

INDUSTRIAL WORKER



OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

April 2015 #1773 Vol. 112 No. 3 \$2/ £2/ €2

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Work: What Is It Good For?

By x675309

What exactly is work? We could define it as activity for the sake of making money.

But aren't slave labor and unpaid internships work, too? We could say it's activity that accumulates profit for someone, whether or not it benefits the one who carries it out. But does that mean that as soon as you start making money from an activity, it becomes work even if it was play before? Perhaps we could define work as labor that takes more from us than it gives back, or that is governed by external forces. Or perhaps we can only understand what work is by stepping back to look at the context in which it takes place. In a world of "diversity," one common thread connects us: we're all subject to the economy. Christian or Muslim, communist or conservative, in São Paulo or St. Paul, you probably have to spend the better part of your life trading time for money, or make someone else do it for you, or suffer the consequences. What else can you do? If you refuse, the economy will

go on without you; it doesn't need you any more than it needs any of the hundreds of millions already unemployed, and there's no point going hungry for nothing. You can join a co-op or commune, but you'll still face the same market pressures. You can canvas and lobby and protest on behalf of sweatshop workers, but even if you succeed in getting reforms passed, they—like you—will still have to work, whether in maquiladoras or NGO offices. You can go out at night in a black mask and smash all the windows of the shopping district, but the next day you'll have to do your shopping somewhere. You could make a million dollars and still be stuck with your nose at the grindstone trying to keep your lead on everyone else. Even when workers overthrew governments to establish communist utopias, they ended up back at work—if they were lucky. All this makes it easy to feel that work is inevitable, that there's no other way our lives could be structured. That's convenient for the ones who profit most from this arrangement:

they don't have to prove that it's the best system if everyone thinks it's the only one possible. Is this really how life has always been? Now, however, even the future of the economy is uncertain.

Forget about the Economy—What about Us?

When the economy crashes, politicians and pundits bewail the consequences for average working families. They demand emergency measures—such as giving billions of dollars of taxpayer money to the banks that caused the crisis by ripping off "average working families" in the first place. What's going on here? We're told that our lives depend on the economy, that it's worth any sacrifice to keep it running. But for most of us, keeping it running is always a sacrifice.

When the economy crashes, mining companies stop blowing up mountains. Developers stop cutting down forests to build new offices and condominiums.

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Syndicalist Union Protests Migrant Worker Exploitation In Berlin



Members of the FAU protest the "Mall of Shame" on Nov. 26, 2014. Photo: FAU Berlin

Romanian construction workers in Berlin fight, with support of the FAU, for their wages—unpaid by "Mall of Berlin" contractors. The bosses pretend to be innocent, while masking their business and personal relations.

By André Eisenstein

Evidently, a construction site is nothing for wet blankets. But besides the hard physical work, exploitation and inhuman treatment of migrant workers from the European Union (EU) seems to be the current practice on many German construction sites. What is new now is that cheated workers are fighting back! In the autumn of 2014, Polish colleagues found support from the Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union (FAU) Freiburg. By the end of the year and continuing into

2015, Romanian workers—unionized with the FAU since November 2014—are fighting for unpaid wages totaling in 60,000 euros (\$67,000).

From July until mid-October 2014, the comrades worked in the center of Germany's capital to construct the "Mall of Berlin." For constructing this shopping and apartment complex, which opened solemnly (despite unfinished construction sites and defects in fire safety) at Potsdamer Platz in autumn 2014, hundreds of workers from Romania slaved away for 10 hours a day and received only 6 euros per hour (or approximately \$6). Due to problems with the pay and a lack of promised accommodation, workers staged protests and crossed their arms. Finally, in hope for betterment, the workers switched from one subcontractor

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How I Spent My Permanent Vacation

By FW xVeganX

More than what I eat, whether or not I use drugs, and what bands I go to see, the bottom line for me as a member of the hardcore community and the counterculture in general is this: stay unemployed. Do whatever it takes, but keep my time and my labor to myself. I'm proud to say that it's been over three years now since I worked at any job for someone else. Here's why—and how.

WHY

First of all, and most importantly, there just isn't any other feeling that can compare with the sensation of complete freedom and self-determination. I wake up in the morning, when I want to, and make plans to do things that day—to do what I want to. Nobody can buy a beautiful

sunny day away from me at seven dollars an hour. If I suddenly have a new inspiration or idea, I can pursue it spontaneously without having to worry about how it will reflect on my future employment. I'm free to suddenly go on tour with my favorite band, to accidentally run into an old friend and spend the day catching up on lost time, or to stay home all day and write the first chapter of a novel if I am moved to. So my life contains a great deal more diversity and spontaneous opportunity than it would otherwise. And because I don't have to do the same thing over and over every day, all day (for example, sell real estate, wait tables, or program computers), I can do enough different things to keep everything fresh and exciting.

And of course I do things! I don't just hang out or sit around—I have all the energy that would otherwise be drained from me at work free to use on all the projects I

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Industrial Worker
PO Box 180195
Chicago, IL 60618, USA



Periodicals Postage
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ISSN 0019-8870
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Send your letters to: iw@iww.org with "Letter" in the subject.

Mailing Address:

Industrial Worker, P.O. Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, United States.

May Day! May Day!

The deadline for announcements for the annual "May Day" *Industrial Worker* is **April 3, 2015**. Celebrate the real labor day with a message of solidarity! Send announcements to iw@iww.org. Much appreciated donations for the following sizes should be sent to:

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

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

Remembering Fellow Worker Penny Pixler

I'd like to add to Patrick Murfin's impressive obituary of Penny Pixler (see "Portrait Of Penny Pixler, Feminist And Wobbly," March 2015 *Industrial Worker*, page 6).

As reticent as she was, Penny would have been embarrassed by all the accolades in this obituary. She wouldn't have appreciated it being posted on social media either.

A few notes: Penny struggled in school as a child. When her hearing loss, unknown to anyone, was discovered and corrected, she became an excellent student and went on to earn three college degrees. I think it was her way of saying, "I AM

smart."

Penny was a voracious reader. When she made the decision to move to Colorado, several of us helped her pack thousands of her books. The topics included international politics, history, women's studies, world religions, poetry, and Irish literature. I asked her, "Have you read all of these books?" She replied, "All of them. And some of them twice."

I think of her whenever I look at my (much smaller) collection of books. If there is a heaven I hope it has a good library. Penny wouldn't want to be there otherwise.

Karen Nolan

You're Invited To The IWW Regional Organizing Assembly In Baltimore!

When: April 18 - April 19 (10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

Where: Alternative Press Center (2239 Kirk Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21218)

What: A weekend of training, networking and action for IWW organizers, hosted by IWW-Baltimore. Workshops include house visits, mass picketing, campaign strategy and industrial research, as well as presentations on recent IWW organizing initiatives across the east coast.

Registration is \$10. Limited housing is available.

Contact baltimoreiww@gmail.com for more information.

IWW Literature Committee's Working Writers' Contest

Fellow Workers!

You can now give recognition to the story, cartoon, or song that has inspired you this year!

The IWW Literature Committee is seeking nominations for the first annual Working Writers' Contest. Submissions can be in the following categories: workplace writing, contemporary labor or economic analysis, agitational cartoons, or songs.

We are **especially excited** to recognize writing published in the *Industrial Worker* or *Solidaridad* between May 2014 and April 2015, even if it was written by a non-member. Unpublished pieces can also be submitted as long as they were written by members during the same time period.

Please send nominations to workingwriterscontest@gmail.com (note the new address!) before June 1. Recognition will be given at the 2015 General Convention. Good luck!



Graphic: iww.org

Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

ORGANIZATION
EDUCATION
EMANCIPATION

Official newspaper of the
**INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
OF THE WORLD**

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Globe Direct/Boston Globe Media
Millbury, MA

**Next deadline is
April 3, 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: March 27, 2015



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Get Active!

Eight Things You Can Do To Get Active

By FW Sabo

1. Pay attention to where and how you spend your money. Is your money going to support companies that don't care about you? Are they destroying the environment, killing animals, treating your friends who work for them like shit? Are they trying as hard as they can to sell you a product that gives you cancer? Are their advertisements designed to manipulate you, to make you feel insecure or make their product seem like more than it really is? You don't need to give those motherfuckers your money! For that matter—do you buy many things that you don't need? Soft drinks and junk food at convenience stores, for example? Do you end up spending a lot of money whenever you want to relax and have a good time? There are a thousand things you and your friends can do that are fun, creative, and don't cost anything (having intense discussions, exploring hidden parts of your town, making music—instead of drinking at bars or going to movies and restaurants) just as there a thousand ways you can eat and live more cheaply (Food Not Bombs, building furniture instead of buying it, living in big houses with a bunch of friends). Once you experiment a bit, you'll probably find that you enjoy life a lot more when you're not always shelling out cash for it.

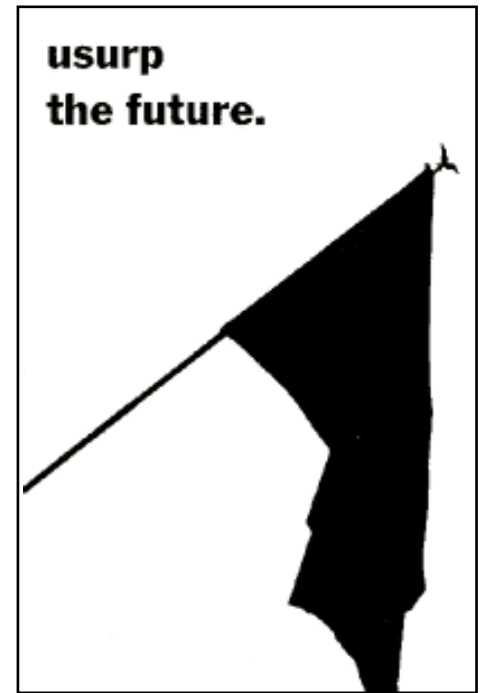
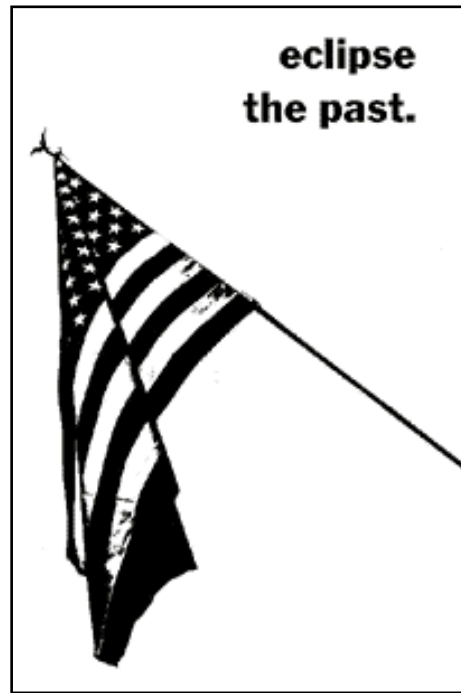
2. Now that you spend less, you can work less, too! Think about how much more time that gives you to do other things. Not only will it be easier to do things that help you spend less, like volunteering at Food Not Bombs (the less you work, the more time you have to make sure you don't need to), you'll also be able to do all the things you never had time for before: you can travel, exercise, spend more time with your friends and lovers. When it's sunny and beautiful outside, you can go out and enjoy it!

3. And you'll have time to do the other

things you need to do to take back control of your life and your world. First, start reading. It doesn't really matter what, so long as it makes you think about things and gives you new ideas of your own. Read novels about human beings struggling against their society, like J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* or George Orwell's *1984* or Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*; read the beautiful, dreamers' prose of Jeanette Winterson or Henry Miller. Read history: learn about the Spanish revolution in the 1930's, where whole cities were run by the people who lived in them, rather than by governments; learn about the labor union struggle in the USA, or the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley in the 1960's. Read philosophy, read about environmental issues, read vegan cookbooks and underground 'zines and comics and everything you can get your hands on. Here's a hint: if there's a university in your town, you can probably get a membership for about \$10 a year—and most libraries include videos, too!

4. Reading isn't the only way you can expand your horizons and clarify your ideas. Talk to people about the things that interest you, arguing when you don't agree, so you'll get to know your own beliefs better. Write to the people who are doing the 'zines you like, discuss and debate things with them, ask them for directions to find out more about your interests. Try writing about your own ideas, and sharing that with people, until you feel confident doing this. Travel to different places, try to learn about other cultures and communities, so you'll have more than one perspective on the world and you can start to imagine what the world is like through other people's eyes.

5. Now you'll know what you want, and you can go about getting it. Seek out other people and groups with similar goals, and figure out how to support them



or participate in what they're doing. Maybe you can copy fliers and give them out at shows; maybe you can organize benefit shows for organizations you want to support (women's shelters, radical bookshops, local groups protesting against the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal or lobbying for protection of the environment). Maybe there are public protests and demonstrations going on that you want to be part of. Try to help find ways to make these more challenging and fun than just a bunch of people holding signs; everyone's so bored with doing that that there must be a more effective and exciting way to go about it.

6. You can start your own projects, as well, you know. If there's no Food Not Bombs in your area, get a group of people together and find some local businesses that will donate their leftover food. If there's something fucked up at your high school or college or workplace, try orga-

nizing a walkout to force the "authorities" to do something about it... and to show everyone that those "authorities" only have as much power as we let them have. If the main street of your town lacks life and excitement, try organizing an unexpected festival to take place in the middle of it one weekend. Shake up everyone's lives and expectations, shake them out of their apathy and boredom so they'll start thinking about things. Establish networks with other people who are also interested in having an effect on the world around them, so you can help each other do this.

7. Through all of this, don't stop questioning yourself and your assumptions. Try to see through all the social programming you've received throughout your life: consider how gender roles constrain the way you act, how your own relationships with people reproduce the same hierarchical order that your fighting in mainstream society. We're not going to really change anything unless we can create new ways of living and interacting, new values that show themselves in the way we treat each other. Show your friends how much you care about them. Consider doing things you never thought you should or could do: dancing, singing, admitting things that you've been taught to be ashamed of.

8. Now look to the future. How can you stay involved with these things as you get older? How can you construct your life so you will always be free to do what you want to? Talk to people older than you who haven't given up and gone back to the daily grind of eat-work-sleep-watch TV. With a little input from them and a lot of resolve on your part, you can maintain your activities and your lifestyle as long as you want to. Idealism, adventure, and resistance don't have to be reserved for youth alone. History is filled with men and women who refused to compromise or calm down, who went all out from the cradle to the grave. They are the artists, the leaders, the heroes and heroines even people from the mainstream respect. We can all have lives like theirs, if we're brave and idealistic enough.

If all of us demand control over what we do and what goes on around us, if all of us do what we can to make life exciting and fair for everyone, things are bound to change. A lot of people know that we don't live in the best of all possible worlds, but persuade themselves that it's hopeless to try to improve things because they're afraid to commit themselves, to take any risks. But it's that lack of ambition that is the biggest risk of all—for what if you do nothing, and nothing happens, and we lose our chance to make this world the paradise it should be? Don't be shy or timid—there's nothing more exciting than taking an active role in the world around you, and there's nothing more worthwhile!

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**.

Nobody Said This Would Be Easy

By Norma Raymond

I work for a big, dumb corporation which has a virtual monopoly on the industry. Since escape is an unlikely dream, I have developed many coping mechanisms. I hope these techniques are not actual proof of minor league Stockholm syndrome. It's hard to justify this employment, so I do what I can to sabotage while trying to form a union.

Daily, I encourage people to slow down production. I urge them to call off when they're sick. I plea with them to speak up when there is a problem. I offer to accompany them if this would be more comfortable for them. I brainstorm with them about what would make the job more fulfilling. I point out work-related problems, and encourage open dialogue. These are not extraordinary acts. They are naturally occurring, everyday responses to corporate employers.

A sick worker is told, "Well, it's not really convenient for you to go home early," (as if we can schedule illnesses) or "You haven't earned enough paid time off to call in sick." A sexually-harassed employee is told, "Well, we like people to be able to joke around and have a good time here," or "Boys will be boys." It's difficult to have hope when some people being harassed refuse to speak up. It's frustrating when the people told such ridiculous things get fed up and quit. The bosses tell them to, "Lighten up" as if they are to blame. The boss will usually not protect you, so you need to learn how to protect yourself. The boss is unnecessary,

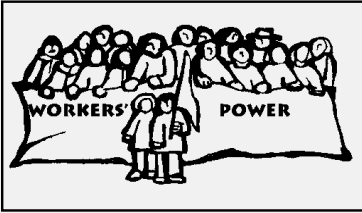
but will imply that you are the one who is expendable. That's why we need to stand up, union up and know our rights.

I was told, in the IWW's Organizer Training 101, that when trying to form a union people will disappoint us. A great friend who claims to support the union may chicken out. The guy who's 100 percent on board may quit. But I was also told that someone you may never suspect has a serious grudge and is a union member in waiting. Another, when enlightened, will be eager to join quickly.

I try to be an example of advocacy, hoping that by setting an example others will step up. I listen to people and take them seriously. I stand up for my fellow workers and stand up for myself.

I have hope that they will stand up for me, but maintain carefulness because I know they may not. I think critically about what the bosses say and what they actually mean. I have learned their games and I'm always strategizing.

It's a paradox. The fight is difficult, yet completely natural. It's slow, but encouraging. The fight can make you feel very alone but also very empowered. It can break your heart or it can make your heart soar with pride. It's not easy—and yet, it is! The one constant though, is that it is always way too important to give up hope. It's not only for yourself, but your co-workers, friends, family and generations to come. So many people before you, people you have never met, fought for you. People may argue, "Things used to be so much worse," but don't let that blind you to how much better it can be.



How To Get What You Want

What do you want most in all the world? More money, a new car stereo, a vacation? To lose ten pounds, to get home from work in time to see your favorite sitcom? Or is it something more than that, something harder to define?

Maybe you've given up on ever realizing your true dreams, and you settle for smaller things because they, at least, seem possible. Maybe it never occurred to you to ask yourself if the goals you've been pursuing really are what you want most. Perhaps, like many people, you feel as if you are being compelled to do things, as if your life is not your own. How often do you feel like that?

Here's a wild idea: everything you do in your life, you should do because you want to do it, more than anything else in the world. And when you make plans, you should aim for the most exciting, glorious life you could imagine, not just for conventional "success" or "security," the consolation prizes of the tired and hopeless. What could be more radical than choosing your actions according to how enjoyable they are, rather than how moral, how responsible, how socially acceptable they seem? And yet, what else really makes sense? Haven't we tried serving every master but our own wishes, fighting for every cause except ourselves? Where has that gotten us?

Pursuing your desires doesn't just mean blindly following your impulses wherever they lead. It means, first, discovering what you really want: weeding through your desires and deciding which are real and which are illusory, which are stronger and which are weaker, which will bring you the most happiness in the end. It means reconstructing yourself and your life so that you can pursue as many of your desires as possible (since there is no guarantee that all of them can be simultaneously achieved—most of us find ourselves always pulled in different directions by competing impulses and longings); it means prioritizing and analyzing

your desires themselves. Maybe what you want is to feel better about yourself: is getting your nails done the answer, or could that impulse be a part of your insecurities? Perhaps you love the countryside; is it enough for you to buy a few acres of it and enjoy that, while the rest of the world is slowly wrapped in concrete?

Pursuing your desires also means reconstructing our society. Each of us is the product of the world we live in; and yet, this world is itself the product of our own efforts. To reconstruct yourself and your life, you must reconstruct the world that constructs and affects you, and for this you will need everyone else's help. If we want to pursue happiness, we should take responsibility for the world we are creating, and together make sure that it will be one that creates happiness in us. But won't doing whatever we want pit us against each other? No—it will force us to work together. For the greatest, most ambitious endeavors cannot be carried through alone; they require the participation of other people, even of whole societies. Most of us want community, friendship, to feel safe and free with others more than almost anything else; we need each other to achieve all these things. To create a community in which each of us can live life to the fullest, we must make it possible for all of us to pursue our dreams and be free and creative. Otherwise we're cheating ourselves of each other's potential, as well as our own. That's the secret that the very unambitious "me generation" missed: past a certain point, greed and generosity intersect.

And yes, this will be hard, especially at first. Nothing is more difficult than pushing yourself to always be honest with yourself, demanding the most from yourself and from every day of your life. It will put us at odds with the existing order, that's for sure. But it's a struggle worth fighting if any is! A contest of the vast potential that each of us has, and the vaster potential that we all could have together, against

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 81 Cracking a Hard-Shell Employer

In the spring of 1933, the unity of women nutpickers cracked the arrogance of a wealthy company.

The R.E. Funsten Co. owned seven of 16 pecan processing factories in St. Louis; a workforce that was nearly 90 percent black and female worked in sweatshop conditions for as little as 63 cents a day. In early 1933, workers began to organize and made contact with the Food Workers Industrial Union, an affiliate of the Trade Union Unity League (See Chapter 80).

Funsten workers decided on a list of demands that included better pay scales, equal pay for black and white workers, an end to discrimination and union recognition. After stalling for three weeks, Eugene Funsten rejected the demands.

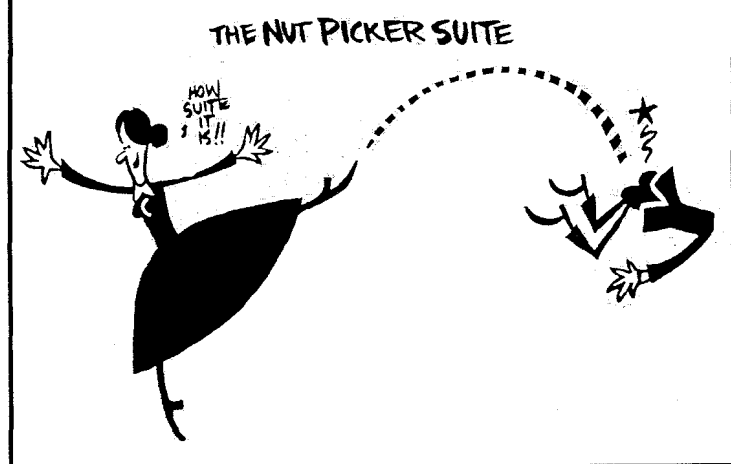
Within a few days, some 1,400 workers had walked off their jobs! "We think we are entitled to live as well as other folks live, and we should be entitled to a wage that will provide us with ample food and clothing," declared Connie Smith, a middle-aged black woman and strike leader.

Funsten made two offers; both were rejected by the strikers. He then brought in strikebreakers; two police cars and taxicabs carrying scabs were smashed by strikers. Fifteen women strikers and organizer William Sentner* were arrested; 1,500 women, black and white, marched on city hall in protest. The mayor appointed a committee to seek a resolution to the strike.

** Sentner later became a general vice president of UE!*

After intense negotiations assisted by the mayor's committee, Funsten agreed to a 100 percent wage increase, abolition in rate differences between black and white nutpickers and recognition of shop committees.

In the midst of the Depression, before the passage of any labor laws, black women had taken on a powerful corporation and won!



Graphic: Mike Konopacki

everything in this world that is pointless, petty, ugly...

The alternative, of course, is to settle for what we have today, and never question whether there could be more to life.

Ultimately, happiness doesn't come from just getting what you want and having it, but rather from the process of seeking it—from the free pursuit of your desires and ambitions. It's that feeling of excitement and weightlessness you experience when you feel free to do and be whatever you want, when life becomes a joyous, ever-changing dance. After centuries of dull servitude to responsibility, propriety, and necessity, we're not used to expressing and following our dreams—the time has come to learn how.

Think back to the most important day of your life, the day you first discovered love or music or adventure... when a thousand new doors opened, and the world seemed bigger than it ever had before, and suddenly everything was possible.

Why can't every day feel like that?

Well, for one thing, we don't exactly live in a society that is designed to help us discern and pursue our hearts' desires, do we? Whatever the rhetoric about "freedom

and the pursuit of happiness" may suggest, our society is filled to the point of absurdity with distractions and restrictions. We're all so busy struggling to keep up that it's hard to even remember our dreams, let alone chase after them. And each of us feels so powerless that it's equally hard to keep in mind that this world we live in is entirely the result of our own efforts: it is our work that has made it this way. Our species has completely transformed the planet. Is this the best of all possible worlds we have built?

If it's not, why don't we stop building it, and invent new ways of living and working together—so we can construct another, better world, that will be more pleasurable for all of us! For what should we work towards, if not pleasure and joy?

Have you ever made love and it felt so good it seemed dangerous?

Being in love means really wanting to live in a different world:

a more exciting world, a more beautiful world, a more joyous, carefree world.

A world where everything matters and nothing is ever, ever dull.

Why shouldn't we start to build that world right here, today?

Wobbly & North American News

IWW Organizes First Unionized Bike Shop In D.C.



Capitol Hill Bikes.

Photo: District Bicycle Workers' Union

By the District Bicycle Workers' Union

Capitol Hill Bikes (CHB) employees have organized with the Washington, D.C. IWW as the District Bicycle Workers' Union, and were recognized by the store's owners on Friday, Jan. 30.

CHB now becomes the only bicycle shop in the District that is unionized. The formation of the District Bicycles Workers' Union was inspired by the unionization of Washington, D.C. bike sharing system, Capital Bikeshare. In an industry that usually has short-term employment,

low wages, and no benefits, CHB hopes that this is only the start of others in the bike industry to organize themselves to improve conditions.

The employees at CHB have a great relationship with the shop's owners and have always been open to new ideas. Decisions have always been informally democratic but now with a union, CHB has formalized the democratic decision making for actions by the shop.

Read an in-depth story on the Capital Hill Bikes workers in the upcoming May Industrial Worker.

Laid-Off Retail Workers Protest In Seattle

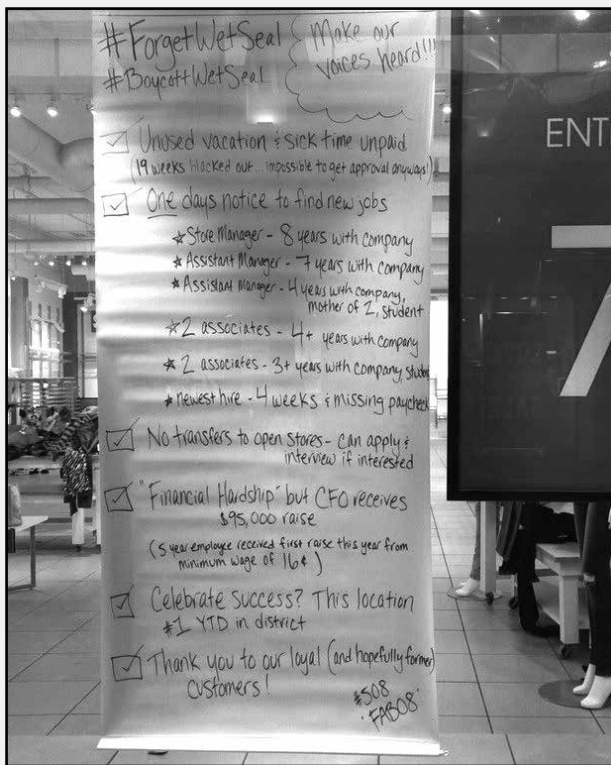
By John Kalwaic

In early January, store workers at a young women's clothing store chain known as Wet Seal posted a sign on the front window of their store at the Northgate Mall in Seattle protesting the impending layoff of the store's employees.

At the beginning of the year, workers at the store were assured by the company that they would not be laid off. This turned out to be a lie: the staff members of the Seattle store were indeed going to be let go. In protest, the angered employees posted a sign outside the door of the store denouncing the company and telling customers not to shop there. On the sign the employees explained they were not paid for their unused sick days, many of them spent years with the company but were only given one day's notice of the layoff, and the newest hire of four weeks had a missing paycheck. The sign also stated that the CEO of Wet Seal had received a \$95,000 raise despite the financial hardship of the company.

After the employees posted the signs, they were immediately fired for "misuse of company time." Another sign was put in the storefront window of the Wet Seal at the Dayton Mall in Ohio, which read: "Took away all of our benefits including sick time and vacation which we worked for, and were told we would receive. Btw, NO SEVERENCE PAY!"

Social media protests against the company went viral on Reddit and Twitter, with #ForgetWetSeal and #BoycottWetSeal as similar storefront signs appeared in other closing Wet Seal stores. Accordnig to *Business Insider*, store manager Summer Ligon of the Chesapeake Square Wet Seal in Chesapeake, Va., said in a phone inter-



Wet Seal protest sign.

Photo: businessinsider.com

view, "We're packing up our store right now. While I was out some employees had posted those kinds of signs in the windows, but I took them down." When asked why, she said, "At first, out of anger, I wanted to leave them up. Then I realized it didn't make us look good. I wanted us to look professional. I wanted to make sure my girls all got jobs in this mall and [the signs] wouldn't help their prospects." This represents attitudes working specifically against women workers, who are often expected to internalize their oppression and just "look pretty" and "not put up a fuss."

The Wet Seal has now announced that they are filing for bankruptcy as other fashion chains such as Forever 21 become more popular. Regardless, the company repeatedly failed to warn employees across the United States about the store closures and subsequent layoffs and has often committed wage theft by not paying its employees.

With files from Business Insider and The Christian Science Monitor.

FairPoint Strike Finally Comes To An End



FairPoint workers on strike in October 2014.

Photo: labornotes.org

By John Kalwaic

From Oct. 17, 2014 to Feb. 19, 2015, workers at FairPoint Communications Inc. in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire went on strike against restructuring policies and cuts to retirement benefits. The FairPoint strike was one of the longest strikes in the United States in recent years. The workers at the telecommunications company are organized with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The strike involved the contracts of approximately 1,800 employees. The company claimed that the cuts and restructuring were necessary to make the company more competitive, while the unions said that this move would squeeze the workers and the only benefit would go to Wall Street. The company also had plans to downsize their workforce and move many of their facilities out of the New England area.

After workers walked out on Oct. 17, picket lines began to form around FairPoint workplaces in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. Many customers of the telecommunications company complained about the phone and internet service declining in quality. After the strike continued for months, the public utilities company got more than 200 calls about phone and internet services not working or being fixed because of the

strike. Things got pretty heated on the picket line on Dec. 2 in Keene, N.H. when a replacement worker named Charles Hunter tried to run over picketers with his car. The man was then arrested. The strike continued to drag on, as neither side was willing to budge.

On Dec. 5 the company urged the workers to stop the strike as it had dragged on for months, but the workers and unions refused to cave. On Dec. 30 the National Labor Relations Board ruled against the unions' claim that FairPoint was not bargaining in good faith. Despite this setback, the strike continued for another two months. The unions and the company finally came to an agreement in late February 2015; the agreement won the workers some concessions from the company. The company agreed not to lay off workers or outsource jobs to other non-union areas of the country, but at the same time forced the workers to pay more for retirement.

The strike was long and the workers braved the cold New England weather to picket, which at some points got very confrontational with scabs crossing the picket line. In the end the workers did not win a whole lot, but it could have been much worse.

With files from the Burlington Free Press, <http://www.pressherald.com>, <http://www.Vt.digger.org>, WMUR 9 ABC, Concord Monitor and the Fierce

Workers Walk Out At NYC Restaurants

By John Kalwaic

On Jan. 12 workers at Pure Food and Wine, an upscale raw food vegan restaurant in Gramercy, New York City, walked out in protest over unpaid wages. Many current and former employees—as well as sympathetic customers—picketed outside the restaurant. Some employees claimed they had not been paid in over a month. Workers at One Lucky Duck, another upscale vegan restaurant nearby with the same owner, also walked out and picketed with the workers from Pure Food and Wine.

The employees at both restaurants said the owner had not paid them for their work since December 2014. This is when the wage trouble started. The restaurants started receiving calls saying they were not paying their bills. Many workers were paid late or with petty cash. In other cases they were not paid at all. Around 100 employees of Pure Food and Wine and One Lucky Duck are owed back wages. According to an anonymous former employee at Pure Food and Wine, the back of house staff who had not received their pay checks due on Dec. 28 threatened to walk out if they were not paid by Jan. 12.

When they were not paid by that date, the staff from both the back and front of house walked out. Picketers carried signs saying "Pay our wages," "One month back pay," and "Many unlucky ducks." The picketers also taped hand written signs saying, "No pay no way," and "Raw food raw deal," over the restaurant entrance sign.

The owner of the restaurants stated on various forms of social media that the restaurants had been closed due to a flood, which was an outright lie; they were closed



Photo: gothamist.com

because the workers at both places had gone on strike.

A server named Maiquensaez Vega told the news website Gothamist, "We're all pretty much family here, everybody gets along. The restaurant is great, the product is good. But the way we were dealt with, and me being here for eight years, I feel like it's a slap in the face." Often, upscale places with a progressive image still exploit their workers.

The interesting thing about this walk-out is that, according to sources, there is no union or organization behind it. Rather, it was a spontaneous action by the workers.

With files from Gothamist and NY1.

Special

The Joe Hill Centenary Takes To The Road

By Norman Stockwell and George Mann

*"From San Diego up to Maine,
In every mine and mill -
Where working men defend their rights
It's there you'll find Joe Hill."*

- "I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night."
Lyrics by Alfred Hayes,
music by Earl Robinson.

On Nov. 19, 1915 Wobbly activist Joe Hill was killed by a firing squad in Salt Lake City, Utah. After national and international appeals for clemency that included pleas from Helen Keller, Jane Addams, and Eugene V. Debs, Hill was executed for the murders of a grocer and his son who were shot in a robbery on Jan. 10, 1914. There is little doubt today that Joe Hill was framed for the crime because

he was a foreigner and a known labor activist. His death inspired several songs, and his life has inspired many fellow workers, but Joe also wrote some of our best-known labor songs, including "The Preacher and The Slave," "Casey Jones," and "There is Power in a Union," which are still sung today at union rallies and events.

This year, to mark the 100th anniversary of his death, a group of Wobblies and others are organizing the "Joe Hill Road 100 Show," a national concert tour. The tour will begin in Chicago on May Day, then head on to Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Madison, Oshkosh, Green Bay, and the Twin Cities for the Upper Midwest "leg." An east coast leg in July will include Albany, New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. In September, it will head to the south planning stops in places such as Blacksburg, Va.; Greensboro, N.C.;

Atlanta, Ga.; Asheville, N.C.; and Nashville, Tenn., and the last leg in November will hit the west coast before ending in Salt Lake City.

Each local community will produce a show with a mix of local and national touring artists. Some shows will also include spoken word pieces, and, of course, the songs of Joe Hill will be sung.

Joe Hill (Oct. 7, 1879 - Nov. 19, 1915) was born Joel Emmanuel Hägglund in Gävle, Sweden and was also known as Joseph Hillström. He came to the United States in 1902 and learned English as an itinerant laborer. Joe Hill was an organizer, songwriter, cartoonist and journalist during his 36 short years. He traveled from the east coast to the west coast, fanning the flames of discontent in mines and lumber camps. He died with literally no more than the shirt on his back.

Joe began writing songs for IWW organizing campaigns, and his first widely-known effort was "The Preacher and The Slave," written for the Free Speech Fight in Spokane, Wash. in 1910. His songs, written to the popular tunes of the day (so folks could sing 'em) have continued to inspire young agitators, and he remains the best-known songwriter among the IWW tunesmiths. With this tour, IWW members and musicians will remember Joe's life and work.

Other commemorative events this year include the Joe Hill edition of the "Solidarity Forever Labor History Calendar" and

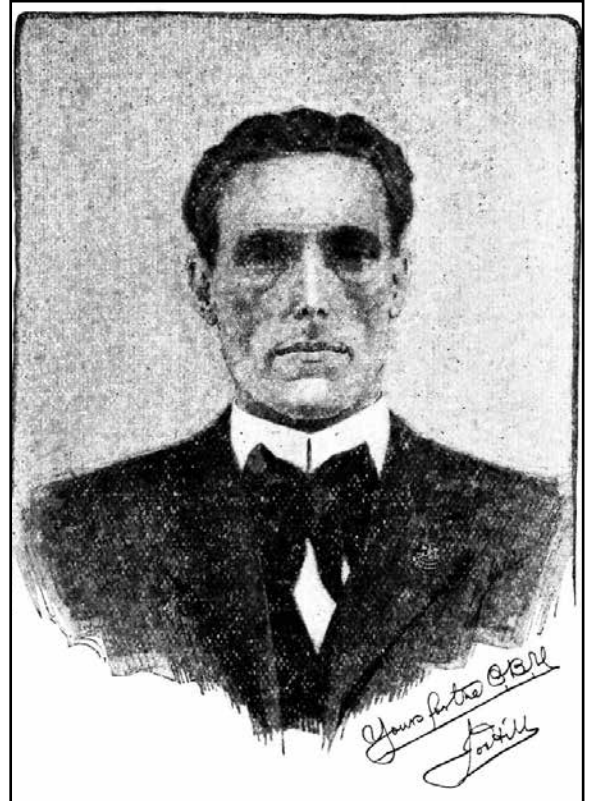


Photo: commons.wikimedia.org

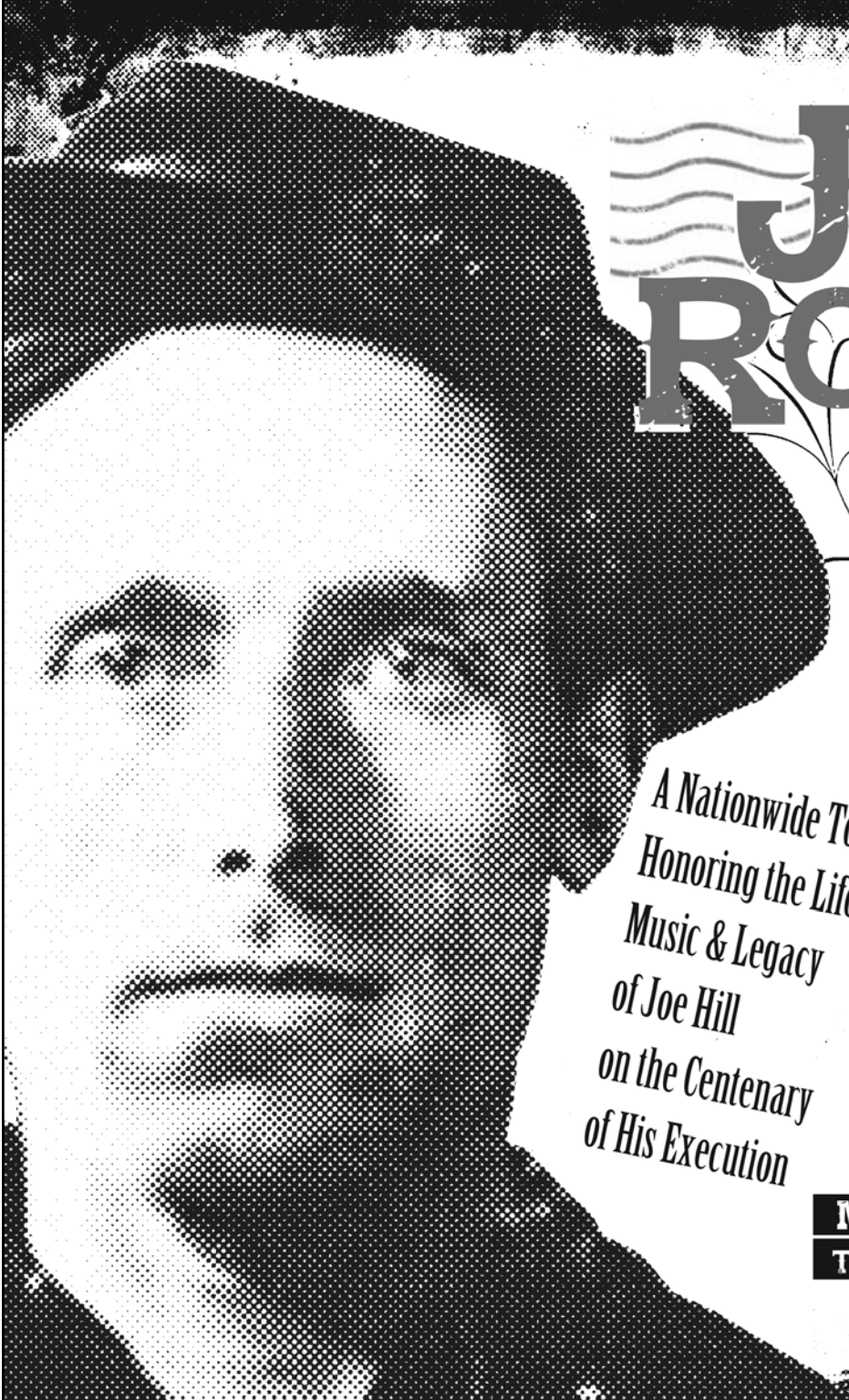
a special reproduction of the 1916 IWW "Little Red Song Book," which was issued at the time as a Joe Hill commemorative edition. In addition, folk musician John McCutcheon is releasing a new album of Joe Hill's songs titled "Joe Hill's Last Will" and performing in a one-person play on Joe Hill written by fellow musician and organizer Si Kahn.

For more information, or to make a donation to help support all of this year's events, visit: <http://joehill100.com> or <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Joe-Hill-100-tour/426997447452407>.



Mourners at Joe Hill's funeral in 1915.

Photo: reuther.wayne.edu





JOE HILL ¹⁰⁰ ROADSHOW

**MIDWEST
TOUR DATES**


May 1: *Chicago, IL*
 May 2: *Indianapolis, IN* • May 3: *Batavia, IL*
 May 5: *Sheboygan WI* • May 6: *Madison, WI*
 May 7: *Green Bay, WI* • May 8: *Milwaukee, WI*
 May 9: *Oshkosh, WI* • May 10: *St. Paul, MN*

FEATURING

BUCKY HALKER	ANNE FEENEY	JAN HAMMARLUND
	LIL REV	JP WRIGHT 

HEADING YOUR WAY SOON
 Visiting the Northeast,
 Mid-Atlantic, South & West in
 the Summer & Fall

**MORE ABOUT
THE TOUR ON**
joehill100.com



*A Nationwide Tour
Honoring the Life,
Music & Legacy
of Joe Hill
on the Centenary
of His Execution*

Front Page News

Syndicalist Union Protests Migrant Worker Exploitation In Berlin

Continued from 1

(Openmallmaster) to another (Metatec). In the end, none of the two subcontractors even paid the agreed-upon wage completely, which—being below the industry’s minimum wage of 11.15 euros (\$11.92) per hour—is illegally low.

“They didn’t only not pay our wages,” a comrade explained, “several times, we were treated arbitrarily and menaced (with violence, too). They did withhold written contracts from us, and they gave us no or completely rotten accommodations.” Another comrade stated: “I had two goals when staging the protest: first, I wanted to fight for our dignity and, secondly, for the money.”

“The first goal, we already achieved,” he added.

Before joining FAU Berlin, the comrades had already gone to the publicly-funded counseling office for posted workers sent to Berlin, situated in the house of the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (German Confederation of Trade Unions, or DGB). The DGB has confirmed the mounting number of workers from Romania and Bulgaria seeking counseling, as does the intercultural association Am-

aro Foro. Therefore, the comrades’ cases might be considered symptomatic of the increased exploitation and cheating inflicted on workers from EU countries who are hired for the lowest possible wages and, then, are not even fully paid. Still, legal advice and written claims’ assertions do not adequately replace union action.

The latter has been provided quickly and resolutely by FAU Berlin, particularly by its section for migrant workers called the Foreigners Section, as well as by a dedicated FAU working group. Right before Christmas 2014, by means of daily rallies and a noisy demonstration of some 300 people, the grassroots union and its new comrades made the “Mall of Shame” (as they call it), a symbol for the exploitation of migrant workers. By the end of January 2015 a Brandenburg newspaper stated



Wobbly solidarity. Photo: FAU Berlin

it was “a subject of reporting of all Berlin press.” They’ve been wholeheartedly supported by FAU members from all over the country.

In the meantime, the bosses try to avoid their responsibility and take distance from one another. Customer-investor Harald Huth (HGHI) told the press: “We have nothing to do with these workers. This is an issue for

FCL [Fettchenhauer Controlling & Logistic], which we’ve paid completely for all provided services.” But the executing FCL declared bankruptcy by mid-December, which neither hinders ex-general manager Andreas Fettchenhauer to be continually active in the construction industry with half a dozen other companies nor attempts to silence FAU Berlin by the legal means of a temporary injunction. In the meantime, the subcontractors’ representa-

tives declared they “have never employed Romanian workers” (Metatec) and that they had not gotten any money from FCL (Openmallmaster). The first assertion is refuted by so called “renunciations” that some individual workers signed in order to get at least part of their wages. The latter assertion is vehemently refuted by Fettchenhauer himself. And despite Huth’s claim in mid-December to have broken with Fettchenhauer, an “FCL Fettchenhauer Construction GmbH” is right now working briskly on the renovation site of a new shopping center in Berlin-Lichterfelde—a project of Huth’sian HGHI.

As for FAU Berlin, the union continues its protests in 2015, by leafleting, for example, or hold a rally at the subcontractors’ offices. Additionally, the grassroots union supported its comrades in filing lawsuits against the subcontractors. And the FAU continues to fight back against the use of “temporary injunction” and the restrictions of union liberty. So, this struggle will remain thrilling.

For more up-to-date information, visit <https://berlin.fau.org/kaempfe/mall-of-shame>. Follow the campaign on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mallofshame>.

Work: What Is It Good For?



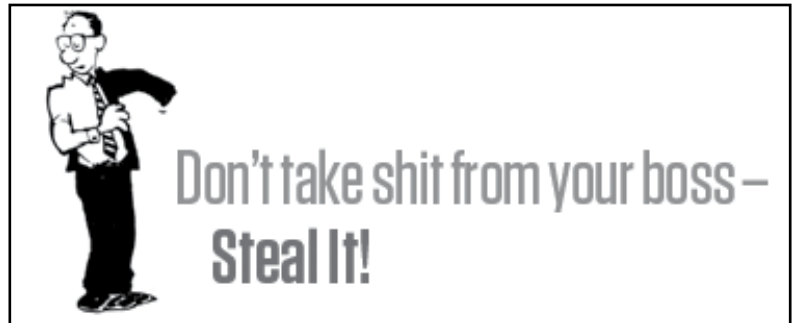
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Factories stop pouring pollutants into rivers. Gentrification grinds to a halt. Workaholics reconsider their priorities. Prisons are forced to release inmates. Police departments can’t buy new weapons. Governments can’t afford to mass-arrest demonstrators. Sheriffs sometimes even refuse to evict families from foreclosed homes. Of course, millions more are forced out of their homes and go hungry. But the problem isn’t that there’s no housing or food to be had—it’s not the crisis that causes that, but the fact that the system is still functioning. Long before the crash, people were being forced out of their homes while buildings stood empty and going hungry while

food surpluses rotted. If more people go hungry during a recession, it’s not because there has been any material change in our productive capacities, but simply one

more example of how irrationally our society always distributes resources. When workers go on strike, you can see some of the same effects as during a crash. They may go hungry, but they can also develop a new awareness of their power as they get to know each other outside the constraints of the daily grind. The rest of society suddenly notices that they exist. Sometimes they establish new collective projects and ways of making decisions. Occasionally they even take over their workplaces and use them to do things outside the logic of profit and competition. The same goes for student occupations. So perhaps the real issue is that crashes and strikes don’t go far enough.

So long as the economy runs our lives, any interruption is going to be hard on



us; but even if nothing ever went wrong, it would never deliver the world of our dreams. And whether or not we’re ready for change, things aren’t going to go on this way forever. Who can still believe we’re on the right track now that pollution is killing off species by the thousand and causing the polar ice caps to melt? Between global warming and nuclear war, industrial capitalism has already produced at least two different ways of ending life on earth.

That doesn’t sound very stable! If we want to survive another century, we have to reexamine the mythology that grounds our current way of life.

Stay tuned for part 2 of this new series examining work, “The Mythology of Work,” in the May 2015 Industrial Worker.

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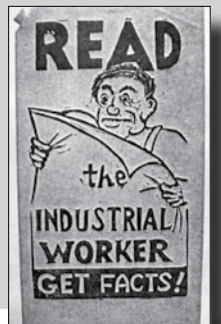


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Revolution In Our Daily Lives: Alive In The Land Of The Dead

By Ann Archist

The 20th Century has marked the end of the millennium that saw the world become colonized by and organized under Western civilization, that saw the industrial revolution and overpopulation restructure both humanity and the very surface of the earth itself. This century began with fifty years of alternating slaughter, starvation, and rabid nationalism such as the human race had never seen before. It is concluding with an ominous silence among young people in the United States and much of Europe, for with the end of the “Cold War” the idea that there really is any alternative at all to our modern living conditions and society is becoming hard to conceive of; and in the meantime, we are becoming more and more organized and arranged by the technological systems that we set up with the supposed intentions of making our lives more free and meaningful.

As this century is ending with sentimental retrospectives and the like, what we really must do is not look back but look ahead. Now more than ever we must consider whether our modern lives as we have come to live them over the last thousand years really satisfy all our needs and desires as human beings, and prepare for the new millennium to be a new chapter in the human experiment. We must use the lessons we have learned from the 20th Century to plan for a new era in which human life can be meaningful and fulfilling, even thrilling, heroic. Or have we learned any lessons?

Don't wait for permission, for some far-off “world revolution,” for later “when you have more time.” Demand joy, danger, passion in your life today!

About the Problem

The poverty against which man has been struggling throughout history is not merely the poverty of material goods; the ennui and disorientation experienced by the members of the middle and upper classes in today's wealthy industrial nations have revealed the poverty of Western existence itself.

The problems that we face today cannot be traced to class conflict alone. It is not merely a question of the ruling class profiting at the expense of the proletariat, for we have seen that the profit that those with capital do make does not make their lives any more fulfilling. It does not matter whether a woman is buried alive in a prison, in a reform school, in a sweatshop, in a ghetto, in a prestigious university, in a condominium bought on credit, or in a mansion with a private swimming pool and tennis courts, so long as she is buried alive. Everyone suffers from today's status quo, albeit differently; but whether a man is starving on his minimum wage salary, exhausted by his repetitive responsibilities at the office, or befuddled by the curious

feeling of emptiness that accompanies the undirected acquisition of material wealth, he has a stake in fighting for change. So we all, rich and poor, must band together to consider our situation and struggle to alter it.

This also means that there is no mythical “They.” Innumerable radical movements and social critics have relied upon this concept to motivate people by stirring up hatred for the “evil orchestrators” of human suffering, the enemies who conspire against us. But this kind of thinking only serves to divide us against each other, and whether we are divided on class lines, on color lines, or according to any other categories, we are distracted from the important issues and impeded in our progress. Our true “enemy” is the social forces and patterns at work between ourselves, and it is these forces which we must come to understand and to struggle against.

This is not to say that there are not individuals whose behavior is particularly dangerous to their fellow human beings, insofar as it perpetuates or intensifies our present state of emergency. But even if these individuals do have negative intentions towards others, it is still unlikely that they possess a clear understanding of the extremely complicated conditions to which they are contributing.

About the Process

We individuals who are unsatisfied with their lives, who do feel the “poverty” of the existence that modern Western civilization has to offer, must seek out others who are experiencing similar symptoms. Together, we must construct and publicize an analysis of our situation: a theory of why human beings act and interact in the ways that they do today, and how this leads to our sensations of alienation, disorientation, and exhaustion.

This analysis must have effective action of some kind as its necessary and immediate consequence, or else (as have the theories of a long tradition of “radical” discussion groups) it will come to nothing.

And this struggle presupposes participants who are fighting for themselves, to see and feel change and improvement in the course of their own lives—as we shall see . . .

About the Solution

Whatever solution, whatever revolution, we propose, must be present-oriented rather than future-oriented if it is to be genuinely revolutionary.

The past and the present are both full of examples which indicate this. To consider one: Christianity demands of its followers that they delay gratification until they enter the next world, when they will supposedly be rewarded for their proper conduct; in doing so it assumes that this proper conduct is not fulfilling enough in itself to be worthwhile

unless it is rewarded. This kind of thinking reflects a dire misunderstanding of the nature of human happiness; for happiness is to be found in activity, in activities that are exciting and satisfying in and of themselves, rather than in passively awaiting rewards for unsatisfying activities. Therefore it is not surprising that many devout Christians are bitter, spiteful individuals who jealously resent healthy activity and excitement in others—for they believe that they will find true happiness only in their “heavenly reward” for behavior that is not at all exciting for them, and thus must watch enviously as others freely do what they can only dream of doing in their most “sinful” fantasies. Conversely, many Christians who are happy are happy despite their Christianity, because they are able to take pleasure in their lives and deeds in this world.

Traditional Marxism takes the Christian mistake one step further by asking its adherents to work towards a revolution they will probably never live to see—that is, in the Marxist “faith,” gratification is delayed beyond the reach of human experience. It should be no surprise that today, beyond a little anachronistic romanticism about the “nobility” of self-sacrifice, the Marxist offer serves as little incentive for people to seriously fight for the “communist revolution.” In contrast, today's capitalistic consumer market at least promises prompt gratification in the form of material goods (and the myths and images it associates with them) in return for the generally unsatisfying labor it requires. But—does it deliver true gratification to its participants?

Again, happiness is an active experience, not a passive sensation. Thus, a woman who cooks a recipe of her own invention for her friends may find a great deal of pleasure and meaning in this undertaking, while a man who slaves all day to cook exotic food in an expensive restaurant will find that the purchases he makes with his paycheck cannot compensate him for the days of his life he has given up. You can purchase a twenty acre estate, the latest in status-symbol automobiles, and an entire wardrobe of unique and exquisite fashions, but the pleasure that these possessions afford cannot compare to the exhilaration of spending a day freely pursuing your desires.

Accordingly, our revolution must be an immediate revolution in our daily lives; anything else is not a revolution but a demand that once again people do what they do not want to do and hope that this time, somehow, the compensation will be enough. Those who assume, often unconsciously, that it is impossible to achieve their own desires—and thus, that it is futile to fight for themselves—often end up fighting for an ideal or cause instead. But it is still possible to fight for ourselves, or at least the experi-

ment must be worth a try; so it is crucial that we seek change not in the name of some doctrine or grand cause, but on behalf of ourselves, so that we will be able to live more meaningful lives. Similarly we must seek first and foremost to alter the contents of our own lives in a revolutionary manner, rather than direct our struggle towards world-historical changes which we will not live to witness. In this way we will avoid the feelings of worthlessness and alienation that result from believing that it is necessary to “sacrifice oneself for the cause,” and instead live to experience the fruits of our labors. . . in our labors themselves.

To put it another way, our revolution must be above all a revolution in the ways we live and think. It must be a recognition and rejection of the thought patterns and patterns of social interaction that have led us to today's unsatisfying existence, in favor of patterns of thought and interaction that will be satisfying in themselves. It must be a revolution in our motivations, replacing reward-motivated behavior with behavior that is intrinsically meaningful. It must be a revolution in our everyday lives. Rejecting boredom, exhaustion, and despair for excitement, danger, love, passion and compassion—that is a revolution worth fighting for! And certainly there are large scale, long term goals that we must fight for, to make this revolution possible for all of us in the years to come; but we should fight for these goals not out of servitude to a doctrine or cause, but because it is exciting and invigorating today to strive for difficult and worthy objectives.

Alive in the land of the dead. They eat dead food with false teeth. Their buildings have false fronts, their radio and television stations broadcast dead air. They kill time as spectators of false images. Their corporations are guilty of false advertising, and their employment ‘opportunities’ offer only murderous mistreatment, lethal boredom, and fatal submission; they demand that you meet deadlines, that you pitch tent in the death camps. Does the dead end justify the means? They inhabit dead cities and make false moves, really going nowhere at all, treading day after day the same path of despair. Even their air is conditioned. They ask you to give your lives for their countries, for their religions, for their economies, leaving you with only. . . . Their system is organized by artificial intelligence and provides only virtual reality. Their culture will pin you down and bore you to death, their lifestyle is lifeless, their existence is a permanent deadlock. Everything about them is dead and false. The only thing that is unbearable is that nothing is unbearable. When will we demand more?

The struggle is for life, for real life. Fight foul, life is real!

Regarding Fraternity Culture And Racism In Oklahoma

As a student at the University of Oklahoma (OU) I have found great solace in small enclaves of radicals and comrades among the seas of institutions found on the OU campus that represent exclusion and privilege. Small pockets of people exist who understand and acknowledge the inherent racism and classism found among the plantation-style homes full of fraternities and sororities adjacent to the campus; these Greek houses are full of young adults of supposedly good breeding and lineage, that stake claim to this academic environment which is in direct conflict with the ideals that they secretly hold and express during functions in polite company.

As a comrade of the Oklahoma Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), I must rebuke those who claim to be shocked by the actions of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity, who chanted racial slurs directed towards African Americans on a bus ride to a country club in the middle of Oklahoma. If we can suspend this idea of modern American equality for a moment, we can

recognize that life here is not equal. To see this, look no further than what is already around you, and what is prevalent across American institutions of higher learning.

This was not some youthful indiscretion, it isn't some wayward racist opinion held by youths in the throes of their salad days. This reflection of racism within SAE was an honest view into the opinions of those who are found in the halls of my university. Their ideology is a direct affront to the concept of universal human suffrage and equality, two profound tenants of thought I find reflected not only in small groups of the truly educated at OU, but within the Oklahoma IWW, the radical labor union that gave me and others here so much hope that true equality and inclusion can happen, if we fight for it.

The history of the SAE fraternity is marred with reflections of southern seclusion, and in fact is the only fraternity formed in the antebellum South. They claim proudly (and incorrectly) that their founder, James Devotie, was the first casualty in the American Civil War. They boast about the fact that of the 400

members of their fraternity during the outbreak of the war, 369 fought for the Confederacy. This pride is still evident in many places, namely the Confederate flag hanging visibly within a room at the Oklahoma State University SAE house. Currently, they are known as the deadliest fraternity, and in a 2013 newsletter written by their leader, he details how 12 chapters have been forced to close within the last several months. They are notorious for hosting racist parties with participants wearing black face and mocking gang violence.

I call all IWW members, all OU students, all comrades and radicals, all people who have been excluded, to join together inclusively to decry not only Sigma Alpha Epsilon, but all institutions founded upon racism, socio-economic caste systems, and privilege.

How can we support or allow exclusionary practices while being those who supposedly hold the idea of universal human suffrage dear?

We can't. We won't.



The Oklahoma IWW, the One Big Union, is the definition of inclusive and therefore the antithesis of institutional racism, sexism, and classism found on the OU campus.

The ideas of radical unionism and radical inclusiveness have a place at OU. This can be perfectly expressed by the literal writing on the wall of the SAE house that a comrade painted in a fury yesterday evening: “TEAR IT DOWN.”

**-Kristin Fleming,
Oklahoma IWW**

WobThoughts

Is The Work 'Ethic' Really Ethical?

By x12345

Did you ever wonder why your parents act so disoriented when it comes to 'leisure' activities? Why they start one little hobby, and either fail to follow through with it or become pathologically obsessed with it... even though it doesn't seem to have anything to do with their lives? Maybe they seek to lose themselves in gardening or following the exploits of some basketball team. Maybe your father buys all sorts of fancy tools (the kind of tools many men his age have), but only uses them for a few days before setting them aside—and then buys a lot of skiing equipment the next month. Or perhaps they just spend their time trying figure out how to pay off the debt they owe for that wide screen television they spend the rest of their time watching.

And—have they ever been honest with you about their jobs? Do they enjoy them? Is their work the most fulfilling thing they could be doing, are they able to achieve every goal they always wanted to? Do they feel heroic or proud every day as they return home—or are they exhausted? Do they turn that wide screen television on as soon as they come in the door? Do they have the energy to do anything else?

Did you ever wonder if there might be a better way for them, for you?

What is 'Work' Like?

Because of 'division of labor', most jobs today consist of doing very specific tasks, over and over, with very little variety. If you are a dishwasher, you wash dishes: you don't get to interact with people or solve complicated problems very often, and you never get to leave the dishroom to run around in the sunlight. If you are a real estate agent, you never use your hands to make anything, and you spend most of your time thinking about market value and selling points. Even jobs that include a certain amount of variety can only remain interesting and challenging up to a point: for we work forty hours a week on average, and at least five out of the seven days. That's a lot of our lives to spend working. Work is the first thing we do on most of the days of our lives, and we don't get to do anything else until we've been at work for quite a while. When we spend most of our time and energy working on one task, or even ten different tasks, eventually we will feel bored and desperate for variety... even if we are conditioned not to realize this.

On top of this, because of the spread of large businesses and the consequent

decrease in self-employment and small businesses, most of us do not have much voice in what our responsibilities at work will be. It is hard to start your own business or even find a friend or neighbor to work for. We often must get a job to survive in which we follow the instructions of a manager who probably doesn't have much more control over his job than we have over ours. Since we don't get to decide what we are doing, chances are that we will feel alienated from our work, disinterested in the quality of our labor; we may even feel that the projects we are working upon are unimportant.

Indeed it is easy to feel that most of the jobs available today are unimportant—for in a certain sense, many of them are. In a purely capitalist economy, the jobs that are available will be determined by which products are in the most demand; and often the products that are in demand (military technology, fast food, Pepsi, fashionable clothes) are not products that really make people happy. It's easy to feel like all your labor is wasted when the products you work so hard to sell just to survive seem to do nothing for the people you sell them to. How many people really are cheered up by the soggy french fries at McDonalds? Would they perhaps be happier eating a meal prepared by a friend of theirs or a chef they knew who owned his own cafe?

In short, "work" as we know it tends to make us unhappy because we do so much of it, because it is so repetitive, because we don't get to choose what we do, and because what we are doing is often not in the best interest of our fellow human beings.

What is Leisure Time Like?

We come home from these jobs exhausted from having invested all our time and energy in a project we may not have even been free to choose, and what we need most is to recover. We are emotionally and physically worn out, and nothing seems more natural than to sit down quietly for a while and watch television or read the daily paper, while we try to gather our strength for the next day's labor. Perhaps we try to leave behind our exhaustion and frustration by concentrating on some hobby or another; but as we are not very used to directing ourselves in the workplace during the day, we often don't know what we really want to do when we are free at home. Certainly some company or another will have some suggestions for us, whether we receive them from advertising or watching our neighbors; but chances

are that this company has their profits in mind at least as much as our satisfaction, and we may discover that playing miniature golf is strangely unfulfilling.

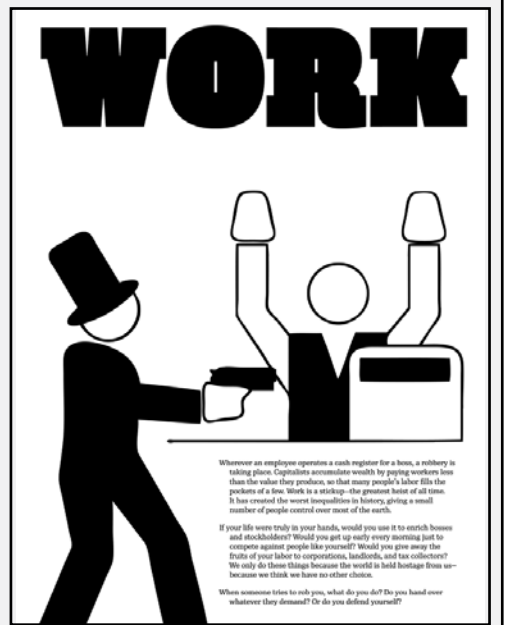
Similarly, of course, we don't have much time or energy left over from work to consider our situation or participate in any rewarding activity which requires much time and energy. We don't like to think too much about whether we enjoy our jobs or our lives—besides, that might be depressing, and what can we do if we don't enjoy them, anyway? We don't have the energy left to enjoy art or music or books that are really challenging; we need our music to be soothing, our art nonthreatening, our books merely entertaining.

In fact, we come to associate having to expend effort and do things with our work, and associate relaxing and not doing anything with leisure time. So, because many of us don't like our jobs, we tend to associate having to do things with being unhappy, while happiness, as far as we ever know it, means... not doing anything. We never act for ourselves, because we spend our whole days acting for other people, and we think that acting and working hard always leads to unhappiness; our idea of happiness is not having to act, being on permanent vacation.

And this is ultimately why so many of us are so unhappy: because happiness is not doing nothing, happiness is acting creatively, doing things, working hard on things you care about. Happiness is becoming an excellent long-distance runner, falling in love, cooking an original recipe for people you care about, building a bookshelf, writing a song. There is no happiness to be found in merely lying on a couch—happiness is something that we must pursue. We are not unhappy because we have to do things, we are unhappy because all the things we do are things we don't care about. And because our jobs exhaust us and mislead us about what we want, they are the source of much of our unhappiness.

What is the Solution?

You don't have to work at those jobs, you know. It is possible to get by without all the Pepsi, all the expensive clothes, the wide screen television and the expensive interior decorating that all those paychecks go to pay for. You can try to start your own business doing something you care about (although this still involves the danger of having too little variety in your work), or you can try to find a job in today's



marketplace (good luck!) that you actually enjoy... and that leaves you enough time and energy to do other things in your life that you also enjoy. The most important thing is to arrange your life so that you are doing things because you want to do them, not because they are profitable—otherwise, no matter how much money you make, you will be selling your happiness for money. Remember that the less money you spend, the less you will have to worry about getting money in the first place... and the less you will have to work at those dehumanizing jobs. Learn to use all your 'free' time, not to vegetate or spend money on entertainment, but to create things and accomplish things—things that no one would pay you to make or do, but that make your life (and perhaps the lives of others) better anyway.

Some will argue that the system we live within would break down if we all were to walk away from our jobs—so much the better. Haven't we built enough automobiles, enough shopping malls, enough televisions and golf clubs, enough fucking nuclear weapons already? Wouldn't we all be better off if there was a shortage of fast food and a surplus of unique home-cooked meals? If playing music is more rewarding than working in an assembly line, why do we have so few good bands and so many transistor radios? Of course a 'work-free' world is a dream we will probably never see come true; but as always, the challenge is to make this dream a part of your world, as much as you can—to liberate yourself from the chains of mindless consumerism and mind-melting employment and live a more meaningful life.

Wobbly Arts

Skagit Valley, Migrant Labor Camp Fieldwork, 1960-1980

c, angelica guillen, 1990

las campesinas
prayed in church every sunday

they wore men's pants to work
drove buses tractors trucks
smoked Pall Malls
maneuvered hands forged into agile deliberate tools
by decades of hard field work

they covered their heads with long cotton cloth
tightly secured by wide brimmed hats

levantando la cosecha
they leaned towards the ground
always in dread of hearing THAT sound

airplanes!
flying in low
heaving pesticides over fields, us
we covered our faces with the cotton fabric
hoping to keep the toxic mist away from our mouths, our breaths
the niños in our wombs

"hold your heads down, muchachas! don't look up at the
airplanes or the sun
keep working!" the mujeres called out to us, younger women

we continued
cutting the soil with our hoes
removing weeds
poison spray was supposed to kill

campesinas
were the weeds
the pesticides killed

Many campesinos suffered the effects of the pesticides that were sprayed on us while we worked in the fields. Fourteen years old, I watched the most graceful and kind women and men fall ill and die. We did not know then that pesticides could kill people. Now I look back and know that the illnesses I saw were the result of people being poisoned while they work.

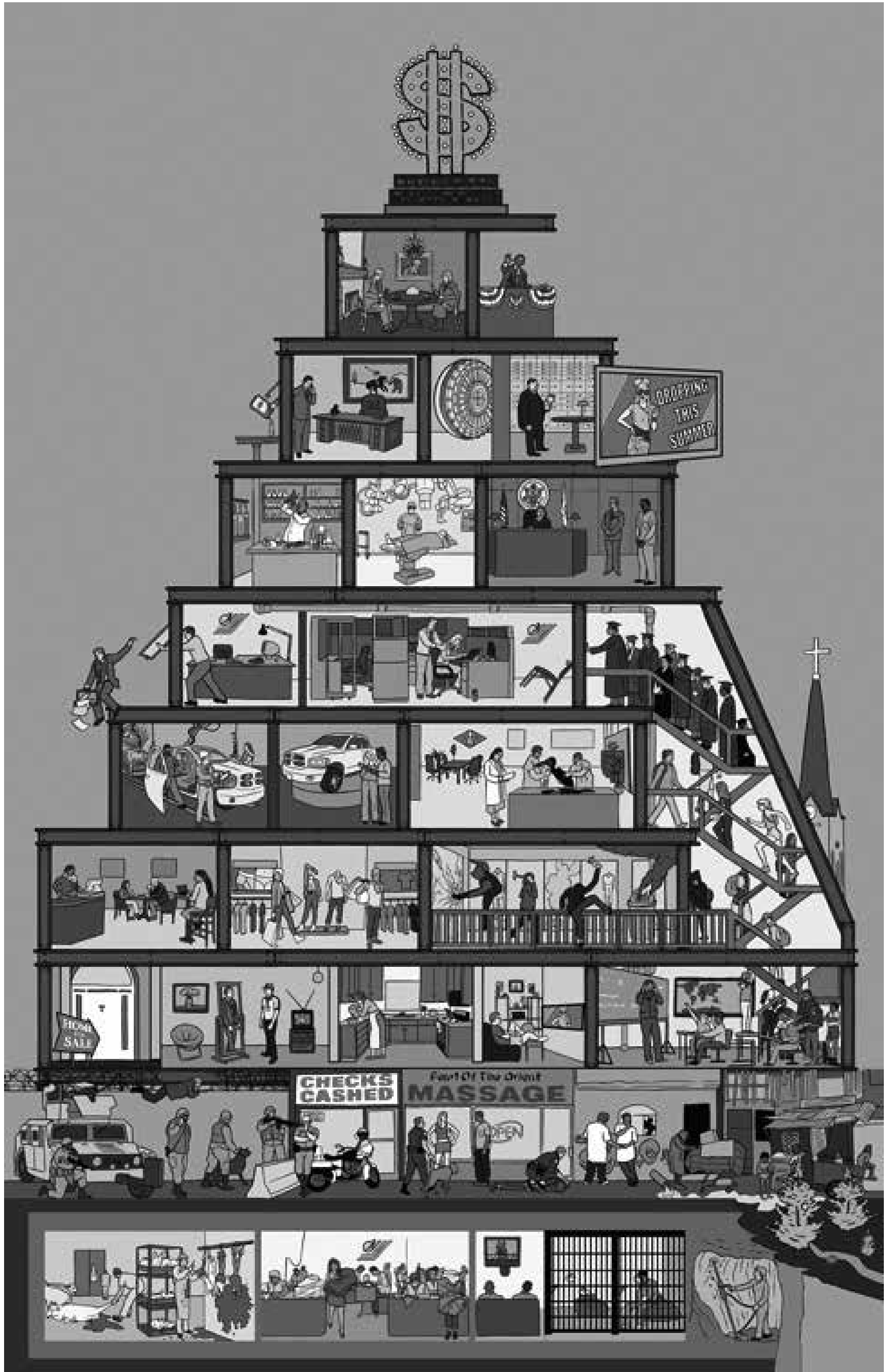
I remember my tia's (aunt's) beautiful skin, vibrant with a power that drew light to it and held it. it was always fragrant with the smell of tortillas and *guisados* (home-cooked main dishes). The bones of her body lay safe and snug beneath her firm skin. Out in the fields she wore a wide brimmed hat to shield as much of her body as she could from *el spray* (pesticides) and the sun. My tia was 50-years-old.

I remember Yisidra's skin, a glowing tribute upon her 38-year-old, slim frame. It held the sheen and elasticity of a young girl's skin. Its scent was not of cooking

but of Ponds hand lotion. This was the skin of a woman aware of her beauty, for beautiful she was. Working beside her in the fields, we young girls listened attentively to her advice on how to be beautiful—at night before you go to bed, brush your hair, put Ponds lotion on your face and hands. She would examine our hands every day to make sure we were taking care of them. Her stride firm, her caressing voice would tell us of our dignity as Mexicana women. I still see her standing in the fields waving to us.

He survived Vietnam and returned to the only place that would hire him: migrant labor camp. Kinky, shoulder-length, black hair stormed in all directions around his head; his skin crinkled across his cheek bones when he smiled. Morenito like the earth and young like the sun; he conquered the fields and fieldwork. Overhead airplanes sprayed. He was 22 years old.

Not much later, tia and Yisidra's skin bulged and heaved with a cancer that greedily devoured them raw. Each a mother of several children, each reduced in a matter of months to a small bundle. And he developed a disease that specialists could not name, much less treat. The pain unceasing. His body wept pus—hot and unhealed—then no more.



Special

How I Spent My Permanent Vacation

Continued from 1

care about. I can go to the library here (it's only \$10, for anyone, for a yearly membership at the university library here—that even includes their video and CD libraries) and read or watch old movies, I can exercise, I can play music, write, do all sorts of creative, self-improving, productive things. If I had been working the past three years, it would have been impossible for me to have made Inside Front what it is—I wouldn't have had the time or energy to research and write it, to organize and publish it, or to distribute it the way I have. The same goes for Catharsis, the band I play in; the music we have made and the experiences we have had traveling and performing mean more to me than any amount of money ever could, and Catharsis has taken up a lot of time that I wouldn't have had if I worked. The same goes for my involvement in CrimethInc.—because I don't sell my time to some office or business establishment, I have time of my own to dedicate to helping bands that I love get their music packaged the way it should be and available to others. The same goes for my involvement in other projects—writing for other magazines and pamphlets, flier-ing, and being active in my community in other ways. If I worked, even if it was at a job I liked (at a cafe with a relaxed atmosphere, etc.), I might not be unhappy, but my life certainly would not be as fulfilling as it has been with all of these activities in it in place of traditional employment.

Better yet, I get to work on these things that I care about however I see fit. I'm not following instructions, attempting to impress anyone who will be evaluating me for a promotion, or working within the confines of any restrictions on my efforts. I have completely free reign for my creativity. I can decide for myself how and when I will be most productive, rather than having to show up at work at 9 am every day whether that is good for my concentration or not. Thus I can make myself more effective and efficient than any boss ever could.

Finally, and most importantly, I'm voting both with my dollars and my time and energy against the existing system. I don't approve of the way most of my friends are treated in their places of employment; they usually have to deal with overbearing or incompetent managers, their tasks are often boring and repetitive, and they are typically not even given enough money to be able to take care of all their needs (many of which needs—nice clothes, transportation, etc.—are created by their jobs). I don't approve of the way many corporations conduct business (i.e. mistreating and slaughtering animals, destroying the environment, exploiting their workers, supporting governments that oppress and exploit their citizens, making products that are harmful to humans and the environment, etc.) and I also don't approve of the way our economy functions (with so many companies being interconnected and owned by multinational corporations) to force us to practically support the entire system whenever we support any particular company. When I don't work for them, they don't get to use my labor to perpetuate the status quo. When I don't receive an income from them, I don't have capital to give back to them for them to use to perpetuate the status quo. And most of all, my time and energy are mine to be used to fight against them, rather than to support present conditions. For example—how many of you know vegans who work at places that serve meat and dairy products, or other people in similar situations? We have to get away from that sort of thing.

HOW

Really, everybody already knows everything I've just described. Most people, if they had the choice, would love to leave their jobs or at least get new ones. Well-publicized, reputable poles have estimated the proportion of Americans unhappy with

their jobs to be as high as 90%. That's shocking, considering that our work is usually the most central and important thing in our lives. But people don't feel that they have any alternatives. The companies they work for will only let them have the goods and services they need to survive if they earn the money to pay for them.

My solution to that problem is to see which goods and services I can do without, and to look elsewhere for the others. I don't buy Pepsi to drink with every meal—that stuff isn't too good for you anyway, and Pepsi Co. is involved in some really bad shit. I don't spend a lot of money in bars or nightclubs; there are plenty of free activities I can do with my friends that are just as exciting. I don't buy fashionable or expensive clothing. I don't spend money on expensive amenities that are supposed to “save time”—because the truth is, they don't. Otherwise, where the fuck is all the time we should have saved up by now with our fast food, our microwave ovens, our automobiles, our fax machines, our computers? We're busier than ever today, overloaded with so many different demands on our time from these different “time-saving” devices and the jobs we work at to buy them.

So where do I get food, shelter, and other necessities? Food—I almost never pay for it. Here, even in North Carolina, which is not too diverse socially or culturally, we have this thing called Food Not Bombs. F.N.B. is basically a group of people who go to all the restaurants, grocery stores, etc. and collect the food they are going to throw away at the end of each day—because it's no secret that a LOT of perfectly good food goes to waste in those places. F.N.B. then serves this food downtown so that everyone who is hungry can have food to eat. I eat there twice a week, and each time they have a fair bit of food (bread, vegetables, canned food, etc.) left over that I can take home with me. Even if your town has nothing like Food Not Bombs, you can put the ideas into practice easily enough—before F.N.B. started here, I used to go to my friend's burrito shop and collect the beans, chips, and rice they would have thrown away at closing time. The Hare Krishnas serve free dinners here too, once a week, and I have no scruples about eating their food—who knows what they would do with those resources if they weren't spending them on keeping me fed? You can probably find similar opportunities that are unique to your area if you look. The consumer economy thrives on excess, so why not take advantage of it? Obviously this system wouldn't work if everybody in the world tried to do it, but that's not going to happen for a long time, if it ever does... so in the meantime we should get by however we can as individuals. We'll worry about arranging a completely work-free world when that actually looks like it might be in range.

Far too many useful things besides food are thrown away in our conspicuously consuming society, for that matter. You can get nice furniture that college students leave by the dumpsters at the end of the school year when they move out of their apartments. I have friends who have found everything from working clocks, stereos, and vacuum cleaners to new athletic shoes in dumpsters. And if you find the right thrift shop (not “vintage clothing” shop) you can dress yourself pretty well for less pocket change than you can scrape out of a public fountain in one night.

Shelter is the second most serious challenge to a person who wants to avoid working (health care is the most serious, and I don't have any easy answers for that one yet). In Europe and, to a lesser extent, New York, squatting is a possibility. People often complain to me that squats are too dirty and dangerous for them, but I think if the people who do not choose to live under dirty and dangerous conditions normally were to organize squats of their

own, that (obviously) their squats would not be too dirty or dangerous. Think how much fucking money you could save if you didn't pay rent! Even if squatting is not an option (since it is sort of discouraged by the authorities), it's possible to arrange cheap places to live. Plenty of people I know pay only a little over a hundred dollars a month to share an old house with a bunch of friends. I've known people who have been paid to stay at someone's house and take care of it while they were gone; I've known people who have worked on the house where they lived (painted it, etc.) in exchange for paying little or no rent; the list goes on. The possibilities are endless and ever changing, so I can only give examples here—you have to find concrete opportunities for yourself.

As for things that have to do with the hardcore scene—often if you're active, doing something that is useful to people (because I'm trying to encourage that here by speaking out against work, NOT discourage it!) you can barter it for the records, 'zines, etc. that you're interested in. If you write reviews, you can get all that stuff for free; you could trade a traveling band food or a place to sleep in return for their record; you could trade some rare records for a tattoo or vice versa; trade a copy of your friend's 'zine for another one that interests you; volunteer to help organize and clean up after a show in return for free admission.

Another way to make ends meet when you're unemployed is—brace yourself—stealing from corporations. This can range from the very petty to the other side of the spectrum. You can get a variety of materials you may need from some simple, low risk urban hunting and gathering. Toilet paper is, obviously, everywhere; so are cleaning products, matches, salt and pepper, coathangers, cardboard boxes, light bulbs, batteries (you can get them out of smoke detectors, for example, if you don't think it will endanger anyone), staples and staplers, pens, soap—just keep your eyes open. Copy shops often have tape, folders, markers, paper, and a million other typical “office” needs (it's a well-known fact that Kinko's has financed punk rock in the U.S.A. almost single-handedly). For that matter, stealing from the workplace is a time-honored American tradition, since so many people are so frustrated there; if you make friends with people who do work at these companies, chances are they will be happy to share a little of their companies' resources with you. Example? Since Inside Front #4, three years ago, I haven't paid for a single xerox copy; that includes thousands of copies of each issue from 4 through 7, thousands of pamphlets, and literally tens of thousands of fliers.

Do I feel bad about this? No. Corporations are distinct from traditional businesses in that they exist as separate financial entities from their owners. When you steal from a large corporation, you're stealing from a business entity that exists to perpetuate itself rather than from a private individual. Sure, private individuals profit from these corporations, and some of them are not really all that bad; others, though, like Pepsi or Marlboro, are up to some really bad things, and the less resources they have to pursue those goals the better. Most of the workers at these corporations receive a set salary, and will not suffer too much if you steal from the corporation. These corporations, in fact, usually figure some loss from theft, etc. into their budgets—they know that's the price they must pay for doing business in an environment where their workers feel little loyalty to their employers or fulfillment in their work, and many people in society are hungry, fed up with their jobs, and fed up with being “honest” and waiting fruitlessly for change. If you actually did steal more from a company than they were prepared for, the people who will probably lose money are the stockholders—and the majority of stock is not held by working

class men and women who are counting on it to be able to take care of their families. And if so much theft somehow occurred that these huge corporations like Kmart and McDonalds had to close, I would shed no tears about it! These companies and the multinationals that own them would disappear, never again to wreak wholesale destruction upon the earth's environment, never again to sell the same unhealthy, nasty-tasting hamburgers in every town from Los Angeles to Moscow through sheer force of advertising dollars. Perhaps they would be replaced by individuals who could be held accountable for their behavior by their communities; individuals who would care about their communities and act accordingly, rather than having to obey the impersonal and disinterested orders of a faceless profit machine. Individuals like my friend who owns the Burrito shop, who would give me food when he knew I couldn't afford it—because he knew I would do the same for him.

Anyway... Certainly, I'll admit it does take some time and energy to avoid working; you have to spend a fair bit of each figuring out how to survive without a steady income (at least you can do this on your own time, when and how you want to). Not to mention that you will have to go without some comforts and conveniences you may have been used to; but is that stuff really more important to you than anything else? Of course, more than anything else, it helps to have the support and camaraderie of your friends in an undertaking like staying unemployed, and that's where our hardcore community comes into this.

How Does This Relate to Hardcore?

Being a one-person economy is extremely difficult. Even if you don't work, you will still have no free time if you have to arrange all your food, all your shelter, all of your needs for yourself from scratch. But with others to work with, it becomes a lot easier. Food Not Bombs, the organization that I mentioned earlier, works so easily and smoothly because it is a group effort. Because a number of people help with obtaining the food, cooking, serving, and cleaning, it isn't that much work for any one individual, and the whole thing seems more like a friendly social event than a demanding task. The same goes for all the other ways of obtaining resources to stay unemployed—not only are they easier in groups, but you will feel less alienated from the world if you do them with others.

Imagine if the hardcore scene wasn't just a bunch of kids wearing funny clothes, practicing their dance moves and camera angles at punk shows once every couple weeks. Imagine if everyone in the hardcore community, at least those who could (because of course not everyone can), quit their jobs and used all the potential energy we have as idealistic young people to try to develop a new way of life. We could use the networks we have already set up for touring bands, distribution, etc. to support each other in our attempt to break away from the employment system. Imagine how much creative energy would be unleashed, if we all stopped exhausting ourselves for “the man” and put that energy back into our own lives! Surely, all together we would be able to make something like that work. And then we would no longer be just another subculture with our own characteristic “rebellious music” and “fashionable clothing.” We would be a fucking counterculture, a force that would work effectively against the status quo we all claim to reject—for the contents of our daily lives would, by themselves, do more to change the way the world works than our words ever could.

Does this sound difficult? It probably will be! But whether it is impossible or not can only be determined by trying it. And besides, what do we have to lose? Are our diet sodas and home entertainment systems really worth the lives we must sell away to buy them?

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.

Building Ties With Comrades In Mexico

By x379809

The Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (Authentic Labor Front or FAT) of Mexico can indeed lay claim to this title, with 50-plus years of history to back up this claim. Since 1960, FAT has won many struggles for working people in factories, helping to establish several cooperatives, and fighting to establish the first secret ballot in a union election in Mexico's history. Not only have they initiated campaigns to bring gender equality in workplaces, but also many women have occupied leadership positions within the union.

I first became aware of FAT at Pittsburgh's May Day celebration through the United Electrical, Radio and Ma-

chine Workers of America (UE), who I marched with. Speaking with the director of international relations about my recent visit to Mexico, I was encouraged to support FAT via my friends, family and contacts in Mexico. UE has been a strong supporter of FAT during the past 30

years, starting with the beginnings of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and continuing to this day. The UE/FAT relationship has resulted in many victories on both sides of the borders. During my next visit to Mexico, I made a point to visit the FAT office in Mexico City. As a gesture of support I brought a statement of solidarity from my General Membership Branch (GMB), a translated copy of our Preamble, general strike posters and a few t-shirts. I was given a tour of their offices, which had many framed letters, photos and posters from other unions worldwide.

I was instantly struck by the mural on the front wall of their union hall. In the center of this mural was Emiliano Zapata, the southern insurgent leader of Mexico's 1910 revolution. Flanked on both sides were Albert and Lucy Parsons. Directly below Zapata stood four of Mexico's organizers who were either killed or disappeared standing on farmland while ripping apart barbed-wire fencing. One of the men holds a copy of "Capital" with a picture of Karl Marx. Throughout the mural, various "angels," or the spirits of the fallen workers, hold banners inscribed with the words "Unionism without Borders." Some of them are taking aim at capitalists and politicians, with faces

of pigs and skeletons, cowering from the workers while holding bags of money. The words of August Spies, "Here you will tread upon a spark, but there, and there, and behind you and in front of you, and everywhere, flames will blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out. The ground is on fire upon which you stand," also appear paraphrased within the mural.

Not only do we share ideological heroes, but also in our composition FAT is remarkably similar to the IWW. While our Preamble states our goal is the abolition of wages and a world without capitalism, theirs states the purpose is "building a self-managed society with the direct participation of the work-

ers and civil society." Our Preamble inspires workers to be "organized, not just in everyday struggles with capitalists, but to carry on production when capitalism is overthrown." FAT declares "Self-management at work, is understood as a formula of struggle from

which the working class takes over, builds their organizations, defines their programs of control and advances in their control of production." and the goal of "becoming socially owned and managed by those who do work." In many ways FAT is the IWW's Mexican counterpart and we as a union should build connections with them. As one of the few independent labor unions in Mexico, FAT truly has lived up to its bold name.

Globally, working people are facing similar conditions such as privatization and austerity measures with increasing state violence against activists and suppression of labor rights. The parasitic capitalist class has always viewed Mexico as a source of cheap labor. A study of international capital in Mexico provides proof as to the ruthless nature of the private ownership of the means to merely survive. The cause of the 1910 revolt was back then Porfirian/American hegemony. Unions like the Casa Obrero Mundial and FAT have been fighting a continual battle from the early 20th century, survived fascistic political programs and still on their feet fighting corporate greed. With Mexico on the front lines, we should take the time and consider the struggle of our Mexican sisters and brothers, and actively support them, because workers' struggles have no borders.



Graphic: FAT

Labor/Union Challenges In Taiwan: A Delegate's Perspective



August 2001 IWW workshop at Wisteria Tea House in Taipei.

Photo: David Temple

By David Temple of the Taiwan IWW

The Taiwan initiative of the IWW has been coming to terms with the political situation in Taiwan. There is a tug-of-war here between Chinese and American influences captivating the youth of the island and distracting them from the basic problem: a paucity of good jobs, all at low pay, all without union protection.

Organizing for the One Big Union (OBU) in Taiwan has been an education since I was made a delegate in September 2013 and entrusted with the goal of starting a Regional Organizing Committee (ROC) in Asia, based in Taiwan.

With referrals from former General Secretary-Treasurer (GST) Sam, I sought out and met two young college students who were signed up by the Perth, Australia branch. In addition, I was referred to an interested education worker in northern Taiwan who referred me to another interested worker in southern Taiwan. I traveled from my central location to meet both men and issue Red Cards. In addition, I contacted an activist friend I had met 10 years earlier who introduced me to student activists that worked in his café. They were not interested in starting a union and the two activists from Perth didn't show their Red Cards. The education workers paid one month's dues and ceased contact. The organizing campaign reached a dead end.

In Taiwan, despite low wages stuck at a 16-year-old rate, overwork, and unsafe working conditions, both older and younger workers are reluctant to organize into unions. The older workers lived through a brutal 37 years of martial law from the U.S.-supported dictatorship. The younger workers grew up with neo-liberal two-party market capitalism where independent unions were restricted. The ruling class embedded sweetheart unions with special privileges as a way of controlling the work force, stifling labor unrest, and ensuring voter sympathy.

Student activism falls into two basic camps: pro-China or laissez-faire U.S. influence. There is a small group of student activists leaning towards Taiwan independence. Unionism equals radical communism because of fear-mongering from propaganda against a China takeover or U.S. anti-worker capitalism. Pro-China student activists condemn the World Trade Organization (WTO) and sweatshops but generally do not see union solidarity as a remedy.

Where does that leave the pro-union anarcho-syndicalism of the IWW in Taiwan? For many bad reasons, old and young oppressed workers in Taiwan cannot or will not make the connection that organizing themselves in their workplace is the only way to start addressing the dilemma of top-down management.

The following issues act as obstructions to union organizing in Taiwan:

1. Minimum wage is too low; there is no living wage.
2. Tipping is prohibited or collected and kept by the boss.
3. Overtime work is not compensated in family businesses; rules are not enforced.
4. Year-end bonuses are used to entrap workers into compliance with unfair

workplace conditions.

5. Only government-approved unions may be organized.

6. A workplace must have at least 30 employees to file to unionize.

7. Hooligans harass workers attempting to unionize.

8. The ex-pat worker community is transient; foreigners may not unionize or participate in public demonstrations or face deportation.

A delegate for the IWW should organize with their fellow workers in their own workplace. As a teacher of English as a Foreign Language, I am faced with the handicap of organizing a transient workforce of ex-pats who rarely stay on the job long enough to organize. Another problem I have as a delegate of the IWW in Taiwan is that I am a 60-year-old immigrant of European descent; there is prejudice and suspicion about me. Even though I speak Mandarin Chinese, I am still seen as an outsider by most Taiwanese. An organizer who is indigenous to Taiwan stands a better chance of being successful here. There are many handicaps we must overcome before a ROC can take hold in Taiwan and Asia.

It will be very difficult to succeed in promoting organizing workers in Taiwan and Asia without indigenous delegates. To address the issues inhibiting union solidarity and organizing in Taiwan, this delegate proposes to do the following:

1. Find a Taiwanese group or political party to bore into that will appreciate the goals of the IWW union organizing effort.
2. Continue promoting the OBU on the internet at <http://www.taIWWan.blogspot.tw>, a digest of worker actions in Taiwan. The site has received over 8,000 hits worldwide.
3. Continue the community Facebook page of taIWWan. We have over 800 friends supporting our efforts worldwide.
4. Post articles to local Facebook pages that will raise the consciousness of English-speaking workers here in hopes of building a support group to form a ROC.
5. Continue offering our free "How to Start Your Own Union" workshops.
6. Continue offering a free progressive lending library to the community.
7. Promote my website <http://www.readingsandridings.jimdo.com> where readers can access my proletarian creative writing and blogs, including <http://www.iww.org>.

8. Keep General Headquarters (GHQ) informed of developments in Taiwan IWW organizing and continue following up on referrals from GHQ of fellow workers in the Asian/Taiwan region.

Most importantly to our organizing campaign here is finding indigenous fellow workers willing to organize themselves and fellow workers into a union with the IWW. As it is illegal to organize a union without 30 workers in a shop and approval from the Ministry of Labor, clandestine union organizing campaigns must be stressed. Your delegate must be able to meet indigenous workers with fire and guts to improve their working conditions and compensation at the grassroots level and to grieve unfair labor practices. I believe this can be done.

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