury," I was saved from becoming a full-flung alcoholic. Without reading this book, I would not be around to write about Orwell. I have known too many people whose lives were lost to alcoholism, directly and indirectly. Orwell is of course entitled to his views on alcohol, but it is better not be an alcoholic or to be saved from alcoholism at an early stage. According to a recent Ken Burns

documentary about prohibition, the IWW supported the constitutional amendment creating prohibition.

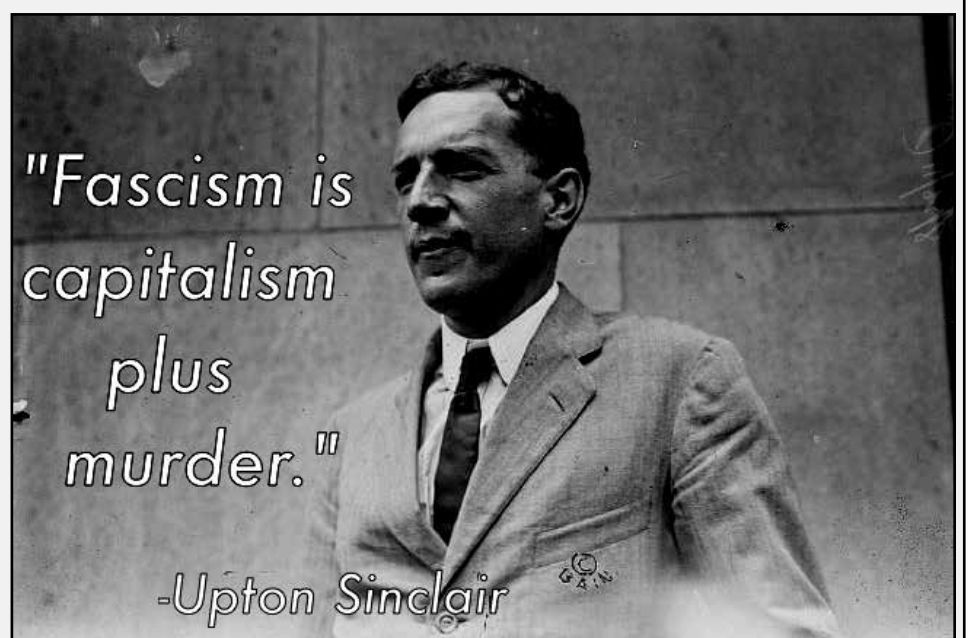
4. Sinclair believed in God and wrote a book about it. In that respect, he differed from many radicals. The book was titled "What God Means to Me: An Attempt at a Working Religion." It was published in 1935. I differ from many others with radical labor backgrounds in my religious views. Please note that Norman Thomas started out as a Presbyterian minister. In this sense, I go against much of radicalism. But I'm also just a little bit of an individualist. A Catholic priest, Father Thomas J. Haggerty, was one of the founders of the IWW. Martin Buber, a professed anarchist, also believed in God.

5. Sinclair believed in mental telepathy. He wrote a book about it called "Mental Radio." Sinclair's wife was the successful subject of mental telepathy experiments at Duke University by famous parapsychologist J.D. Rhine. Albert Einstein endorsed "Mental Radio." Einstein also happened to be a personal friend of Sinclair. I for one have been interested in mental telepathy.

6. Sinclair ran for governor of California as a Democrat in 1934 on a platform that he called End Poverty in California, or EPIC. There was a very dirty campaign run against him. Naturally, he was defeated. Many of his ideas were similar to the IWW program.

7. Sinclair put up many personal fights for freedom of speech and freedom of the press—something very personal to me.

8. Sinclair's "The Jungle" deals with, among other topics, the immigrant experience. As a grandchild of immigrants, my father came to America with his mother and two older brothers when he was two.



Graphic: prosebeforehos.com

Towards the end of the book, we hear a speech based on a person modeled after Eugene Victor Debs. Debs, of course, was a founder of the IWW.

9. Sinclair was early in warning against Hitler. During the 1930s, H.L. Mencken berated Sinclair for unjustly attacking Hitler—Mencken believed that Stalin was much worse. Hitler was responsible for the deaths of over 50 million people. I think Mencken changed his perspective. In an era of isolationism, Sinclair advocated intervention against Nazi Germany during World War II.

10. Many of his ideas could very well be applied now, including making factories of bankrupt businesses into workers collectives. This could and should also be used for businesses that "outsource" their factories or other commercial facilities from the United States to other countries.

I think Orwell would like that idea.

11. Like my father, Sinclair went to the City College of New York.

12. His book, "My Lifetime in Letters," contains letters from many vital personalities, including Albert Einstein, Peter Kropotkin, and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

13. He wrote a play about the Wobblies called "Singing Jailbirds." Wobblies were among his favorite people. He also wrote a play about Sacco and Vanzetti, called "Boston."

14. Writing 90 books is quite an accomplishment.

15. Sinclair said that all the socialists had to teach him was that they themselves existed.

Upton Sinclair's idea about turning factories of bankrupt businesses into producers' co-ops is especially needed today in this time of outsourcing.





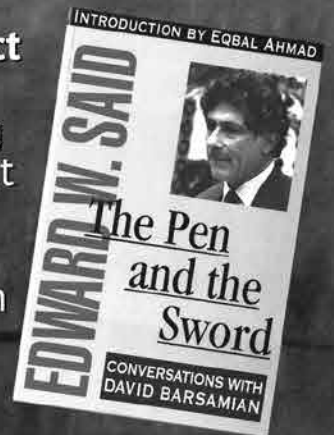
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## Letters from Prisoners

## Crime And Punishment

By Bomani Shakul

*"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." — Fyodor Dostoyevsky*

If what Dostoyevsky says is true (and I believe it is), then America, which boasts the largest prison population in the world, is perhaps the most uncivilized country there is. A bold statement, I know, especially coming from someone who has spent the past 23 years behind bars. But if what Dostoyevsky says is true, then what happens inside these places is crucial to understanding what kind of society we live in, and who better to speak to the reality of prison life than someone who is living the experience?

But no one wants to learn about the madness that predominates inside these places. People—average, law-abiding citizens—are losing their homes and jobs, struggling to survive, and the last thing anyone wants to hear is how hard prison is for a bunch of criminals. "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime" is the prevailing sentiment and attitude. It never occurs to people that the rising incarceration rate is connected to the same economic and political policies that resulted in the home foreclosure crisis and the rise of unemployment.

When people think of crime, what usually comes to mind is a poor person inflicting pain upon another poor person. Very seldom, if ever, do we stop and allow ourselves to consider the forces that create crime; trapped by the pull of our own necessities and fears, we live reactively, focusing on the effects instead of the causes of what we see and believe, and so we remain divided. And it's precisely because of this division that we are our own worst enemies; divided, they rule us!

But who are "they," and what do they have to do with the ways in which we see and treat each other?

Howard Zinn, in his book "A People's History of the United States," tells us who they are and how they use us against one another:

"[T]he wealthiest 1 percent of the nation owns a third of the wealth. The rest of the wealth is distributed in such a way as to turn those in the 99 percent against one another: small property owners against the propertyless, black against white, native-born against foreign-born, intellectuals and professionals against the uneducated and unskilled..."

Hence, in the context of a capitalist society, crime is the result of an unequal distribution of wealth. As such, a distinction between guilt and responsibility must be made. For instance, a person can be guilty of selling drugs but not at all responsible for creating the conditions wherein selling drugs is the only viable option for survival. Indeed, when one lives in a society where profit takes precedence over human potential, one's very existence becomes a crime; and whether this takes the form of selling drugs, stealing food, or joining a gang to fight over turf and limited resources, the goal is to stay alive.

I grew up in poverty, born to a marginally educated black woman who, because

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of a lack of opportunity, sought to raise me and my three siblings on welfare. In the whole 42 years I've been alive, I've only seen my father one time. By the age of 10, I was stealing food from the neighborhood grocery store in order to survive. I was 13 when I took my first joyless joyride in a stolen vehicle, which ultimately led to being sent away for the first time. By the time I turned 17, I had been living on my own for several years and selling drugs in one of the most impoverished, drug-infested neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio. A few months after my 19th birthday, in 1988, the year crack cocaine became an epidemic, I was involved in a shootout over money and killed a rival drug dealer. For this, I was sent to prison to serve a life sentence for murder.

In a nutshell, this is the story of my life, and if any of it was unique, the telling of it would be inconsequential, an unnecessary recounting of my personal troubles. What makes my story significant is that it's the exact same tale told by millions of poor people who grow up in the slums of America, which points to the possibility of there being something larger than one's personal troubles at work in the processes that determine where one ends up in this society.

In his groundbreaking work "The Sociological Imagination," C. Wright Mills, using the example of unemployment, explains the difference between personal troubles and societal issues:

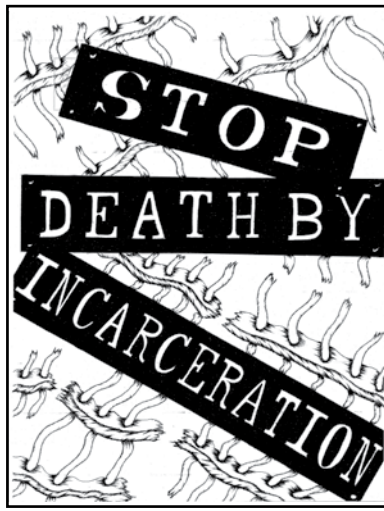
"When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of society, and not merely the personal situation of a scatter of individuals."

Applying the same logic, it should be considered an issue that black people, in a country where they only represent 13 percent of the population, make up 50 percent of those who are sent to prison. It is likewise an issue that virtually 100 percent of those behind bars are poor and come from economically-deprived sections of society.

In addressing this issue, it's not enough to point the finger at a bunch of so-called criminals and, without first looking at the economic and political institutions of society, claim that they are the sole cause of their predicament.

Despite what those in power would have us believe, no one starts out with the goal of becoming a criminal and spending the bulk of their lives behind bars, in and out of prison. As individuals, we make choices based on what we perceive our options to be: and those options, be they good or bad, are a product of the society we live in.

"When a society is industrialized," explains C. Wright Mills, "a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise and fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a



Graphic: Timmy Jackson

father."

Similarly, when a society is deindustrialized, a steel worker becomes a corrections officer; a would-be college student, a drug dealer. When communities are decimated and hemmed in by poverty, families take new heart or fall apart. When a fictitious "War on Drugs" is declared on the inner city, penitentiaries are built in rural areas and filled with criminals; a wife lives alone; a child grows

up without a father.

Contrary to what we have been told, this is how life (under the system of capitalism) unfolds—not in a picnic basket of unlimited opportunity, but in a crucible of socioeconomic forces that force us to assume positions of survival. Thus, a steel worker becomes a corrections officer, not in pursuit of a lifelong dream, but in order to feed his family. A boy growing up in the ghetto becomes a criminal or gang banger, not to glorify crime, but to survive. And what C. Wright Mills would have us understand is that the various permutations that we as individuals undergo are directly connected to the economic and political permutations of the system.

When corporations, through Congress, lobby for the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), removing obstacles for corporate capital and goods to move back and forth between Mexico and the United States, they do so with full knowledge and understanding of the economic consequences. Cheaper labor means greater profits, but it also means the closing of factories, a lower standard of living, a subpar educational system, and an increase in crime as normal everyday citizens scramble to survive. And what do those in power do in order to address the ramifications of their decisions? They build more prisons.

With the advent of deindustrialization in the 1980s, the prison population in the United States more than quadrupled, peaking at 2.5 million and surpassing both South Africa and Russia in per capita prison populations. During the same period, 1980-2007—while 30 million people languished below the poverty line—the United States produced 1,000 billionaires and 227,000 millionaires, with a combined worth of \$30 trillion, more than the gross domestic products (GDPs) of China, Brazil, Japan, Russia and the European Union (EU) put together. This is how the system of capitalism works: the rich get richer, and the poor get screwed. In his book "Understanding Power," Noam Chomsky talks about what he refers to as "superfluous populations," which is a very intellectual way of calling people "trash." From the perspective of the rich, whose main objective is to accumulate wealth, human beings are useless when they no longer contribute to profit-making, so as a result, explains Chomsky, the rich want to get rid of them—and the criminal justice system is one of the best ways of doing it.

So prisons, it must be understood, aren't about controlling crime and punishing and those who commit it; they're about controlling the poor. Looked at correctly, it's not an exaggeration to say that what is going on now is very similar to what was going on in the 1940s when Hitler was exterminating the Jews. The only real difference is that those who are now being thrown away are considered "criminals," which, let's face it, makes it a whole lot easier to accept. But just as Hitler created the justification for the mass extermination of the Jews, so too have those in power created the justification for the mass incarceration of the poor.

When Ronald Reagan declared the

so-called War on Drugs in the 1980s, a finely honed strategy of imposing mandatory sentences for particular kinds of drugs (read: crack cocaine) was used to lock up those from predominantly black and Hispanic communities. For instance, a young man in the ghetto gets caught with a kilo of cocaine or \$20,000 in cash is sent to prison for 20 years. In the meantime, nothing is said about the chemical corporations who make billions of dollars from sending the necessary chemicals to Latin America in order to manufacture the very drugs that are destroying inner cities throughout the United States.

And what about the bankers who launder billions of dollars in drug money through American banks? According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it's estimated that a half trillion dollars in drug money gets laundered internationally each year—more than half of it (\$260 billion) through American banks. But are any of these people in prison? The answer is NO! And the reason why none of these people are in prison is because those in power determine what constitutes a crime and, more importantly, who gets categorized as a criminal. A white man laundering billions of dollars in drug money is a businessman. A black man selling drugs in the ghetto is a criminal, and for his "crimes," he is sent to prison.

And what happens to that black—poor white or Hispanic—man when he enters America's prisons? If he makes it through orientation without being raped, he is lucky. It's a brutal world in here, and unless one is totally devoid of common sense, one very quickly learns that there is safety in numbers. In other words, the picture repeats and expands, and it's the ghetto street all over again. But in here the police operate without restraint, and the old adage about "absolute power corrupting absolutely" is on full display. Not a day goes by without someone being sprayed in the face with mace, shot with a pellet gun, or thrown down a flight of stairs.

A few weeks ago, while watching the news, I witnessed a group of college students in California being sprayed in the face with mace because they had the audacity to protest against the rising cost of college tuition, student-loan debt and the uncertainty surrounding future employment. In New York City (and around the country), I witnessed members of Occupy Wall Street being forcibly evicted from their camps, some (as in Oakland, Calif.) being shot with pellet guns, thrown atop automobiles, and kicked and shoved about like cattle. Watching these things, it occurred to me that this is what Dostoyevsky must have meant when he said, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." Indeed, what many Americans witnessed and experienced for the first time is something that those of us in prison witness and experience on a daily basis.

So why are normal, everyday citizens being treated as criminals, and for what crimes are they being punished? From the perspective of those who own society, it's considered a lack of appreciation when slaves rise up to question their masters; and of course where people come together and begin to talk earnestly about the inequity of the system, they automatically represent a threat to the status quo and must go. Then we learn how thin the veneer of civilization really is and how fragile our so-called freedoms are.

When eyes are burning with mace, when blood is dripping down the face, it all becomes frighteningly clear: capitalism is a sham; and whether in or out of prison, as long as we live under a system that views everything and everybody as a commodity, we're all doing time. And that, at the end of the day, is the real crime—not that some of us are locked up, but that none of us are free!



# World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email [solidarity@iww.org](mailto:solidarity@iww.org).

## New Team For International Solidarity

The evolution of absurdity continued in 2014. People were killed on their jobs due to company management that doesn't give a shit about workplace safety. Organizing efforts of concerned workers were nipped in the bud. Attacks against democracy, freedom, and environmental movements got more violent and ruthless. Labor laws got cut, conditions worsened, and more free trade agreements were put in place to ensure the profits of the rich well into the future. For us, the working class, this system is obsolete! It cannot be stressed enough that it's time to organize!

But the International Solidarity Commission (ISC) of the IWW wields the silver bullet of resistance: international working-class solidarity. We are thankful for our relationships to militant labor organizations around the globe, and we must maintain and improve our solidarity activities. Therefore, we introduce our continuing officers Fellow Workers (FWs) J. Pierce and Florian H., our new officer FW Yusuf C. as we bid farewell to FW Bill B.

FW Bill sent the following message: "THANK YOU TO THE ISC AND THE IWW: Kudos to the 2014 ISC. It has been a privilege to serve, to update the world wide ISC Liaison and Branch list, to deliver the ISC report to the General Convention in Chicago, and to meet face to face with workers in Poland. Thanks to Florian for all of his hard work. Thanks to J. Pierce for spearheading the Direct Links program. All the best to the incoming ISC, including fellow workers Yusuf of Turkey and Anders of the U.K."

Thanks to you, Bill! You have done a great job: consistent and patient. The ISC will continue with your vision and your work. Florian and J.P. say, "Thanks for your continued support!"

Our new team member from Turkey, Yusuf, says:

"They developed a lot of tactics against us to break and prevent our resistance. They told us their logic: 'You are cheaper than people in the U.S., equal compared to the Chinese and more expensive than Indian workers. If you want to keep your jobs, your wages have to freeze or decrease. You need to work harder and more efficiently.' So we are confronted with longer working hours, fewer benefits, competition in performance and innovation, less power but more responsibilities. To summarize: less money and less time for life. And we must agree to that even if we already work 12 hours a day. But why should we? What about our co-workers around the globe? They are losing their jobs because we agreed to work harder for lower wages. Who can prevent the loss of our jobs to those with cheaper working conditions in a different country? Who can stop this competition that makes us sick? We don't want to compete with

our fellow workers. We don't want their capitalist hierarchy. We don't want their system. They can't divide us anymore by nations, by occupations, by education levels, by gender, with their ideological games. We have to shout out loud: No more bosses, we are not stupid!

"My name is Yusuf Cemal and I have been working as a programmer for local and international industrial or communication companies such as described above for the last 16

years. Since 1992 I have organized in working class movements, radical left parties, and other groups in Turkey. When my coworkers and I discovered the IWW, we immediately jumped on board and started to build the IWW in Turkey.

"Now, I have started to contribute to the International Solidarity Commission, not only due to my individual egalitarian thoughts and beliefs, but due to the fact that we have to show to every worker that we have no border or limit as a working class when we organize. We have to deal with the same struggles, experience similar conditions, and fight the same fight. We always say that the working class and the employing class have nothing in common. It's time to be part of this long struggle internationally."

There is more than enough motivation within the ISC to contribute to our common goal. Therefore, please pay attention to the call for solidarity from the South African farmworkers' union, Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU):

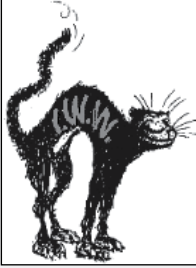
"After the rebellion of South African farmworkers, who stood up and fought for their rights and working conditions in 2012-2013, the CSAAWU defended, dismissed and victimized workers and took cases to the Labour Court where farmworkers were heard the first time since 1994.

"Two cases were lost and the CSAAWU has been issued with cost orders in excess of R 600,000 (\$53,500) for supporting the farmworkers' struggle. The charge is unacceptable but not surprising. This case shows again in whose favor labour courts act and make decisions. The voice of the working class has never been welcome in any legal or administrative office in a system based on exploitation and violence.

"We stand in solidarity with the CSAAWU to support organized workers who fight for and care about each other. We will help this union to continue their fight. An injury to one is an injury to all!"

Thanks to all of our active ISC liaisons from 2014 and hello to the new ISC liaisons for 2015! There is much to do, so let's get to work!

Solidarity Forever,  
**Florian H., J. Pierce, Bill B., Yusuf C., and Anders M. (ERA)**  
 2014 & 2015 ISC



Graphic: iww.org

## Hospital Workers Win With Anarchist Union In Poland

By John Kalwaic

Cleaners and meal servers at Belchatow Hospital in Poland, who are organized with the anarcho-syndicalist Związek Syndykalistów Polski (ZSP) union, won some of their demands after going on strike in early November 2014. The workers demanded that 30 of their colleagues, who were fired by the company that employs workers at the hospital, be reinstated.

On Nov. 3, 2014, approximately 130 workers at Belchatow Hospital protested and occupied the hospital to demand the reinstatement of their fired colleagues. They carried banners and demanded a meeting with the boss in an effort to reinstate the laid-off workers. Additionally,



Graphic: zsp.net.pl

workers demanded that the hospital meet health and safety standards, such as the reduction of working hours, and the right to take leave they are entitled to for rehabilitation. At the time of this writing, the hospital administration promised it would reinstate the workers.

Belchatow Hospital has gone through several different companies that provide cleaning and meal services. Many of

these companies have laid off workers as outsourcing continues to be a problem in Polish hospitals. Many of the jobs these companies produce are not permanent and pay sub-minimum wage.

With files from <http://www.libcom.org> and <http://zsp.net.pl>.

## Workers Strike At Shoe Factory In China

By John Kalwaic

Approximately 2,500 workers went on strike on Dec. 6, 2014, at the Guangzhou Panyu Lide Shoe Company in Guangzhou, China. As with the strike of about 50,000 workers at another company's shoe factories in the Pearl River Delta region several months ago, one focus of this strike was on the company's non-payment of social security,



Striking workers on Dec. 6. Photo: libcom.org

larger ones in the region's recent history. According to factory workers engaged in the strike, "organizing and mobilization is showing the power of the working class, and this proves once again, the wisdom and the awakening of the Chinese working class. Long live the unity of the working class!"

With files from <http://www.libcom.org>.

## CNT-f Congress Vows To Continue Struggle Against Austerity

By Monika Vykoukal

The IWW was invited to attend the 33rd Confederal Congress of Confédération Nationale du Travail – France (CNT-f) in Angers, France, this last December. This three-day delegate meeting takes place every two years. This year around 60 sections were represented. Since I live in Paris, I was able to attend the congress on the Friday afternoon and evening and Saturday morning, Dec. 12 and Dec. 13, 2014—the part of the meeting that covered reports from officers, but I was only present for the beginning of discussions on other items.

Of the over 30 motions submitted by the CNT-f's sections, several proposed working more closely with other radical unions, political groups and international labor networks, including the French section of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo – Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores (CNT-AIT), the International Workers Association (IWA) internationally, the Red and Black Coordination and the IWW.

The context for both was given as the weakness of the Left in France, the creeping growth of the far-right, and the lack of a strong movement against attacks on workers' rights and social provisions of all kinds. Based on an update I received since, no formal decision was made on those items, but I, for one, personally, would look forward to more cooperation and exchange with the CNT-f and other radical unions in Europe.

The congress passed the following statement:

*In the face of austerity, the criminalization of social movements, and the extreme right, the CNT keeps up the fight!*

*The Confédération nationale du travail held its 33rd confederal congress in Anger, on 12, 13, and 14 December. In a*

*fraternal atmosphere, the numerous sections present could engage in rich discussions on the processes, direction, strategy and development of the structures of the confederation in the coming two years, as well as elect a new confederal team. A new federation of work, employment and professional training will be created, as well as a confederal training institute.*

*The participation and the contributions of comrades from foreign organizations close to the CNT, such as the German FAU [Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union], the Swedish SAC [Sveriges Arbeters Centralorganisation] and the Algerian CLA [Conseil des Lycées d'Algérie], was also an opportunity to reaffirm our solidarity and links with workers in struggle against the capitalist system across the whole world.*

*In a politically and socially difficult situation, dominated by austerity policies, the rise of the far-right and a weakened social and labor movement, which has to face ever stronger violence from the State as well as bosses, the CNT stands more than ever for self-organization and the communist and libertarian social transformation of our society.*

*The CNT invites all those who can identify with our struggle and our practice, to join us or to contact our sections, to expand our struggle against capitalist oppression.*

*For class struggle, self-organization, international solidarity and the emancipation of workers: the CNT, a fighting union!*

**The CNT**

The above statement was translated by Monika Vykoukal, who attended the Congress on behalf of the IWW. More information can be found at <http://www.cnt-f.org>.



Graphic: CNT-f

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