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Incarcerated Workers' Uprising In Nebraska

By FW Chadrick, x385061

Greetings my friends. My name is Chadrick Fitzgerald, IWW membership number x385061. As I write these words, I am sitting in a cell on the Special Management Unit (SMU) gallery in Tecumseh Correctional Facility under investigation for the uprising that took place on May 10, 2015. The Nebraska Department of Correction (DOC) has been run poorly for some time; we have had a number of changes in directors and that's about it. The number of problems are too long to list but somewhere at the top of that list sits overcrowding, lack of programming, and the mistreatment of the inmates.

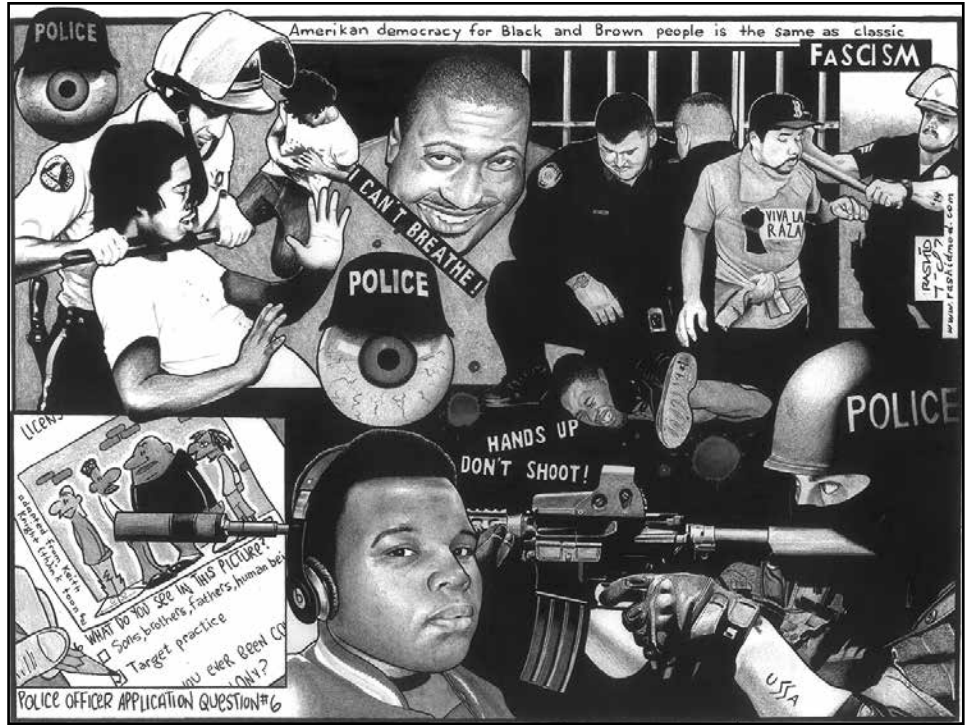
To give you an idea of how out of control it has become, prison guards themselves have sued the state of Nebraska and won because they were being abused by co-workers using racial slurs at work. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has threatened to sue because of the overcrowding and current living conditions. The inmate population has

tried many times to get programming that would help us upon release, and time and again: nothing.

There are a few jobs that pay more than \$24 per month (\$1.21 per day) and they are restricted to approximately 200 of the more than 1,000 inmates that live here. Those jobs include Cornhusker State Industries (CSI) woodshop and laundry, and a few in the kitchen. So once again a group of inmates came together to make a list of things that need to be changed. This list was to be presented to staff at 2:30 p.m. on May 10. If the prison staff refused to talk with us, then work was to stop on May 11.

At approximately 2:30 p.m., a group of about 65 inmates went to the main compound area when medical sick calls were called over the PA (public address system). When staff noticed the group, they were confronted. Seventeen staff members were trying to stop more from joining the growing group. As the list was

Continued on 8



"Hands Up Don't Shoot!"

Graphic: Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, rashidmod.com

Kansas City IWW Member Released From Prison



Keith Brown-El. Photo: Ida B Wells Coalition Against Racism and Police Brutality

By Hedy Harden

Supporters of Kansas City IWW branch member Keith Brown-El posted his bail on May 29. We are thrilled to have him back home with us. Please follow the "Free Keith Brown-El" Facebook event page for updates regarding his trial, which is set for December. A cash bond of \$5,000 was posted, and Keith is no longer eligible for a public defender. Our website <https://fundly.com/free-keith-brown-el> was set up to help raise money for an attorney.

Keith Brown-El is a dear friend to many. He is the vice chairman of Missouri Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), a member of the Kansas City IWW and the Ida B. Wells Coalition (IBWC) of Kansas City, as well as a volunteer programmer on 90.1 FM/

KKFI's "Jaws of Justice" radio program and a tenacious advocate for homeless people and people in prison. Additionally, he's on the board of the Salvation Army and active in many community causes. Keith had been imprisoned in Jackson County Detention Center since Feb. 10, 2015, for a completely bogus weapons charge.

Keith is a well-respected community leader who works tirelessly on justice initiatives and is the epitome of the type of personality that the criminal justice system in the United States should seek to produce.

After 36 years in prison, Keith was finally released in 2008 and has been off parole for several years. Keith lives in a senior citizen apartment complex where he is widely known for helping the older

residents—taking them to doctor appointments and watching out for them. He helps unload the Harvest Truck and distributes food within the apartment complex.

Keith has a great compassion for people and all living things. He is highly intelligent with a powerful passion for justice. Keith cannot sit back and do nothing when he witnesses injustice.

Keith is a valuable member of the IWW's local Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC). He understands the prison system like few others and works very hard to make a difference in the lives of Missouri prisoners. He believes that if treated humanely, offenders will eventually return to society in a better frame of mind to lead an honest life.

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Attention All Wobblies!

The 2015 Referendum is coming up and ballots will be mailed out to members' last-known home addresses by Oct. 15, 2015.

Please, mail your updated address to IWW GHQ, P.O. Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618 or send your request to GHQ@IWW.org.

Be sure to stay in good standing and make sure your delegates and branch secretaries report timely to General Headquarters to ensure that you receive these important mailings!

-IWW General Headquarters



Graphic: today.lbl.gov



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

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

Centennial Of The Armenian Genocide

This year, 2015, is the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, in which Ottoman Turks murdered 1.5 million Armenians. Adolf Hitler was inspired by this genocide and some of the Ottoman techniques, such as bringing people to their deaths in cattle cars on railroad trains. But, you may ask: What is the importance of this to the IWW?

The answer comes in listening to the words of German pastor Martin Niemöller

(1892–1984): "First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a communist. Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholic priests, and I did not speak—because I was not a Catholic priest. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak

out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak out for me."

Another answer may come from Howard Zinn. He wrote, "One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth."

**In solidarity,
Raymond S. Solomon**

Marilyn Monroe Was Exploited By Patriarchy

On May 30, 2015, I saw the first half of a movie about Marilyn Monroe, followed by a documentary about her. My initial thought:

As a child, Marilyn Monroe was in and out of foster homes. Her mother's mental illness was not understood and good medicines were not yet available. Monroe wanted to be a serious drama actress, and she eventually took courses at Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio in the hope

of changing the type of acting she did from the "dumb blond" sex symbol to a serious drama actress.

Now, I'm not anti-sex: I'm anti-patriarchy, and Marilyn Monroe (also know as Norma Jeane) was terribly exploited by the patriarchy of the film industry.

Monroe died at around the time she was becoming active in Actors' Equity—a labor union. Incidentally, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was not

murdered until he was involved with the sanitation labor union strike in Memphis, Tenn. Marilyn Monroe was exploited as a woman, as a worker, and as a disabled person. She did not get appropriate medical treatment. There was a prejudice, greatly influenced by patriarchy, which militated against a change in acting direction.

**For the OBU,
Saul B.**

Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

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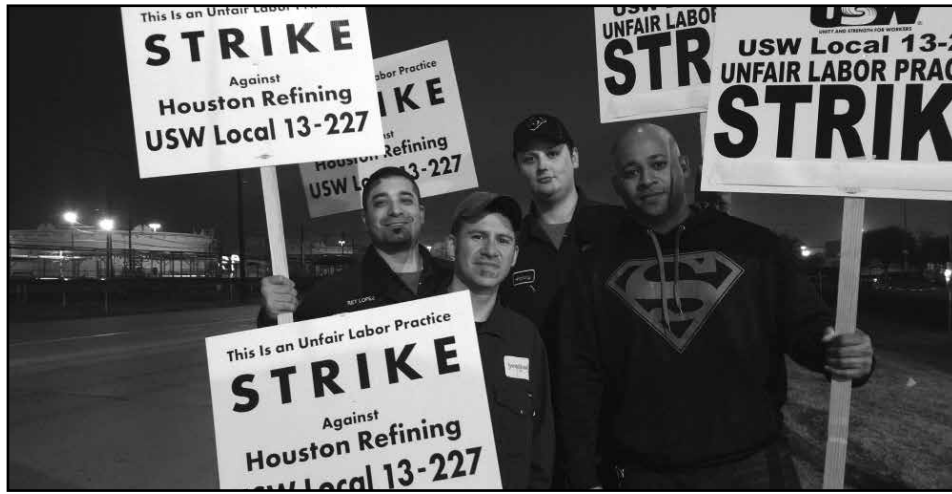
Organizing

Reflections On the Steelworkers' Strike In Texas

By Adelita Kahlo

Union power is in decay, and many unions have been resorting to more creative methods of organizing in order to remain relevant. We've seen the Democrats putting their money behind the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) Fight For \$15 in Houston and attempting to "turn Texas blue." But this dependency of unions like SEIU and the United Steelworkers (USW) on the Democratic Party means they are severely limited in what they are willing to do in the realm of tactics. This, along with union density being sharply in decline, and union power being undermined by right-to-work legislation spreading to states such as Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, means the unions are not up for waging anything close to a class struggle. Instead, unions like the USW maintain their position as representing only certain interests and timidly bargaining around them.

Texas, like other right-to-work states, has a working class that is almost entirely disconnected from their own fighting traditions. There is no real culture of worker resistance, union or not, nor is there any historical memory of fighting strikes. However, recently in Houston we have seen a few significant developments unfolding in labor, starting with the immigrant rights movement and detention center hunger and labor strikes, and then the Maximus Coffee strike and lockout at the end of 2013, as well as the ongoing Fight For \$15 "movement" and its semi-annual spectacles, and the most recent and equally significant, the USW refinery strikes. These developments are very exciting for Houston, not simply because of the lack of historical memory of struggle to draw from, but also due to the high density of industry in Houston, which is unlike most of the country. This makes Houston a critical choke point for U.S. capital and thus pivotal for workers struggle nationally.



USW Local 13-227 workers on strike in Houston.

Photo: industriall-union.org

Maximus Coffee, originally Maxwell Coffee, under current ownership has suffered a 25 to 50 percent pay cut, the removal of overtime pay, the reduction of their 401(k) plans, and a decrease in health benefits all before the strike started. Roughly 90 percent of union workers went on strike at the end of 2013, which essentially ended as a lock-out when the bosses forced the union out of the plant.

Houston's remarkably large industrial sector provides a lot of semi-skilled labor opportunities and has been instrumental in Houston's ability to float above water during the economic crisis—much better than most of the country.

When the USW strike started it was the first strike the refineries and their workers saw in 30 years. Yet the USW was unable to carry out a successful strike nationally or locally. This is due to union decline mentioned previously, but also because one-third of the oil industry is unorganized (much of it is made up of contract workers). Also, the relationship between the USW and the Obama administration impacted the overall strategy of the strike. A mere 10 percent of all union workers went on strike, and local union leaders claimed this

was part of their strategy. Overall this affected only about 20 percent of production, which is pretty insignificant, and we realized quickly that most workers had little to no information about the strike or negotiations. Locally the USW's timidity looked like a handful of workers carrying signs at each gate while being unable to block scabs from crossing, or from even standing or parking on company property. The international union didn't even use their massive treasury to support their striking members. It was clear that the USW was not in a position to wage a political struggle against oil because they are beholden to the ruling party.

At the time that the refinery strikes started in Houston, the local IWW had been going through a new incarnation. It has been very difficult to organize an active IWW local, largely due to the low morale in Houston around workplace struggle as well as due to a small (yet growing) Left. The local not having any real organizing experience together meant that disagreement over orientation to the strike diminished our ability to intervene on a more coordinated level. The disagreement generally fell into the difference between passive and active support. Those who

were in favor of a more passive approach would participate in picket duty and coordinate with USW staffers to bring beverages and to plan some disruptive actions that could not be associated with the USW nor their membership. There was also an assumption that because of the political conservativeness of the workers there would be no basis to fight together.

Those looking to participate in more active forms of support wanted to prioritize having conversations with the rank and file, relationship building, learning about conditions in the plants, trying to gauge the mood of the strikers, and most importantly trying to find a way to practically throw down with workers instead of symbolic solidarity consisting of holding signs and such. The pivot of this approach was meeting one worker that I will call Trey. Trey was a shop steward and pro-union, yet he was at the same time critical of the union and its tameness in regards to strategy and tactics. He was a self-proclaimed conservative, yet he was open to principled political debate and the idea of a cross-industry network that used direct action. It was his openness to other approaches and his relationship to the rank and file that allowed us to explore building an independent struggle that could put the rank and file in control of their own strike. This would be the basis for workers of different political stripes to come together on practical terms, leaving open the potential for political unity to emerge from concrete experiences.

One of the most exciting potentials to emerge from our relationship with Trey was the discovery that Madicorp was providing temporary workers and other strike-breaking resources (i.e. security) to the refineries. This is the same Madicorp that was contracted to send security forces to Ferguson, Mo., to help put down the rebellion. At the time Ferguson was still on everyone's minds, and in Houston we had been involved in organizing Ferguson solidarity actions. Through this we helped solidify a majority black, anti-police group that was beginning to transition into community organizing efforts. Many of these Ferguson militants came out to the picket lines to engage with and support the rank-and-file workers. Because of the discovery of Madicorp's involvement in both strike-breaking and in putting down an uprising in Ferguson, there was a potential to concretely link the black struggle to the industrial workers' struggle: Madicorp could be a target for both USW rank and file as well as Ferguson militants. Yet, because of our inability to coordinate within the IWW we were unable to respond to the moment, and the moment passed us by.

As Wobblies we are thinking and rethinking workers' struggles constantly. As of now there is no real workers struggle, only moments. The potential that emerged from the USW refinery workers strike could have meant a shift in what kinds of activity the IWW participates in locally and nationally. As of now the majority of active Wobblies are involved in organizing individual workplaces. And while workplace organizing is undoubtedly important, we are not always in a position to provoke struggle. So we are also thinking about other ways to organize. Along with workplace committees, we are interested in experimenting with solidarity networks, general milieu-building, collaboration with groups, strike intervention, and so on, and the potential for engaging in strike intervention that overlaps with black struggle could have put a lot of these strategies to test. Yet now that there seems to be a sustained black movement emerging in the United States, we believe the potentiality for overlapping sectional struggles will emerge.

This piece was originally published on <http://unityandstruggle.org>. It was reprinted with permission from the author.

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.

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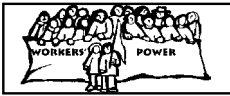
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Building Workers' Power In The United Kingdom

By New Syndicalist

A few months ago New Syndicalist (a group of Wobblies from the United Kingdom writing about worker-led, anti-capitalist theory and strategy) was approached by the Workers' Power column with a request to write a reflective piece on the recent growth of the IWW in the United Kingdom. People who have been following our online media presence will know that the U.K. IWW hit an important milestone this year—exceeding 1,000 members. This was celebrated recently at our annual conference in Bradford, England. An older member recalled attending the 2005 conference in the same city that had just seven members in attendance. In 2015 most branch delegations were larger.

We have seen fantastic growth over the past decade, particularly in the case of some of our larger branches that now have between 100 to 300 members. What is it like to have branches of this size and how did they get built? These were the key questions posed to us. These are obviously very big questions and have by no means simple answers, particularly in terms of attempting to represent the dedicated and patient work of IWW organizers across the United Kingdom over the past 10 years. Nonetheless, we did put our heads together at New Syndicalist and decided to focus on what we thought were the five most important factors in helping to grow our branches in the North (where we are based), some of which have doubled in size over the last year.

The list is by no means exhaustive, and some more experienced Wobbs may feel we may be trying to teach them to “suck eggs” here as they will recognize many fundamental concepts within our existing organizer training program. We nonetheless present them in the hope of solidarity, shared dialogue and spirited debate.

Training

Monitoring the quality of your membership is as important as (if not more than) keeping tabs on the quantity of red cards being taken out; in an ideal world, paper membership would make up a very small portion of overall membership! Regular training allows us to turn every red card holder into an active, participating member. Participation is a difficult thing to track—aside from clear-cut measures like attendance at branch meetings and rate of reply to emails, we're often left relying on gut feelings about how connected to the union our membership is feeling. There are, however, things we can do to keep our union connected.

Running regular trainings is a really good way of keeping union culture healthy. Formal training like the IWW's Organizer Training 101 and union representative training allow members to collaborate in a way that branch meetings don't. It gives people practical skills that, when applied,

reinforce the sense of connection to the IWW and to our broader struggle.

Informal training, like teaching people about the IWW, current campaigns, and the nuts and bolts of running a union, is just as important. Whether members are encouraged to take minutes, understand motions, chair meetings, or just share knowledge, contributing to the culture of the union is what gives our branches strength. In the Sheffield IWW we've started running a mentoring scheme (see below) for new members, pairing them up with experienced Wobbs who work in their industry. By taking this lower intensity, longitudinal approach to training, we bump up our paper membership into fully fledged Wobblies.

Growing your branch internally means that the die-hard Wobbs can step aside and avoid burning out, knowing full well that they'll be replaced by someone competent. It also means that people are more likely to take on roles if they know there are other people around to help if things get tough. We've all seen bottlenecks and we know that they're not healthy.

In sum, pushing internal growth with training is essential for diversifying, decentralizing, and steadily building union culture.

Striking a balance

Advocates of solidarity or direct action unionism frequently contrast the organizing methods and tactics that build confidence and solidarity on the shop floor with the legalistic, top-down approaches allowed through labor law. It is true that such a division exists in organizing, and our preference as Wobblies is always to push campaigns into militancy and through means that collectively empower the workforce. Nonetheless we have found a certain degree of flexibility in our organizing approaches that do not necessarily cast the above as a simple either/or route for growing campaigns. This is particularly the case where we have built campaigns in response to workplace grievances and unfair dismissals.

Taking an employer to tribunal is both costly and incredibly risky in the United Kingdom. Fees can range from £300 to over £1,000 (GPB) (or approximately \$467 to \$1,556 [USD])—a pro-business measure introduced by the recent government due to the growing success of workers winning compensation through this route—and success rates are slim. As a result, when it comes to the opening stages of any grievance, much case work effectively relies on bluffing employers when they first meet with a union rep, playing on their fears of litigation, and, occasionally, their lack of confidence with employment law. A healthy threat of direct action gives you a bit more to bring to the table and allows a divergence from that legalistic path should it reach unsatisfactory limits.

This legal shell also allows us to build



IWW red cards. Photo: IWW Sheffield (UK) Branch

credibility with employers when and if we need it. Employers will sit down and negotiate with accredited union reps and branch officers—even though these distinctions in the IWW are largely functional—while refusing to talk to picketers and protesters. An impromptu phone call from the union's national secretary has likewise proved an important tactic in ramping up the pressure on an uncooperative boss in this strange game of smoke and mirrors.

Ultimately, is it going to win the war? No. Is it really our preferred tactic? No. But it does help secure a few battles along the way, and with a solid base of social mapping and committee building it can help secure victories for some of the toughest campaigns.

Mentoring

As previously mentioned, the Sheffield IWW runs a mentoring program where all new members are paired up with a more experienced fellow worker, ideally one who works in the same industry.

The purpose of the mentor is to provide a source of organizing advice to new members and to help them familiarize themselves with the workings of the IWW. The mentor keeps the new Wob informed of upcoming union events and is meant to encourage them to gradually take on a more active role in the union by moving up a checklist of activities (called “The Wobbly Ladder”).

The principle is that this develops new organizers in the spirit of replacing ourselves, and reduces membership turnover. It also encourages more communication and cooperation between Wobbs in the same industry, contributing to the formation of industrial organizing committees and workplace-specific campaigns.

So is it working? It's a bit early to say, but in the six months since the program was created, we haven't had any mentored members drop out, and we now have former mentees mentoring new members. Two new members and mentees are also now active members of a newly-founded education workers' organizing committee, something that was facilitated by the connections established through the scheme (note: feel free to contact the Sheffield IWW for more info about mentoring and to see the graphic designs of the mentor and new member packs).

Outreach

In the last year we have been trying to expand our branch outreach. In the past a lot of our outreach activities have been focused on the city center—for example, holding stalls on the weekend, attending protests and rallies, or distributing our literature in central venues. However, due to this, we have missed out on a lot of recruitment opportunities in communities and industries where workers live and work outside the commercial centers.

We initiated our new outreach project by physically mapping out the whole of our potential recruitment area in Sheffield. Having understood the scale of the poten-

tial activity that could go on in this space, we then divided our map into manageable chunks to be assigned to individuals or committees of organizers. These areas are typically based on geographical features, such as residences forming their own distinct neighborhoods, major industries, or pre-existing homogeneous communities.

Organizers or committees then carry out further research into their assigned areas to understand the economic activity, social life, and other features of these communities. This is done with the aim of tailoring appropriate outreach activities to the needs of these particular areas. Typically, organizers are drawn from the neighborhoods they live in, so aspects of these will already be known.

Volunteers are provided with a support handbook that helps guide their outreach activities. This begins with preliminary research into “passive” outreach activities, such as leafleting and touching base in social hubs, and building toward our goal of active and visible outreach in the form of public meetings and training sessions in those neighborhoods.

Part of the drive behind this project was a desire to encourage diversity in our branch membership. It was also informed by the growing realization that many of the largest industries in the North, including so-called “pinchpoint” targets, draw their workforces largely from local neighborhoods outside the commercial centers. Our conversations with members from the Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (SAC, the syndicalist union in Sweden) on their “travelling organizer” model also provided many useful ideas and approaches. A recent book from AK Press, however, on the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) Defence Committees in 1930s Barcelona, proved a particularly inspirational example of how geographical and community-based outreach has the potential to assist mass mobilization of industrial unions.

Media

We're lucky enough to have some very technically-skilled fellow workers in the Sheffield branch. We've had high-quality video coverage of our main public campaigns this year. These videos have really helped provide a concise, accessible introduction to the IWW and our current campaigns for members of the public who find us on Facebook or bump into us on the street. When we've run fundraisers or stalls we always have one of the videos playing. They have become part of the union culture very quickly, and serve as proud reminders of all the good work we've done.

We don't use social media in any unique way, but it is worth noting that our online support has been growing very steadily for the last year. We use social media to publish every public event and every bit of branch news, as well as links to other groups in the United Kingdom who share our vision for a better society. It means that even when it feels like things aren't particularly busy (like when we don't have an active public campaign), we're letting everyone know that we're still working away on IWW projects, such as New Syndicalist.

During our last public campaign we had a press officer tasked with interacting with local radio and television, national newspapers and other major media outlets. It paid off brilliantly. We ended up getting coverage in *The Telegraph*, *Pink News* and a load of other newspapers that we frankly didn't expect to be interested in such a small union in a small city like Sheffield.

New Syndicalist is a group of Wobblies from the UK writing about worker-led, anti-capitalist theory and strategy. They keep a blog at <http://newsyndicalist.org>.

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Note: The “Women Workers’ History” comic is taking a break for this issue. Stay tuned for #84 in September!

Wobbly & North American News



ILWU Local 10 marching on May Day in Oakland, Calif. Photo: cswpdx.files.wordpress.com

Dockworkers Protest Police Brutality

By John Kalwaic

Some dockworkers' unions have taken a stand against police brutality in the United States. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in Oakland, Calif., held a strike against police brutality and to express the International Dockworkers Council's (IDC) support for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. On May 1, 2015, International Workers' Day, the ILWU Local 10, which represents dockworkers and ferry workers in Oakland, went on a one-day strike, shutting down the Port of Oakland to protest the many cases of African-Americans being killed unjustly by the police. The police killings of Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Tony Robinson, Freddie Grey and many others has spread protest, outrage and riots in the United States.

ILWU Local 10 has taken on many different issues in the past. They went on strike for a day in 2010 to protest the killing of Oscar Grant by a Security Guard in the Oakland Metro and they shut down the Port of Oakland for a day in 2011 in support of public workers in Wisconsin who had been stripped of their collective bargaining rights. On May Day, ILWU Local 10, Local 34, Local 61 and Local 6

marched together with the Inland Boatman's Union and shut down all the ports in Oakland. The march was comprised of a number of activist groups and at times ranged from 800 to 2,000 people. Later, on May 12, the Police Officer Association (POA) in Oakland attacked the ILWU Local 10 as well as the other unions affiliated with the San Francisco Labor Council for "alienating potential allies." The ILWU defended its position against the POA stating that its membership had voted to exclude the POA in protest of unjust killings by the police.

Another case of dockworkers taking this kind of stand was the IDC, which represents many dockworkers unions around the world, coming out in support of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has been in prison now for nearly 30 years after being accused and framed for the killing of police officer Danny Falkner. Mumia Abu-Jamal's health has been failing recently due to his diabetic state and the prison's refusal to give him proper nutrition or care. The IDC called on the prison to give Mumia proper care, and also called for his freedom.

With files from <http://www.48hills.org> and <http://www.ilwu.org>.

Obituary

Farewell Fellow Worker Doug Smith

By x331980

Doug Smith, of the Whatcom-Skagit General Membership Branch (GMB) in Bellingham, Wash., died peacefully on June 3, 2015. He was only 56 years old. Fellow Worker (FW) Doug was born in 1958 and grew up in Pullman, Wash.. He moved to Bellingham when he was 20. Doug joined the IWW in early 1981, when Seattle GMB delegate Bob Markholt came to town to speak to a crowd at the Fairhaven Cooperative Flour Mill. At the time there was only one Wob in town. Doug was the first person in line to take out a red card that night, and became member number x332390 in Industrial Union 450. On his membership card he listed his occupation as "tramp printer." He was one of the 20 original charter members of the Bellingham GMB a couple of months later. He was a self-taught offset press operator and worked at Blackberry Cooperative Press, an anarchist print collective and IWW shop. Doug also played bass in the fantastic local rock band called Radio Free Lynden with several other Wobs, and served as the delegate for both Wobbly shops.

In the 1980s, Doug was passionately committed to fighting against the murderous U.S. policy in Central America. He was active in the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador and in Nicaraguan solidarity groups. He helped raise funds to purchase an ambulance and send it to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front rebels, and organized support and funds to assist with a rural hydroelectric project in San José de Bocay, Nicaragua, where his friend Ben Linder would be assassinated in 1987 by Contras. Doug's subsequent trip to Nicaragua was a highlight of his life, and a frequent subject of conversation. Doug worked tirelessly against injustice and exploitation here at home, and was, for a time, active in Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. He once told Jackson to his face that he (Jackson) needed to be more radical and less subservient to the Democratic Party. He worked



Doug Smith. Photo: Smith family

in support of virtually every labor struggle that came along in the 1980s and 1990s.

After the demise of the print collective and the breakup of the band, Doug attended Whatcom Community College and worked in the union print shop at Western Washington University. He moved to the San Francisco area around 2000 and eventually became a shop steward in an Allied Printing Trades commercial print shop. Doug developed serious heart problems and eventually became too disabled to hold down steady work, so he moved back home to Bellingham around 2005. He participated in the Occupy movement. Unable to work, Doug was homeless for a couple of years until mid-2014. In September 2014 Doug was one of the first of the older generation of Wobs to re-join the IWW and help get the new Whatcom-Skagit General Membership Branch off the ground. He participated in boycott pickets on behalf of the Familias Unidas por la Justicia farm workers union into late 2014, and many other labor struggles. Sadly, Doug's health problems caught up with him, and he could not remain very active in the branch. FW Doug Smith died a paid-up and proud member of the IWW. Doug's smile and friendship will be missed by his friends and fellow workers in Bellingham and Seattle.

Minimum Wage Laws Bring Opportunities For Direct Action

By Chelsea

"I don't know who you people are!" barked Joe, the strip club owner, to the group of Wobblies gathered in his office. "Why don't you all go flip burgers!"

Despite his confrontational and disrespectful language, typical of how he often spoke to his employees, Joe gave in to the Seattle IWW's demands within hours.

Joe is no stranger to scandal; he was a former disc jockey (DJ) at another Seattle strip club that was shut down for prostitution and racketeering, and he was rumored to have had mafia connections. As a boss, Joe is abhorrent, showing no respect or concern for the safety of his club's servers or dancers. Employees had horror stories of working around bodily fluids and other filth with no safety procedures, of frequent illness with no health benefits or sick leave, and of dancers being stalked and sexually assaulted at the club. Added to this is the abusive language of management, as well as shady bookkeeping. Managers told bartenders and servers not to report tips. Instead, managers were reporting employee tips as \$5 per week.

On April 1, the Seattle minimum wage went up to \$11 per hour (the first step in a process towards a \$15 per hour minimum wage, which won't go into effect for two to six years). But two weeks later, Joe was

still paying his servers the old minimum wage of \$9.47. When Alyssa, a server at the club, asked Joe about when they could expect a wage increase, she was fired. Server Lindsay, fed up with Joe's hostility whenever she asked about wages, put in her two weeks' notice but was promptly fired. "You're beneath this job," Joe told her.

Unfortunately for Joe, Lindsay is in the IWW. After meeting with the Seattle General Organizing Committee, Lindsay and Alyssa began an escalation plan. The first step was issuing a simple letter to Joe outlining what they wanted. Neither wanted their jobs back, just the amount owed to them from the hours worked after April 1—when they should have started making \$11 per hour. Interestingly, after Lindsay and Alyssa left, Joe finally started paying workers the full \$11, likely due to the attention they brought to the issue. But that's not good enough. Workers were due \$11 an hour starting April 1, not whenever the bosses felt like it. Back pay was owed.

Lindsay and Alyssa walked confidently into Joe's office to deliver the letter followed by a four-person team. One person was video recording the action. Lindsay handed Joe their letter and summarized their demands. Joe initially denied not paying them the new wage, but the two workers held firm that they had pay stubs

to prove it. Joe quickly lost his cool, yelling at everyone, but his immature jabs were drowned out by the clapping of the group as they proceeded out of the office. The mission was accomplished; the letter was delivered, and Joe got a glimpse of the support that Lindsay and Alyssa had. The letter, while brief and cordial, ended with a vague threat of further action: "before we lose our good cheer."

Further actions were already being planned. Surely it would take a lot to make a stubborn, misogynistic boss like Joe cave into the demands of two young waitresses. Joe called Lindsay later that evening, threatening to report them to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for not reporting tips (which he had told them not to do) and calling her a "fucking little snot," but, surprisingly, he agreed to pay up. A few days later, Lindsay and Alyssa both had the money they demanded. Even better, Joe paid all his other employees back wages as well.

This victory, though relatively small, shows that for all of the political posturing around raising the minimum wage, it is direct action that gets the goods. Lindsay and Alyssa had legal avenues to try, but any complaints to the city could take months to process, and Joe technically had a year to comply with the new wage increase once notified of a complaint. Instead, these workers had their money within days by demanding it themselves with the support of their union. Minimum wage legislation is a great step, but it must be enforced on the shop floor through workers acting in solidarity.



Graphic: anarchosyndikalismus.org

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Reviews

Books For A Renewed American Workers' Movement:

By Brandon Oliver

This is the first in a series that will focus on three books that I think are particularly useful to reviving a fighting labor movement in the United States. They are: "The Blue Eagle at Work: Reclaiming Democratic Rights in the American Workplace" by Charles Morris, 2005; "Reviving the Strike" by Joe Burns, 2011; and "Out of the Jungle: Jimmy Hoffa and the Remaking of the American Working Class" by Thaddeus Russell, 2001. I hope to convince every labor radical and IWW branch to keep these in their library, but more importantly I hope that we in the IWW can take lessons from these books and make them part of our program.

—Life Long Wobbly

Morris, Charles. *The Blue Eagle at Work: Reclaiming Democratic Rights in the American Workplace*. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2004. Hardcover, 328 pages, \$45.55.

If you're like me, the first question you'll have about this book is about the boring title. What does it even mean? "Blue Eagle at Work"? Why not "Black Cat on Strike"? In fact, this title caused me to overlook this book for a long time in favor of flashier books about struggles taking place far away. When I finally got around to reading it, I found myself full of new thoughts about what a renewed workers movement could look like in the United States.

The author Charles Morris is a practicing labor lawyer with several decades of experience, and his book is a lengthy explanation focusing on a close reading of U.S. labor law. I know it sounds boring, but bear with me a little longer. According to Morris, U.S. labor law has always recognized members-only unionism (also called "minority unionism"). It may be more accurate to say that members-only unionism was a common practice, which was legally recognized in the 1930s and 1940s, and was never prohibited after. The landscape of the 1930s and 1940s, in which workers were generally free to join one union or another, or none at all, and in which unions were only responsible to the workers who freely chose to join them, sounds like the pluralist set-up in some European countries such as Spain that get labor intellectuals such as Staughton Lynd so excited (more about that later).

As Morris describes members-only unionism, it is based on voluntary membership, and does not rely on National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)-recognized exclusive representation (which recognizes exactly one union as the representative of an entire bargaining unit) and mandatory membership (whether through the dues checkoff or other means). According to Morris, this form of organizing is enshrined in the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), and there is no legal reason why it would not still be a protected form of concerted activity. Although it may have been considered "pre-majority" organizing in 1935, intended to lead to a stable, mature, majority union organization, there is no legal requirement that a minority union must take any specific steps towards majority status (such as an NLRB election).

This seems promising for the narrative of "solidarity unionism," which we tell ourselves can lead to permanent, stable workplace organizations that do not rely on recognition or legitimacy from companies or the government. In an interview published by *Jacobin* magazine, Staughton Lynd does a good job of explaining the pitfalls of unionism based on exclusive representation contracts, mandatory membership, and the no-strike clause and management prerogative clauses that come from the first two:

The critical elements of [the post-1935] model are: exclusive representation of

a bargaining unit by a single union; the dues checkoff, whereby the employer deducts dues for the union from the paycheck of every member of the bargaining unit; a clause prohibiting strikes and slowdowns for the duration of the contract; and a "management prerogatives" clause giving the employer the right to make investment decisions unilaterally. In combination, these clauses in the typical contract give the employer the right to close the plant and prevent the workers from doing anything about it. So long as collective bargaining agreements conform to this template, the election of reformers—an Arnold Miller, an Ed Sadlowski, a Ron Carey, a John Sweeney, or a Rich Trumka—will not bring about fundamental change.

Yet, a form of unionism that does not rely on exclusive representation or mandatory membership seems so distant from our world of absentee, dues-bloated unions and raiding over bargaining units; we might as well just daydream about socialism. The question is, if the government never changed labor law to exclusive representation and mandatory membership, how did we get from there to here? Morris tells us that when the NLRA was developed in the early-to-mid 1930s, members-only non-majority unionism was a common practice; according to contemporary research it represented the majority of contracts signed before World War II. Morris argues that the NLRB election process and elections that allowed for exclusive representation rights, especially combined with dues checkoff, quickly became "addictive" (his word) for union bureaucrats who realized that it was a much quicker way to rapidly add a dues base and secure that dues base against competing unions.



Passage of the NLRA in *The New York Times*, July 6, 1935. Graphic: nlr.gov

The narrative here is compelling, but Morris does not draw any theoretical conclusions. This deserves much more attention, but I think that there is an important theoretical point here. There are three classic revolutionary positions about unions, which can be summarized as:

1. Syndicalist: We need to replace the hierarchical, pro-business unions with directly democratic, anti-capitalist ones;

2. Left communist: All unions, after a certain period, by having to represent the "average," non-revolutionary worker and accept compromise, have had to make their peace with capitalism and end up defending it;

3. Trotskyist: Unions are genuine organizations of the working class but with leaders who represent and defend capitalist interests, who must be replaced by revolutionary leaders.

I think all of these positions have some validity, but also recognize that they come from before 1935, that is, before the NLRA, before exclusive representation and mandatory membership became the model for unionism in the United States, and brought



CIO organizing poster, circa 1935. Graphic: nlr.gov

no-strike clauses and management rights clauses with them. The problem with all three of these positions, or at least the caricature that they have become when upheld by modern leftists, is that they are very black-and-white, and almost magical in their lack of nuance—they are certainly not materialist. What Morris' narrative provides is a story of precise steps that pro-business union leaders were able to take, to completely remove the union from the control, financial and otherwise, of the membership and make it a pillar of capitalism. Of course these pro-business leaders did not act alone—their path was cleared by the ruling class guiding them. I think it can be shown that in every western capitalist country there has been a process of stabilization that involved the government, capitalists, and union leaders working together to create a situation where the unions were completely removed from the control of the members. This is how Joe Burns, in "Reviving the Strike," was able to quote so many conservative union leaders talking about the importance of retaining the strike weapon and independence from the government in language that would never be used today even by "liberal" union leaders. Those conservative union leaders came from before the period when unions were removed from membership control. They may have been conservative, but they were a reflection of a conservative sector of the working class—one that was nevertheless clear about the effectiveness of the strike weapon.

In the United States, the recipe for removing membership control was exclusive bargaining and mandatory membership. In many European countries, such as Spain, it has been done by subsidies from the government and corporations, allowing unions to still have voluntary membership without challenging or changing the overall functioning of the system. When Staughton Lynd gets so excited about the voluntary membership in Spain, and the relative plethora of minority unions there, he somehow avoids pointing out that the capitalist state nevertheless operates a stable labor system there. The reason is, almost all of the minority unions receive subsidies, and their goal is to take market share from the majority unions to receive bigger subsidies—not to challenge the "union-industrial complex," as one small radical union puts it (or "empresas de servicios sindicales" in Spanish).

In other words, if we want to be materialists, then let's be materialists. That means following the money. It's too easy to say, in vague terms, that the unions have left the control of the workers and become tools of capital and the state—or else that the unions are and always have been genuine workers' organizations with bad leadership. Let's go further. We can see, if we take a step back, a nearly universal process, where capital, the state, and the trade union bureaucrats work hard to remove the financing of the union from

the hands of the workers, or to remove the ability of the workers to stop financing one union and start financing another. It is done by different methods in different countries and periods, and it is not always fully complete, but it is unmistakably a general trend.

As I said, though, this deserves more detail another time. Let's return to the book. Although he unwittingly provides insight into how unions got to be what they are today, Morris is not a radical. He is a "New Deal Democrat," of the sort that one thought disappeared at least two generations ago. The sincerity of his New Deal politics shows both how low the modern Democratic Party has fallen, as well as how much of what passes for radical thought today is barely New Deal-ism, 80 years too late. For example, Morris talks about "industrial democracy"—a term that today is only used by radicals as shorthand for a post-capitalist society. Morris, however, uses it in the same way that New York Senator Robert F. Wagner did in the late 1920s. "Industrial democracy" for Morris or Wagner does not mean workers' control over production any more than political democracy means workers' control over society. For Wagner and Morris, industrial democracy is a system of power-sharing between classes in the plant and the company, complete with checks and balances, just as political democracy is a system of power-sharing between classes in the larger society. For Morris, the tragedy of the American labor law regime seems to be that it missed the chance for the sort of workplace representation that was the norm in post-World War II Germany and Western Europe generally.

But nobody would dispute the quagmire that American labor is in, or the bankruptcy of the laws governing it. The question is, how can American workers break the shackles, or perhaps how can they organize in a way that avoids the shackles altogether?

Here again I want to point out Joe Burns' excellent "Reviving the Strike" along with Thaddeus Russell's "Out of the Jungle." In fact, I would recommend reading all three of these books back-to-back-to-back. Morris' book gives primers on left-hand jabbing while Burns' is a lesson on right-hand knock-out swings. Burns shows us how working people can wage large-scale struggles against capital and win, avoiding the losing tactics of the past 70 years, and inspire hundreds of thousands, even millions of new workers to form workplace organizations. Morris gives a convincing schema for how those millions of workers could control their organizations in the day-to-day, without relying on the trap of NLRB elections, or contracts with mandatory membership and dues checkoff clauses. Along with this, Russell reminds us that working people under capitalism are not concerned with making the system run smoothly, and will not fight for that. They want more of the good things in life, and any labor movement that wants to have a chance of inspiring allegiance by the thousands has to prove that it is fighting for a materially better existence, not for a well-dressed capitalism (however liberal the dressings are).

In the scenario Morris outlines, a new type of union could form based on a workplace committee and at some point simply declare its existence as a union (either quietly, to other workers, or out loud, to the boss) without bothering with an NLRB election. He also confirms that NLRA Section 7(a), protecting concerted activity, would offer the very modest legal protections of the NLRB to such workers. So far, most of my fellow workers in the IWW will be with me—we have seen this before, plenty of times, since the IWW Starbucks Workers Union (SWU) started in 2004.

Continued on next page

Reviews

New IW Review Series Explores “The Blue Eagle At Work”

Continued from previous page

By the way, the timing is interesting here, since Morris’ book was released in 2005, just around the same time that the SWU in Manhattan withdrew its NLRB election petition in favor of solidarity unionism. I think this switch by the SWU wasn’t the only thing that brought the IWW on the solidarity unionism track, but it was something of a watershed, and the idea became much more popular afterwards.

We have much less confidence about what comes next.

According to Morris, such an organization would have a few more legal protections, which, modest as they may be, have yet to be systematically and strategically used by an organization such as ours. First of all, it could negotiate and make agreements directly with the employer on behalf of its members (without having to announce ahead of time who those members are). Second, it could exercise Weingarten Rights, which guarantee a right to have a shop steward present during potentially disciplinary meetings with management.

The negotiation power of a members-only, non-mandatory union (MONMU, the technical description of this kind of organization), might seem limited. But that is only in the abstract. Returning to

Burns, negotiation power is only as limited as the union’s will to really strike and its ability to convince the workforce to do so. Anyways, a MONMU could sign an agreement covering whichever workers voluntarily join it, which could have two effects: it could convince more workers to join, or it could have the employer extend those conditions across the workplace for the ease of simplicity. Both would be victories.

The Weingarten argument is more interesting. As mentioned previously, Weingarten means you have a right to have a shop steward present with you at potentially disciplinary meetings. The courts have recently interpreted this to only apply if you have a union, and then it only gives you a right to bring your shop steward, not anyone else. For a long time it meant simply that you could have a co-worker present with you at a potentially disciplinary meeting, and applied whether or not you had a union. According to Morris, that recent change from the courts could actually spur on MONMU organizing. Imagine a MONMU that has 20 members out of 100 workers, but only has two or three shop stewards and are therefore the only members of the union known to management. The union has “instant membership” that the shop

stewards can give to workers on the shop floor. If a worker is called to a potentially disciplinary meeting, even if they aren’t yet a member, they say they want the shop steward—the boss has no way to know if the worker is a member, the steward gives the worker instant membership, and the steward has the right to be there.

This is a good sketch of how a different type of union could form a permanent, sustained, militant workplace organization in non-union workplaces. If there’s a weak part to Morris’ book, it’s this: I would have liked to see more consideration of how a fighting organization could operate within partially-organized industries as well. There are plenty of workplaces and industries with one union that does nothing, and where an independent organization could accomplish a lot to change things. Some of these workplaces have two-tier contracts, where “B card” union members are exploited by the union; some allow temp workers who are not represented; and there are some industries, such as rail, where there are multiple competing unions. Railroad Workers United is a great example of the kind of independent organization we can form in these situations, but it would have been nice to see more information about how these independent

organizations can conquer a right to exist within the workplace, in the day-to-day. So, the right to negotiate, the right to be present at disciplinary meetings—these are modest things and will not inspire tens or hundreds of thousands of workers to join new (old) types of unions. It is mass struggles, which win important gains, that will do that, as Burns points out, and only if these struggles win a better life, as Russell reminds us. What Morris usefully does is to show that there is a legal basis for a different type of union to exist in the day-to-day without the crippling drugs of NLRB elections, exclusive representation clauses, and mandatory membership. A different type of union can fight, it can win, and it can continue to exist without necessarily going down the same route as the existing ones.

But none of that will happen by magic. For any of this to happen, we as workers have to make it happen, as we make everything else happen. We in the IWW can play our part, but we have to consciously and democratically incorporate these lessons into our official strategy and transform them from ideas into reality. I don’t see anyone else who will.

This piece was originally published at <http://lifelongwobbly.com>.

Uncovering The Little-Known Life Of Frank Little

Stead, Arnold. *Always on Strike: Frank Little and the Western Wobblies*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014. Paperback, 220 pages, \$16.

Reviewed by Juan Conatz

Among the list of legendary figures of the historical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Frank Little stands out as one of its most tragic figures. Although known more than some others, such as Vincent St. John, Matilda Rabinowitz or Frank Cedervall, he didn’t leave behind a cultural legacy like fellow martyr Joe Hill. Nor did he live long enough to write a memoir, like Ralph Chaplin. We remember Little mostly as a victim; a victim of wartime hysteria and anti-union violence. Secondly, we might remember him for being biracial, the son of a white Quaker husband and Cherokee wife. But his activities as a member and organizer for the IWW are mostly little known.

“Always on Strike: Frank Little and the Western Wobblies” by Arnold Stead aims to change this. Published by the International Socialist Organization-affiliated Haymarket Books, it is the only book-length work on Frank Little. Although relatively short, it does offer some information that is hard to find elsewhere.

Overall a sympathetic account of both Little and the Wobblies, much of the book covers territory previously incorporated in other histories of the IWW. The IWW’s efforts in the Western United States, its mixed opposition to World War I, and the repression it faced during the first Red Scare, are all given ample room.

The author also concerns himself with refuting certain myths about the IWW. Whether from hostile historians, foaming-at-the-mouth-press, or friendly, if condescending, writers, Stead defends the union, its Western sections in particular, from a number of slurs, assumptions of motivation and unhelpful categorizations.

The best part of “Always on Strike” is the information and summary of the nearly forgotten 1913 ore workers strike in Northern Minnesota. Mostly crowded out, for some reason, by the failed 1916 Mesabi Range strike, I had personally never heard of the event. The author acknowledges the strike’s almost ignored status:

In 1913, Frank Little led an ore dock-workers strike that has been all but

ignored by history. Even historians of the IWW like Philip S. Foner, Joseph R. Conlin, and Patrick Renshaw make no mention of the 1913 conflict; nor does Big Bill Haywood’s autobiography. Melvyn Dubofsky briefly mentions Little being kidnapped and rescued but does not deal with the strike’s contribution to a major labor offensive in the northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan mining area.

There are also some useful accounts of the Agricultural Workers Organization (AWO). The AWO was a hugely important part of the IWW around that period and was arguably its most successful attempt at sustainable organizing. It changed the way the union used delegates and took in dues. It apparently abandoned the prevailing pacifism in the organization in favor of militant self-defense, and brought conflict in the union over what “industrial unionism” meant, or if it was actually important at all. Despite this, there are currently no book-length treatments of the AWO. Most histories that partially focus on the AWO are brief and a bit superficial, so the author’s inclusion of it as a topic is valuable.

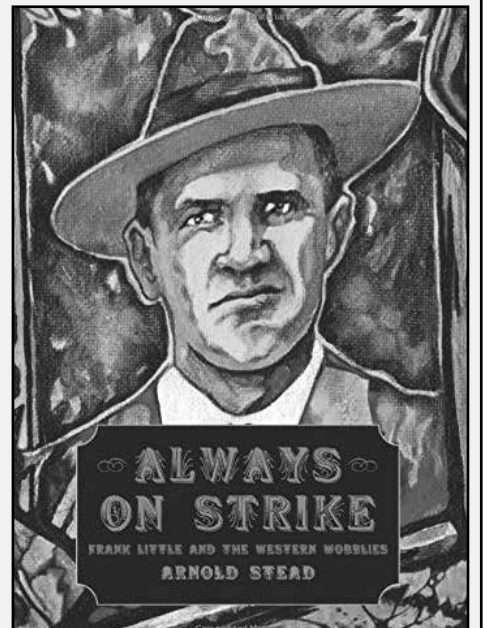
Little was vehemently anti-war, and the descriptions of the IWW’s wrangling over whether to oppose and how to oppose World War I are interesting. There are a number of authors, even ones friendly to the IWW like Staughton Lynd and Eric Chester, who have claimed that the IWW did not oppose World War I. This is not true. It passed resolutions against the war and published material that was anti-war and anti-nationalist in nature. The IWW did formally oppose World War I, but never came to an agreement on what it meant to oppose it. There were mixed opinions on this, ranging from “do nothing, wait for the storm to blow over” to “actively oppose and disrupt conscription.” There were Wobblies that participated in anti-war or anti-conscription coalitions and other bodies that encouraged buying war bonds and enlisting.

Despite rejecting some common myths about the IWW, “Always on Strike” nevertheless accepts other myths itself. For example, making the same mistake as many other historians who focus on syndicalism or the IWW, the author matter-of-factly relates the vision and

outlook of the early IWW back to French intellectual George Sorel. In reality, there is little evidence that Sorel had even a negligible influence. To the extent that French syndicalism had an influence, people like Confédération générale du travail (CGT) militant Emilie Pouget had a far greater impact. Pouget’s writings were translated, published and distributed in the IWW. He is mentioned dozens of times in the *Industrial Worker*. Sorel, on the other hand, receives only a passing mention in the same series in the *Industrial Worker* about French syndicalism. None of his writings seemed to have been translated, published or distributed in the union. As far as I could find, only one article focused on his ideas ever appeared in the IWW press, and not until 1919, a full decade after this influence was supposed to have occurred on the formative IWW. Concepts such as the revolutionary general strike and the “militant minority,” which some historians and writers claim the IWW adopted from Sorel, already existed as concepts and terms within French syndicalism years prior to Sorel writing about them. Furthermore, these terms were used by syndicalists that Wobblies would have been far more familiar with than Sorel.

Why is this important? Well, Sorel’s writings on violence and myth making, his move to the nationalist Right and his influence on fascism have been used in the past to tar syndicalism or revolutionary unionism by association. Other authors have demonstrated how Sorel’s supposed influence on syndicalism was an exaggeration made by early, lazy historians and then repeated over time. Apparently, such is the case with Sorel and the IWW, as well.

Another shortcoming of “Always on Strike” is that there are large parts of the book where the author assumes Little is at an event, such as a strike or a free speech fight. Sometimes the evidence provided for these assumptions is convincing. Other times it is not. The author also, occasionally, “imagines” what Little would say about a situation or event. Maybe Stead felt this was necessary because there is very little information on Little’s activities. While this reason is understandable, it should have been avoided. It is one thing putting words in someone’s mouth based



Graphic: haymarketbooks.org

on you knowing and collaborating with them, such as Friedrich Engels finishing the works of Karl Marx. It is another thing altogether when, 100 years after a person’s death, a historian does this in a biography. While well intentioned, it would have been preferable to stick to the evidence, even if that meant shortening the book to pamphlet-length. For an author rightly concerned about inaccurate historical myths, he very well could be creating them by these assumptions and imagined statements.

Lastly, it would be a disservice to readers of the *Industrial Worker* not to mention the background of the author, Arnold Stead. During the early 1970s in Kansas City, around the time Students For A Democratic Society met its demise and the Weather Underground was established, Stead and some others were arrested and charged in a bomb making case. Stead cooperated with authorities. Although he now claims he was tricked and later went back on his testimony, people spent hard time in prison because of his cooperation. Whatever we may feel about the “urban guerrilla” groups of the 1970s, it is simply reprehensible to cooperate with authorities and send fellow radicals off to the dungeons of the state. While the book is appreciated, our martyrs deserve better historians, better admirers, and better people than Arnold Stead to keep their story alive.

Reviews

Indispensable Reading For Wobblies, Labor Historians

Chester, Eric. *The Wobblies in their Heyday: The Rise and Destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World during the World War I Era.* Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014. Paperback, 316 pages, \$58.

Reviewed by Staughton Lynd

The Wobblies are back. Many young radicals find the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) the most congenial available platform on which to stand in trying to change the world.

This effort has been handicapped by the lack of a hard-headed history of the IWW in its initial incarnation, from 1905 to just after World War I. The existing literature, for example Franklin Rosemont's splendid book on Joe Hill, is strong on movement culture and atmosphere. It is weak on why the organization went to pieces in the early 1920s.

Eric Chester's new book fills this gap. It is indispensable reading for Wobblies and labor historians.

One way to summarize what is between these covers is to say that Chester spells out three tragic mistakes made by the old IWW that the reinvented organization must do its best to avoid.

Macho Posturing

Labor organizing flourished during World War I because of the government's need for a variety of raw materials. Among these were food, timber and copper. Wobbly organizers made dramatic headway in all three industries. At its peak in August 1917 the IWW had a membership of more than 150,000.

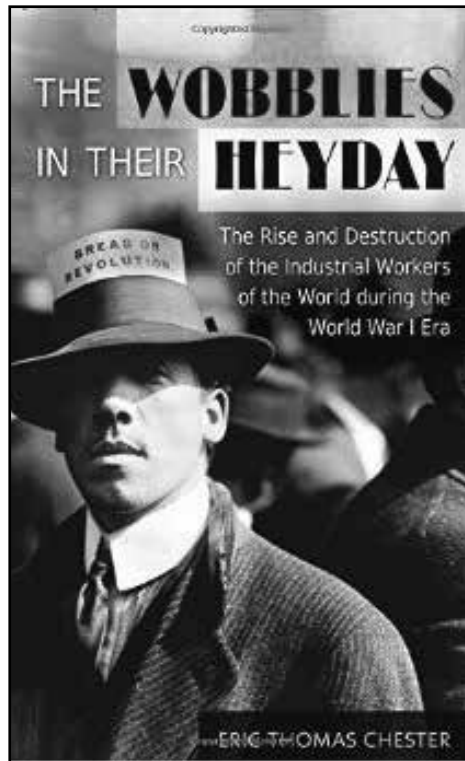
Nine months later, Chester writes, "the union was in total disarray, forced to devote most of its time and resources to raising funds for attorneys and bail bonds."

This sad state of affairs was, of course, partly the result of a calculated decision by the federal government to destroy the IWW. But only partly.

According to Chester, another cause of the government's successful suppression of the Wobblies was that during and after the Wheatlands strike in California hop fields in 1913 some Wobblies threatened to "burn California's agricultural fields if two leaders of the strike were not released from jail."

For years, Wobbly leaders had insisted that sabotage could force employers to make concessions, Chester writes. But what Chester terms "nebulous calls for arson" and "macho bravado" only stiffened the determination of California authorities not to modify jail sentences for Wobbly leaders Richard Ford and Herman Suhr.

Chester finds that there is no credible evidence that any fields were, in fact, burned. But after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, this extravagant rhetoric calling for the destruction of crops apparently helped to convince President Woodrow Wilson to initiate a systematic and coordinated campaign to suppress the Wobblies.



Graphic: amazon.com

Efforts to Avoid Repression by Discontinuing Discussion of the War and the Draft

International solidarity and militant opposition to war and the draft were central tenets of the IWW. Wobblies who had enrolled in the British Army were expelled from the union. At the union's 10th general convention in November 1915, the delegates adopted a resolution calling for a "General Strike in all industries" should the United States enter the war.

What actually happened was that General Secretary-Treasurer Bill Haywood and a majority of IWW leaders agreed that the union should desist from any discussion of the war or the draft, in the vain hope that this policy would persuade the federal government to refrain from targeting the union for repression. At the same time, the great majority of rank-and-file members, with support of a few leaders such as Frank Little, insisted that the IWW should be at the forefront of the opposition to the war.

Self-evidently, what Chester terms the IWW's "diffidence" was the very opposite of Eugene Debs' defiant opposition to the war. When Wobbly activists "flooded IWW offices with requests for help and pleas for a collective response to the draft," the usual response was that what to do was up to each individual member. Haywood, Chester writes, "consistently sought to steer the union away from any involvement in the draft resistance movement."

Debs notwithstanding, however, the national leadership of the Socialist Party like the national leadership of the IWW "scrambled to avoid any confrontation with federal authorities." Radical activists from both organizations formed ad hoc alliances cutting across organizational boundaries.

The IWW General Executive Board, meeting from June 29 to July 6, 1917, was unable to arrive at a decision about the war and conscription, and a committee including both Haywood and Frank Little, tasked to draft a statement, likewise failed to do so. In the end, Chester says, "the IWW sought to position itself as a purely economic organization concerned solely with short-run gains in wages and working conditions."

Disunity Among IWW Prisoners Fostered by the Government

The reluctance of the Wobbly leadership to advocate resistance to the war and conscription carried over to a legalistic response when the government indicted IWW leaders. Haywood urged all those named in the indictment to surrender voluntarily and to waive any objection to being extradited to Chicago. In the mass trial that followed, the defendants were represented by a very good trial lawyer who was also an enthusiastic supporter of the war and passed up the opportunity to make a closing statement to the jury. Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis' superficial fairness deluded Wobs into hoping for a good outcome.

The jury took less than an hour to find all 100 defendants guilty of all counts in the indictment. Ninety-three received lengthy prison terms. Judge Landis ordered that they be imprisoned at the United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, described by Chester as "a maximum-security penitentiary designed for hardened, violent criminals." Forty-six more defendants were found guilty after another mass conspiracy trial in Sacramento, Calif.

Thereafter, Chester writes, the "process of granting a commutation of sentence was manipulated during the administration of Warren Harding to divide and demoralize IWW prisoners." The ultimate result was "the disastrous split of 1924, leaving the union a shell of what it had been only seven years earlier."

Executive clemency, like that granted to Debs, was the only hope of the Wobblies in prison for release before the end of their long sentences. President Warren G. Harding rejected any thought of a general amnesty, obliging each prisoner to fill out the form requesting amnesty as an individual. The application form for amnesty contained an implicit admission of guilt. The newly-created American Civil Liberties Union supported this process.

Twenty-four IWW prisoners opted to submit a form requesting amnesty. A substantial majority refused to plead for individual release. More than 70 issued a statement in which they insisted that "all are innocent and all must receive the same consideration." The government insisted on a case-by-case approach. Fifty-two prisoners responded that they refused to accept the president's division of the Sacramento prisoners, still alleged

to have burned fields, from the Chicago prisoners. Moreover they considered it a "base act" to "sign individual applications and leave the Attorney General's office to select which of our number should remain in prison and which should go free."

Initially, the IWW supported those prisoners who refused to seek their freedom individually. Those who had submitted personal requests for presidential clemency were expelled from the union.

In June 1923, the government once again dangled before desperate men the prospect of release, now available for those individual prisoners promising to remain "law-abiding and loyal to the Government." This time a substantial majority of the remaining prisoners accepted Harding's offer, and IWW headquarters, in what Chester calls "a sweeping reversal," gave its approval.

Eleven men at Leavenworth declined this latest government inducement. In addition, those who were tried in California did not receive the same offer.

In December 1923 the remaining IWW prisoners at Leavenworth including 22 who had been convicted in Sacramento, Calif., were released unconditionally. The damage had been done. Those who had held out the longest launched a campaign within the IWW to expel those who had supported a form of conditional release. There were accusations against anyone who had allegedly proved himself "a scab and a rat." When a convention was held in 1924 both sides claimed the headquarters office and went to court. An organization consisting of the few hundred members who had supported the consistent rejection of all government offers "faded into oblivion by 1931."

Conclusion

It is not the intent of brother Chester's book, or of this review, to trash the IWW. This review has dealt with only about half of the material in the book, for example passing by the story of Wobbly organizing in copper, both in Butte, Mont. and Bisbee, Ariz. Moreover, anyone who lived through the disintegration of Students for a Democratic Society, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panthers is familiar with tragedies like those described here. The heroism of members of all three groups who were martyrs, such as Frank Little, Fred Hampton, and the Mississippi Three (James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael "Mickey" Schwerner), remains. The vision of a qualitatively different society, as the Zapatistas say "un otro mundo," remains also.

What it seems to me we must soberly consider is what practices we can adopt to forestall disintegration when different members of a group make different choices. Hardened secular radicals though we may be, we can learn something from King Lear's words to his daughter Cordelia: "When you ask me blessing, I'll kneel down and ask of you forgiveness."

Incarcerated Workers' Uprising In Nebraska

Continued from 1

given to the staff by an inmate, the staff became aggressive and pulled out large cans of mace and told the inmate who handed them the list to cuff up, at which time he asked why. Shortly thereafter, there was a melee with staff spraying mace and inmates fighting back. Shots were fired from the gun tower and all became quiet as inmates and staff lay flat on the ground.

Staff regained control of the situation for a moment. They handcuffed a few and identi-

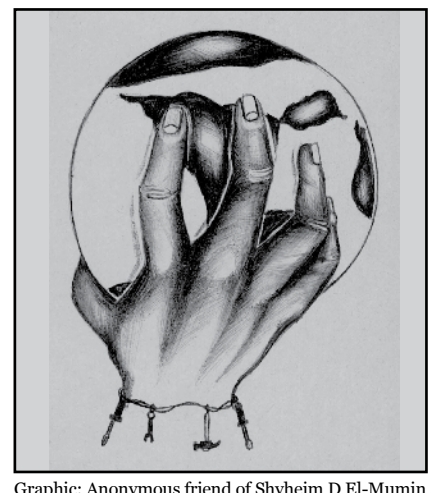
fied the rest, but before long, their verbal taunts became too much. The group stood as one and began marching around the compound. Inmates inside the housing units joined in at this time. Staff ran for cover, locking everyone out of their housing units. The group of inmates marching on the compound tried to break into the gym to let out inmates who had been locked in. This is when they shot inmate Washington in his upper leg. As inmates attempted to give first aid, the

tower rained down bullets. The only two hit were Washington and Camancho. Inmates then carried Washington to medical where they refused to give him aid for some time before dragging him off by his arm to the medical sally port.

Once word got out, fires started burning. Hours later, local and state law enforcement, along with prison officers, came in and regained the prison by force, shooting inmates with less lethal rounds at point-blank range. Some

were already cuffed when they were shot. Inmates were taken to the education building until all were accounted for. Many inmates were left cuffed with hands behind their backs for more than 48 hours.

At the time of this writing, that was eight days ago. We have been receiving only two meals a day since, with little or no way to make contact with our family or loved ones. What the future holds we do not know, but until there are no prisons left, we must fight.



Graphic: Anonymous friend of Shyheim D El-Mumin

Reviews

Documentary On The Plight Of Bangladeshi Garment Workers

Udita (Arise). Produced by the Rainbow Collective, 2015. Available online: https://youtu.be/g_tuwBHR6WU.

Reviewed by FW Greg Giorgio

The garment workers of Bangladesh are paid the lowest wages in the industry. Activists in the IWW have known this from our work with the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) in Bangladesh, a relatively small but militant labor union. Their rights are extremely limited in the milieu of corruption and global trade pacts that allow manufacturers to hide behind subcontractors to subvert the law. In the new documentary “Udita (Arise),” we see the oppressive poverty and living and working conditions of NGWF members and their families in scenes from their union offices, protests, and in the daily lives of those struggling just to get enough to eat.

Hannan Majid and Richard York, known as the Rainbow Collective, have produced a courageous film that allows the routines of garment workers to play out on screen with little adornment, save for the English subtitles. There is no narration and the spare soundtrack of mostly sitar and tabla drums serves the tone of the piece well; the drone of the sitar is a comment on the long working days, low pay and shattered dreams.

It is the women who make up over 80 percent of the garment workers in Bangladesh. And the women show us their lives in “Udita.” Early in the film, Nargis Buya tells her story. She’s a single mom in her early 20s with a young child whose father abandoned them while she was still pregnant. Her two sisters are in the same predicament. Their mother cares for the three babies while her daughters go off to work 12 to 14 hours per day in a sweatshop in Dhaka. They all came to the city to “escape” the poverty of the countryside but, as it turns out, they just traded locations. You can see the hope in their eyes when scenes in the union hall of the NGWF show General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin trying to recover unpaid wages from factory closures. You can see the fire in their eyes when they march through the city with



NGWF marching on International Women's Day, March 8, 2013.

Photo: NGWF

cries of “Friends of the world, unite. Unite as one!” Their mother is overwhelmed in their spare home, straining each day to care for the grandchildren. “They run circles around me all day,” she sighs. Her daughters usually only have one day off work per month.

One woman, Ratna Miah, has worked in the garment factories since she was a girl. She has an edge; righteous anger flashes in her eyes when she talks about a similar journey to Dhaka and being cheated out of two days’ pay for being two minutes late for work. Then it hits you; she is being singled out for her union activity. She’s in the NGWF, almost always a minority union presence in the factories. As she unlocks the door to the NGWF offices where she is proud to lend a hand, it was clear to me that she could be a Wobbly in another place in the world. She rails to the camera about the lack of paid employment for women in Bangladesh. “Our wage is not enough!” she declares. And she knows the numbers. Miah came to Dhaka at age nine to work in the looms and sewing rooms, paid \$9 a month. Later, she attained a position as a machinist.

The grinding poverty of these workers typically, after paying high rents in Dhaka, affords meals of mostly rice with a small smattering of vegetables. So, early in the film, they march, flying the NGWF banners, for an increase to the standard minimum wage for garment workers in Bangladesh.

When we see Fatema Akter, a glimmer of hope might be warranted. She has a husband who seems committed to her and their children. But he’s a scissor bill—a tool of the bosses’ scare tactics. She wants to support the struggle and calmly tells him about “unrest in the factory today.” He ignores her after already scolding her. “You don’t need any of that stuff,” he tells Fatema in response to her support of the union.

The “slice of life” style in “Udita” turns even grimmer when disasters at Tazreen and Rana Plaza are brought to life by workers who were present during the disasters and had family members killed.

One of the men in the film relates his story of a fateful day in 2012: fire alarms failed, doors were locked and the manager told workers “nothing is happening.” The workers were then plunged into darkness

when the power went out, and escape was made more perilous in the dark. One hundred thirty poor souls perished at Tazreen. Kowsar was there and escaped. They were sewing a big order for the world’s largest retailer. “Care about us,” he tells the camera in his message to Walmart. And the factory owner was never held to account for the killings either.

The sheer horror of the Rana Plaza collapse that is seen in the factory rubble is unsettling. Razia Begum, a former garment worker, lost two daughters in the 2013 tragedy at the garment factory where over 1,100 were killed and 2,000 injured. She visits the graves and the factory rubble pile and grieves. Begum’s life has been torn, like the garments at the disaster site, mixed in the tangled masses of cloth, some still gruesomely showing the blood stains of the victims. Later she marches with the NGWF to demand compensation for the victims of Rana Plaza. She admits to her overwhelming pain and loss, frustrated she can’t afford the kind of school her daughters wanted for the boys they left behind.

Amidst this pain and struggle against the exploitation, the murderous effects of irresponsible capital in its race to the bottom wage competition, here comes the NGWF as the film winds down. They persisted by 2014 and were able to get the garment worker base pay up to \$68 a month. They had campaigned for \$109 a month. Five years earlier, they were only making \$42 a month.

“Udita” is a film that shocks and inspires the viewer. It’s about women who are fighting several battles: a culture that blocks their advancement, a factory system that can kill them, and an economic system hell bent on it. As the film concludes, Aleya Atta, a female officer in the NGWF, leads the union on yet another march and declares her mission to educate and empower the garment workers of Dhaka. Fist raised high, she chants, “workers action, direct action.”

See “Udita.” Show it to your friends and co-workers. It marks a low point in 21st century capitalism, a treacherous ditch to humanity. But the women of the NGWF are trying to climb back out.

The Renewed Value Of Old Socialist And Labor Songs

Morgan, Elizabeth, ed. & Utah Phillips, preface. *Socialist and Labor Songs: An International Revolutionary Songbook*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014. Paperback, 96 pages, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Patrick McGuire

I have a confession to make. The first three times I picked up this book and planned to write a review for it, I thought, “I’m not sure this book should’ve even been published. What was PM Press thinking?” While I’m still conflicted about this book, I’ve come to see its merits.

To begin, this is a collection of radical songs edited by Elizabeth Morgan in 1958. I’m not sure if there was ever an edition published in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s. I know that Charles H. Kerr put out an edition in 1997. This is a reprint of that work with an attractive new cover designed by Josh MacPhee. It includes sheet music and lyrics written between 1880 and 1940. These songs would have been old in the 1960s. Today they are archaic.

Please don’t get me wrong. I love labor songs. I’ve spent the last 17 years of my life performing labor songs on picket lines, with labor choirs and at coffee shops. I just don’t want anyone to buy this book thinking that it would be a really useful *songbook.* You aren’t going to dust off most of these songs for singing on any picket line soon. Just

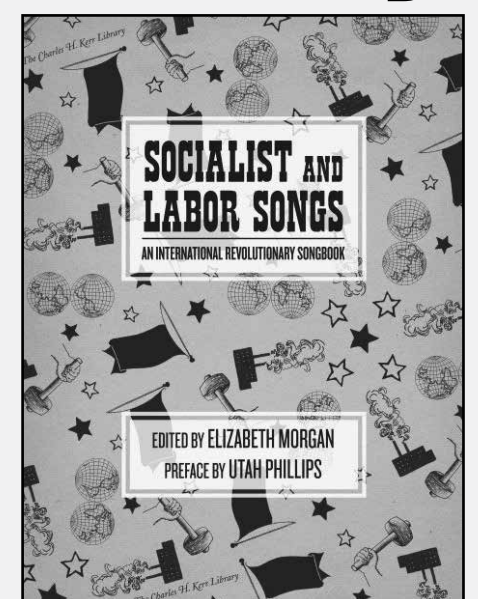
give the opening lines of “The Advancing Proletaire” a whirl: “We are coming, all united, throbbing with unmeasured pow’r. Through the darkness unafrighted. We have waited for this hour.” I’m pretty sure that I know how that one will go over when you try it out at the next strike. There are of course numerous well-known songs and Wobbly favorites included, such as “Solidarity Forever,” “Casey Jones,” “Bread and Roses,” “The Preacher and the Slave” and Maurice Sugar’s “Soup Song.” If you like Utah Phillips, then this book is probably your jam. But it must be said that three quarters of the songs included are obscure and very dated. If you were writing a dissertation about turn-of-the-last-century socialist and labor culture and its representations of throbbing masculinity, then this book could also be your jam.

But the more I thought about it, the more I could see the value of this collection. My friend Travis Tomchuk just published a book about Italian anarchists in Canada and the United States from 1915-1940 called “Transnational Radicals.” At his recent book launch, Tomchuk spoke of the cultures of resistance that the Italian communities had made in places like Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.; Windsor, Ontario; Detroit and New York City. This radical working-class culture included newspapers, holidays, feasts, poetry, plays and songs. The purpose of this culture was to affirm shared values

and aspirations of how to create a new world to replace the militaristic, nationalistic, and xenophobic one they found themselves living in. Elizabeth Morgan’s “Socialist and Labor Songs” needs to be seen in a similar light. It is an attempt to capture the story of diverse traditions of resistance in North America through songs culled from Italian, African-American, Russian, Irish, Yiddish, German and other communities. Collecting these songs embodies the radical idea of memory against forgetting.

There are some rare songs that you might want to dust off and learn. I’m going to make an attempt to learn “The Workmen’s Circle Hymn,” which is a translation of the Yiddish Abeiter Ring anthem that could very well have been sung by radical workers’ groups in the North End of my own Winnipeg, Manitoba. I don’t think it’s going to be the favorite song in my next set, but there’s something to be said about keeping stories and experiences alive. Maybe there’s a gem in there for you too.

The real value of “Socialist and Labor Songs” is that it challenges us with the question, “What are the forms of cultural resistance that exist in the IWW today?” A small (but fun) example of this is the friendly competition between the Winnipeg and Twin Cities General Membership Branches (GMBs) to see who can do the best IWW re-writing of pop songs by Beyoncé, CeeLo Green, Drake or Taylor



Graphic: pmpress.org

Swift. Old traditions like Red November, Black November fall feasts are being held again. More and more Wobbly organizers are writing about their experiences of raising hell in the workplace. There are so many different types of Wobbly cultural creation that are bubbling up. And, of course, we need more.

The publication of Elizabeth Morgan’s “Socialist and Labor Songs: An International Revolutionary Songbook” is a fitting testament to the lifework of a tireless song and story keeper. The stories have been passed to us...what are we going to sing?

Entertainment

“Joe Hill 100 Roadshow” East Coast Leg Kicks Off On July 23 In D.C.

The second leg of the “Joe Hill 100 Roadshow” kicks off on July 23 with Magpie, Charlie King and George Mann in Washington, D.C., and will continue through to Baltimore, New York City and into New England before ending at Club Passim in Boston on Aug. 2.



Joe Hill Road Show musicians, Photo: freedomoutpost.com
clockwise (from left to right): Anne Feeney, Bucky Halker, Jan Hammarlund, Lil Rev, and JP Wright.

Part of the year-long celebration of Joe’s life and songs, the first leg of the “Joe Hill 100 Roadshow” rolled through the Midwest in May with Lil’ Rev, Bucky Halker, Anne Feeney, Jan Hammerlund, and JP Wright performing on most of the dates. Joe’s songs, among them “The Preacher and The Slave,” “Casey Jones the Union Scab,” and “There is Power in the Union,” are part of each night’s program, as well as excerpts from his letters, accounts of the frame-up that led to his execution in 1915, and a reading of his last will.

The northeast leg of the tour will feature Magpie (Greg Artzner), Charlie King, and George Mann on most of the concerts, with special guests in some cities. All three of these “core” artists are longtime labor activists and union members and have produced original music of struggle as well as kept alive and interpreted the vast catalog of folk and labor songs from our history.

Both Magpie and Charlie King have been performing and recording for more than 40 years, and bringing their music

to civil rights, labor and environmental struggles throughout the nation. Mann is a longtime IWW member and former union organizer who has been touring and producing protest music since the late 1990s. Together, they will tell the story of Joe Hill’s life, work, frame-up and execution, and sing the songs that Joe Hill left us throughout the east coast.

Information on the tour is available at the website <http://www.joehill100.com> under “Events,” and we will be sharing photos and videos from the tour on the Joe Hill 100 Facebook page (link on the website).

There are two more legs to the “Joe Hill 100 Roadshow” planned for late September/early October in the South, and a western leg starting Nov. 5 in San Diego and ending Nov. 20 in Salt Lake City, where Joe was executed on Nov. 19, 1915.

Wobbly Word Search!

H Z R K W Z E C K S H B P O R E N R X I
G A Q X C O H T R Y Q X I R E C L E N A L
S H Y T O I R U I R X D H G G I W N A L
V E F M C S O K R N I O S A A T S E Q C K
D E N A A H T A E R E R U T R N T S E T C K
O R G O T R W I E R C W E I O U G A M D
A O A H J S K C F E S Y B Z B J A V A Q
S J G C S R T E P E H I M E A U W T Y K
O I O A D A E S T K N X E X S Q K N D L
E V L S C E E H U L Z E M Y A P R I A F T
U C W T T R R N T W O B B L Y F W S Y T
C X I M V R I Y P O J S Y U G A J V Q P
S O U V V O I V C I M K W Z T A Q X M O Z
N S F M N B D K R F J Q F I E Q A U V Z
Q B Y E R L J O E U O Q R E K J T E F R
U J G I S X U L M P E B X Q S Z R L G G
M Y E R Y Q T Z C D H S E W D T E R T R
I F H Q U Z X S O L I D A R I T Y L Q U
E Q U A L I T Y U A L L V M R O B A L E H
S N O S R A P Y C U L Y E T A G E L E D

BENEFITS
CHICAGO
CLASS WAR
DELEGATE
DIRECT ACTION
EIGHT HOURS
EQUALITY
FAIR PAY
HAYMARKET
JOE HILL

JUSTICE
LABOR
LUCY PARSONS
MAYDAY
MEMBERSHIP
MOTHER JONES
ORGANIZE
OVERTIME
RED CARD
RESPECT

SABOTAGE
SOLIDARITY
STRIKE
UNION
UNITE
WAGES
WOBBLY
WORKERS

Hint! Words may go backwards, forwards, up, down or diagonally.

Do you have something to contribute to the Industrial Worker’s entertainment section? Ideas for games, puzzles, etc.? Submit them to iw@iww.org. We want to hear from YOU!

JOE HILL 100 ROADSHOW

NORTHEAST TOUR DATES
 July 23: Washington, DC
 July 24: Baltimore, MD • July 25: Philadelphia, PA
 July 29: New York, NY • July 30: Schenectady, NY
 July 31: Barre, VT • August 1: Springfield, MA
 August 2: Cambridge, MA

FEATURING
CHARLIE KING
 TERRY LEONINO & GREG ARTZNER
 WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCES BY:
 JOE JENCKS
 EVAN GREER
 THE DC LABOR CHORUS
 THE NYC LABOR CHORUS

GEORGE MANN

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

HEADING YOUR WAY SOON
 Visiting the South & West
 in the Fall

MORE ABOUT THE TOUR AT
www.joehill100.com

International News

In Spain, Movistar “Total Strike” Is A Social Struggle

By CGT Catalunya

(Editor's note: This article discusses the strike of subcontracted and freelance technicians working for telecommunications giant Telefónica's Movistar, which began in Madrid on March 28. For background on this strike, see “#ResistenciaMovistar: A Strike Of This Century In Spain” on page 1 of the June Industrial Worker).

“We must favor understanding and collaboration. Not only workers are involved in this conflict. Also, there are collectives interested in creating tension and making it difficult to reach a solution.” – Felip Puig, Counselor for Enterprise and Employment of the Generalitat de Catalunya

The Movistar strike is interesting in many ways. We could look at the joint action of thousands of freelancers and subcontracted workers, the surprising organization in the beginning (based, literally, on thousands of isolated individuals acting together through smartphone messaging systems in order to make information flow instantly) or the fact that the major institutional unions were overwhelmed by the workers.

We could also talk about the company's many complaints about sabotage or about the thousands of breakdowns that accumulated over time, causing many problems to clients and businesses.

However, we prefer to focus on the concept of “total strike” as opposed to other strikes that are only labor strikes and are closed in on themselves; strikes that don't go out of the limits of the company, like the eight-month strike at Panrico; strikes with determination but with the handbrake on.

Everyone has witnessed how this is an active strike with a growing presence of workers in the street. Social support has been extending progressively, adding pressure along with the strike itself, which culminated in the last 10 days of May.

Paradoxically, when the strike's following was at its lowest, the company was under the most pressure.

Other territories have looked at what was happening in Catalonia with healthy jealousy at first, then as a spearhead for their own aspirations.

Why has the strike been stronger in Catalonia?

We'll overlook the cohesion and internal organization of the strike. One thing we could point out is the intelligent use of existing resources in order to deal with the predictable attrition. Sparse objectives were set aside in favor of specific targets where we could hit harder.

However, what made this strike different in Catalonia was the socialization of the conflict. If we look back to strikes that we can remember, they'll probably have one thing in common: the participation of the common people.

Complying with our own agreements in the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), on the first day of the strike we initiated contact with social movements along with strikers. A few days after, a large number of organizations were present at the union's premises and agreed on the relevance of this strike and the need to join efforts.

Solidarity fundraising events multiplied, up to tens in a week. Money was never enough, but it allowed workers to keep the struggle up without resources. A credit line of €120,000 (or approximately \$135,187 [USD]) was set up by Coop57, a credit co-op, in order to advance what would be collected afterwards.

Conferences about the conflict fulfilled the goal of making the strike better known by the general population, promoting awareness and thus preparing the people for participation. Movistar has tried to make



Photo: cgtcatalunya.cat

the strike invisible through a powerful campaign, which involved the “free press” in the hands of capitalists. This front has been attacked by local events and coordinated work in the social media.

The first demonstration took place on April 20 in Barcelona. After that, almost every action that took place in the streets had some reference to the Movistar conflict. There have been many coordinated occupations and demonstrations in Movistar shops in many locations. These actions have grown in frequency. In the last two weeks, the company knew an action of this kind could take place in any city at any moment. Attacks came from all possible flanks.

Occupations at the Mobile World Centre

Social movements participated in the labor conflict and taught strikers their methods. The first occupation of the Movistar store at Plaza Cataluña (Barcelona) in the Mobile World Centre (MWC), a worldwide mobile technology congress, took place thanks to coordination by strikers and people in solidarity with them. A milestone was achieved since, for the first time, the company showed signs of weakness. An agreement was reached that the occupiers would leave the store and the company committed itself to negotiating with the strikers. Unfortunately it was a trick, since once the strikers left the store, the company returned to its previous inflexible position.

This deceit angered protesters and encouraged solidarity.

The fact that some political parties have shown support for this strike since the middle of May is a symptom of the social relevance it has achieved.

Following the motto “one eviction, another occupation,” strikers and those in solidarity with them did what seemed impossible: despite the security measures, which had been reinforced due to the MWC, they occupied the store again in order to hit the company where it hurts. This took place on May 23, the day before the local elections.

The following week witnessed the outbreak of solidarity in the city and the rest of Catalonia. It seemed like a labor 15M (a protest movement similar to the Occupy movement in the United States) had begun: there were actions every day; there was a constant movement of people acting in solidarity; there were many organizations supporting the strike; there were occupations; and there were demonstrations taking place in Movistar stores all over the territory. It became impossible for mass media to hide these facts. Economic losses reached €75,000 (\$84,510 [USD]) each day in the MWC store, added to the invaluable damage done to the image of Movistar.

We must take note of many aspects of this strike: is it possible to unite precarious and atomized collectives in order to fight against powerful machineries specialized in destroying workers' rights? Do the big institutional unions always have the key to the conflicts in places where they have a majority of representatives?

These questions were answered clearly at a state-wide level. Now we want to stress what made the struggle more powerful in Catalonia than it was in other territories: making solidarity from society work actively in a labor conflict.

New Austerity Measures To “Liberate” French Workers From Regulations

By Monika Vykoukal

Pursuing the measures of the so-called “job protection agreement” (see “Labor Law In France: ‘Socialist’ And Employer Flavored,” December 2013 *Industrial Worker*, page 12), which included facilitating redundancies as well as introducing more precarious new contracts, the currently proposed law for “growth and activity” (commonly referred to as the “Macron Law,” after the socialist Minister of the Economy Emmanuel Macron championing it) is making its way through the French legislative institutions, having been forced through the National Assembly with a special provision, Article 49.3 of the French constitution. This allows the government to pass bills without a vote when no majority can be reached.

Amendments by the more conservative senate brought a proposed commission to “simplify” labor law, which is anticipated to further lessen workers' rights, and the expansion of night and Sunday opening hours from the previous draft—the latter expanded to include businesses selling cultural goods, blatantly following the demands of the director of Fnac, a large chain focused on books, movies and music. As the law now makes its way back from the senate to the assembly, rumors of a second law—“Macron 2”—abound, which would continue to further reduce job protections and increase measures to undermine unemployment provisions.

The germs of this currently Socialist Party-led austerity project date back to at least 2007, when Macron contributed to the report of the “Commission for the Liberation of the French Economic Growth,” led by economist Jacques Attali and created by conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy. Now that Macron is a minister, those proposals are being car-

ried forward. Of its wide and seemingly disparate range of measures, those for deregulating work at night and on Sundays, while removing extra pay for working at those times, have gained the most coverage—but others could potentially have the most grim effects. Another provision allows the employment of disabled workers without pay under the guise of providing an “initiation” into a professional working environment. This measure will replace current obligations to hire disabled workers and actually pay them.

In parallel, mechanisms to enforce workers' rights, such as through the industrial tribunals, will be curtailed. The president of the appeal court will designate the members of the tribunal, and be able to remove those whom they consider to be not sufficiently “impartial.” Members of the tribunal will also no longer be allowed to be active in labor unions. Finally, if a judge considers that a tribunal is not working well, a professional judge, as well as the president and vice president of the employment tribunal, take its place. Even if an employer is found to be in violation of legal provisions, the new law replaces criminal penalties with fines, which will not be determined in court but by the Directeur Régional des Entreprises, de la Concurrence, de la Consommation, du travail et de l'emploi (DIRECCTE), a body which is not genuinely independent of employers. A particularly curious element of this undermining of workers' rights is that the legislation will still allow workers to pursue a case of unfair dismissal. However, even if the tribunal finds the dismissal to have been illegal, this will no longer have any practical consequences, such as reinstatement or compensation.

Perhaps most significantly, the law includes a fundamental attack on labor law as such, as it provides for any “agree-

ment” between workers and employers to overrule labor law. This will mean that although the law provides minimum wages, maximum working time and other protections, any worker will be free to choose to agree to conditions below those standards. The term deployed by the economics minister for this is “*soumission librement consentie*,” which means “willing submission” in the context of the employment relationship. However, it is also the French term for “compliance without pressure;” that is, getting someone's consent by starting with a small ask to ultimately get them to do something they would not have agreed to initially.

The typical mainstream media coverage of the new austerity measures is exemplified by the BBC Two documentary “Quelle Catastrophe! France” with Robert Peston (March 14, 2015). The film describes “a French way of life that combined high living standards, generous welfare benefits and superb public transport” that has “shunned austerity,” while the stereotype of the French being “work-shy” and having it too good echo those used to describe, for example, workers in Greece and Spain over the last few years.

The crisis is re-framed as one of public debt—ultimately created by the quaint “French way of life” in this case—although, as, for instance, highlighted in the recent report “False Dilemmas: A Critical Guide to the Euro Zone Crisis” by Corporate Watch (Christina Laskaridis, 2014, London, <http://www.corporate-watch.org>), it is “not really about high levels of debt or deficits,” (p. 37) but rather about the socialization of private debts (bank bail-outs and such). Profits from the crisis, both in the instruments employed to seemingly solve the crisis (such as the various loans provided to Greece) and through the labor conditions

created by austerity, continue to accrue for corporations, governments and states (with, e.g. Germany profiting from the crisis in Greece), regulators and hedge funds (p.104).

The mechanisms that facilitate those deregulations and ever increasing transfer of wealth are embedded in the structure of the European Union (EU) itself, in particular in the economic policy recommendations of the European Commission for individual member states under the Stability and Growth Pact. Those for France in November 2014 thus included that “efforts could be stepped up to further improve the sustainability of public finances, simplify the tax system and reduce the rigidities of the labour market.”

With the EU determining interest and exchange rate policies and restrictions on budgets of member countries, the only mechanism left to adjust to changing economic conditions is through reducing labor costs, lowering wages and worsening conditions (also known as competitiveness and flexibility). This, as outlined in Corporate Watch's report, also means that member states rely on their own and each other's ability to then pre-empt and contain any ensuing labor struggles. Austerity measures are thus paralleled by increases in surveillance regimes, repression and in the democratic deficit of not only EU institutions, but also national bodies, as evidenced by the passing of the first draft of the Macron Law as an emergency measure. Meanwhile, and similar to austerity measures elsewhere in Europe, the law also anticipates the requirements of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a free trade agreement that would also reduce workers' rights, currently being negotiated between the United States and the EU.

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.



Syndicalists Organize And Win In Berlin!

In this month's column we focus on some news from Germany. In May, the 39th congress of the Freie ArbeiterInnen-Union (FAU), the German syndicalists Free Workers Union, took place in Berlin. The delegates shared their current struggles and campaigns and discussed the recent plans in response to legal changes by the federal government. The principle of labor unity would be mandatory which just allows the biggest union to come up with collective agreements and activities around it. In fact, the options of minority unions in a shop are cut and limited.

Beside the participation of delegates from all branches across Germany, international guests from all over Europe showed up and shared their struggles and strategies. Our delegates from the German Language Area Regional Organizing Committee (GLAMROC) described the congress as very productive and fruitful for all participating unions.

Also in Berlin, the FAU signed a collective agreement in a small business operating an online shop and dispatch center. After tough and long negotiation the FAU Berlin managed to increase the pay level by 30 percent and limit the weekly hours to 35 as the major achievements in the agreement.

But the main difference to other



Photo: berlin.fau.org

collective agreements in Germany is that all workers have the same rights of participation as one workers council. All eight employees in that small business are organized in the FAU workers' group and make decisions together as one of the main principles of the FAU.

The IWW sends warm congratulations to our comrades from the FAU. Thanks for inspiring the workers to fight!



Members of the Association for the Welfare of Dwarves in Alexandria, Egypt.

Photo: madamasr.com

International News Briefs

Workers On The Move Worldwide

Compiled by John Kalwaic

Egyptian People Of Short Stature Form Trade Union

A unique union in Egypt has formed for dwarves, which with the Association for the Welfare of Dwarves in Alexandria (AWDA) was formed to help advocate for this marginalized community. AWDA formed mostly as a social, cultural and sporting club for dwarves, or as they sometimes prefer to be called, people of short stature. ADWA now has several smaller chapters in Cairo as well as the Suez Canal cities of Port Said and Ismaïlia. The Alexandria chapter has around 120 members.

A few years after the formation of AWDA, a new group called the Independent Trade Union of Dwarves (ITUD) came into formation in March 2014. The ITUD has been officially registered with Egypt's Ministry of Manpower as the Arab world's first labor organization designed for dwarves, or people of short stature. The ITUD is much smaller than AWDA and has only about 50 members and one committee. This union provides vocational training programs and professional skill workshops and also advocates for dwarves in cases of workplace discrimination and other labor-related issues. In Egypt dwarves are cut off from welfare services, although AWDA has made some significant gains in recent years. One gain is a new article in the Egyptian constitution which stipulates a 5 percent employment quota specifically for dwarves. Before this was passed, the Egyptian constitution had quotas for people with disabilities but not people of short stature.

Despite these gains, this minority remains largely unemployed or underemployed. Discrimination laws are rarely enforced. There are also problems with public transportation not being accessible to dwarves. Shehata, who serves as director of AWDA and president of ITUD stated, "Neither the state nor private businessmen are standing with us in terms of the providing employment opportunities for dwarfs. Political parties have consistently ignored this and other rights violations against this community," he claims. Meanwhile, AWDA still focuses on building a tight-knit community of people of short stature and advocating for their rights.

Iranian Workers On The Move

Workers are on the march again in Iran. Workers celebrated International Workers Day on May 1 in the thousands and participated in an uprising in a Kurdish region of the country. On May 1, workers took to the streets of the capital city of Tehran for the first time in eight years. Police tried to prevent them from marching but eventually were overwhelmed and let them proceed. Workers began the march at the office of the Workers' House of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the sole authorized national trade union center in Iran. The workers then marched to Palestine Square after the police unsuccessfully tried to prevent different groups from merging into a march.

In Rojhelat, a Kurdish region of north-western Iran, massive protests spread in

response to the circumstances surrounding 26-year-old Farinaz Khosravani's death. Khosravani worked at the Hotel Tara in the city of Mahabad in the Rojhelat region of Iran. The manager of the hotel offered her up to an Iranian military officer as a "sexual bribe" in exchange for raising the number of stars on the hotel. Rather than be raped by the officer, Khosravani killed herself by jumping out the hotel window. When the news got out, the Kurdish community in Rojhelat was furious. A massive protest in Mahabad surrounded the Tara Hotel. The military and police tried to stop the demonstration but were overwhelmed by the demonstrators. The demonstration then turned into a riot and the rioters torched Tara Hotel. This has led to a police crackdown in Mahabad.

Unions are now calling for a massive general strike in Rojhelat to protest the clampdown and call for greater Kurdish autonomy in region. Workers in Iran have an uphill battle. Strikes are, for the most part, illegal, as is the formation of independent unions, which sometimes form but are usually crushed.

Migrant Workers Strike Victorious Despite Repression In Mexico

A strike that began in March 2015 ended in May as 50,000 migrant farm workers struck in the City of San Quentin in the state of Baja California, Mexico, just south of the border from California. Most of the food grown on the farms is exported to the United States and California in particular.

The strike began in the San Quentin Valley in a strike over wages and working conditions. The migrant workers formed a new independent union. Workers blocked the streets and highways as they burned tires and banged pots and pans. The strike has disrupted the packing and shipping of zucchini, tomatoes, berries and other products to stores and restaurants in the United States. The migrant workers are from the Oaxaca and Guerrero regions of Mexico and come to Baja California looking for work—often pulling long hours in bad conditions, similar to the Mexican migrants who work in the United States north of the border.

The strike continued through April and May, until a demonstration was met with brutal force by the authorities. On May 9, the striking migrant workers were staging a sit-in in front of San Quentin government office. Police then assaulted the demonstrators—men, women and children—injuring around 70 people. There was a big community outcry after the incident. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) guerrillas in the Chiapas region of Mexico made a statement in support of the migrant workers, denouncing the actions of the police. On May 15, the growers finally agreed to meet with workers. The farm bosses have so far agreed to raise the wages to \$13 a day and recognize the new independent union of farm workers.

With files from <http://www.madamasr.com>, <http://www.payvand.com>, <http://www.ibtimes.com>, <http://kurdishquestion.com>, <http://revolution-news.com>, and <https://uk.news.yahoo.com>.

Junior Wobblies camp is right around the corner!



August 15-19 in northern Minnesota

We need your help to:

- Reach out to Junior Wobblies (and their parents) who might want to attend.
- Spread the word to DONATE NOW
- Join the committee to plan camps, and develop JRWU.
- Form a JRWU local in your area!

To DONATE, Register for camp, or learn more about us, go to juniorwobblies.wordpress.com

Contact us directly at: juniorwobbliescampers@gmail.com