

**Interim Report of the Acting Chairman,  
Committee on Industrial Classification,  
to the 2002 General Assembly**

Fellow Workers:

**Introduction**

The Committee on Industrial Classification was appointed by the 2001 General Assembly with the task of considering a complete revision of the union's industrial classification system. The members appointed were Jon Bekken (Boston, MA, IU 620); Bill Bradley (Portland, OR, IU 650); Jim Crutchfield (New York, NY, GMB), chairman; John Hollingsworth (Ottawa, ONT, GMB); Paul Huxtable (Victoria, BC, GMB); and Amy Kwasnicki (Philadelphia, PA, GMB). FW Bradley has resigned from the committee. FW Crutchfield has resigned as chairman, pending appointment of a substitute, but remains on the committee.

**The Need for Revision**

The Industrial Workers of the World was first organized because its founders realized that organized labor as it then stood was a relic of a former time and an obsolete organization of industry. They wrote, "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 first Wobblies were committed to the principle of scientific organization, in which workers would oppose the capitalist class by organizing as the bosses organized, mirroring capital's organization and matching it at every level.

Our union's founders foresaw that capitalist industry must continually change, knowing that

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society.<sup>1</sup>

Their plan was that the IWW should keep step with capitalism's changes, confronting industry at every turn with matching changes in labor's organization. FW Vincent St. John wrote,

Basing its conclusions upon the experience of the past the I. W. W. holds that it is essential to have the form and structure of the organization conform to the development of the machinery of production and the process of concentration going on in industry in

1. Marx & Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1884).

order to facilitate the growth of solidarity on class lines among the workers. Unless the structure of the organization keeps step with the development of industry it will be impossible to secure the solidarity so necessary to success in the struggles with the employing class.

Out of date forms of organization with their corresponding obsolete methods and rules will have to be broken down. To do this in time of a struggle means confusion and chaos that result in defeat.

The I. W. W. holds, that, regardless of the bravery and spirit the workers may show, if they are compelled to fight with old methods and an out of date form of organization against the modern organization of the employing class, there can be but one outcome to any struggle waged under these conditions--defeat.

\* \* \*

The constant development and concentration of the ownership and control of industry will be met by a like concentration of the number of Industrial Unions and Industrial Departments. It is meant that the organization at all times shall conform to the needs of the hour and eventually furnish the medium through which and by which the organized workers will be able to determine the amount of food, clothing, shelter, education and amusement necessary to satisfy the wants of the workers.<sup>2</sup>

Another writer in 1916 recognized the need to keep step with the development of industry in our own organization: "The I. W. W. proposes to follow the bosses' plan and scope of organization for the benefit of the worker."<sup>3</sup> And a 1920's pamphlet admonishes,

Organization of the working class must necessarily reflect the capitalist arrangement in industry. It must not lag behind, nor should it anticipate. In doing either it would forfeit its claim to being scientific.<sup>4</sup>

Since Father Haggerty's Wheel was designed in 1905, capitalist industry has undergone revolutionary changes. Agriculture is no longer the largest employer of workers in the capitalist world. Manufacturing

2. St. John, "The I.W.W.--Its History, Structure and Methods" (1919).

3. Grover H. Perry, "The Revolutionary I.W.W."(1916).

4. "One Big Union of the I.W.W." (?1925)

industries have diminished in importance in most developed countries. Service industries have come to dominate the economies of what once were called "industrial nations". Information technology, bio-technology, and other emerging industries are rapidly changing the face of labor in ways Father Haggerty could never have imagined.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, in the intervening years we have done little to conform our union's industrial structure to the needs of the hour.<sup>6</sup> This is understandable. State oppression and internal problems diminished our numbers and our presence in industry to a such a degree that industrial classification would have been little more than an academic exercise. Revisions to the list of industrial unions after about 1920 have done little to keep our union's structure in step with the development of modern industry.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, our system currently would organize workers who assemble plastic baby dolls with those who make dynamite (Chemical Workers' IU 430); computer graphic designers with telephone solicitors (Communications, Telecommunications, and Computer Workers' IU 560); and AIDS counselors with insurance clerks (General, Legal, Public Interest and Financial Office Workers' IU 650). And it has no clear place for workers, for example, in gene-splicing laboratories (health service workers? agricultural workers? chemical workers?), on-line research services like the Electric Library or Lexis/Nexis (education workers? communications workers? printing and publishing workers? general and legal office workers?), or computer software publishing houses (printing and publishing workers? communications workers?).

Now, as the union enters into a new period of growth, it is essential that we remember our founders' intentions and bring the union's industrial structure up to date. We need to do it now, because now we are small and have the time. As FW St. John pointed out, reorganization in time of struggle means confusion, chaos, and defeat. Waiting to reorganize until we have thousands of members instead of hundreds will greatly complicate whatever changes may be found necessary. Splitting or combining Industrial Unions will be much easier when they exist only on paper, than when they have hundreds of members, officers, General Organization Committees, contracts, stationery, union halls, etc.

5. Indeed, globalization, diversification, and other radical changes in corporate organization have so altered the industrial landscape that there is a legitimate question whether industrial unionism, as it was conceived of in 1905, may not itself be obsolete as a program for effective class struggle. While the union needs to give serious thought to this issue, such fundamental issues would seem to be outside the scope of this committee's assignment.

6. The union did make several efforts in that direction in the first fifteen or twenty years of the organization, most notably the radical overhaul in 1919 which, among other things, replaced local unions with Industrial Union Branches.

7. The main exception is the introduction of the Data Storage & Retrieval Workers' I. U. No. 570, about 1976, which was subsequently merged with the Communications Workers I.U. No. 560 to form the Communications, Telecommunications, and Computer Workers IU 560.

The mission of the Committee on Industrial Classification is to study modern industry, and, in light of that study, to propose recommendations for bringing our union's industrial structure up to date.

### **The Boston Proposal**

The 2001 General Assembly also referred to the Committee on Industrial Classification a proposal by the Boston GMB for revising the structure of the Department of Public Service, No. 600 ("the Boston Proposal"). That proposal was to replace existing Industrial Union descriptions as follows:

Public Service Workers IU 650: All workers engaged in the provision of social and public services other than education, health care, and transportation. All workers employed in the public interest sector. All workers engaged in the maintenance of cemeteries, parks, streets, and highways.

Financial and Legal Service Workers IU 690: All workers engaged in the provision of financial, insurance, legal and related services.

The following amendment to the proposal was offered from the floor of the assembly:

Public Service Workers IU 650: All social & public service employees not primarily within the education, health care, or transportation industries. All legal and financial workers. All temporary agency employees not properly organized into other industrial unions.

The proposal and the pending amendment were then referred to this committee for consideration as part of a complete revision of the union's industrial classification system.

### **A Slow Start**

When your committee began its work, its members had little idea of the magnitude of the task they were undertaking. Several members, already among the busiest people in the union, found that the demands of committee work were too great, given their other commitments, and contributed to the discussion only infrequently, as their other activities permitted. Other members were hampered in their ability to participate by lack of regular access to e-mail, or by technical problems in the e-mail system. Although the occasional contributions of these members were valuable, it was difficult for the committee to accomplish anything with such irregular participation.

The committee did accumulate a large body of valuable data. It also made some initial efforts at discussion of general issues, and began to consider some specific proposals for revision of the List of

Industrial Unions; but participation was so irregular that sustained discussion or concrete action proved unattainable.

After trying various methods for stimulating discussion, and finding only very limited success, FW Crutchfield informed the committee of his decision to resign the office of chairman, in hopes that another chairman could be more effective. Unfortunately, nobody has stepped forward to take his place. Thereafter, FW Bradley resigned from the committee. There has since been minimal activity on the committee's email list. FW Hollingsworth proposed that the members individually prepare "discussion papers" for the information of Assembly Delegates, but as far as the undersigned is aware, nobody has done so. FW Crutchfield submitted a draft committee report as a basis for discussion, but there has been no discussion. As a result, the undersigned, as acting chairman, has prepared this report, but cannot represent it as the work of your committee.

In hopes that the committee can be reformed and made effective for the coming year, the acting chairman offers the following findings and recommendations.

### **Findings**

1. **Continuation of the Committee:** The committee's assigned task remains necessary, and that although various factors have prevented it from making much progress over the past year, its work should be continued. Our union is growing again after many years. With every passing year, significant change to our industrial classification system will become more complicated and difficult, as more Industrial Unions are organized under the old system, contracts with employers are entered into by those Unions, literature is issued containing references to the old system, and so on. The process begun by the 2001 Assembly should be continued.
2. **Membership of the Committee:** The task of the CIC is important and complex, and requires the accumulation and processing of a vast amount of information, if it is to be useful to the union. While the current members of the committee, selected from those who happened to be in attendance at the 2001 general assembly, entered upon their task in good faith, several of them have been unable to commit the necessary time and effort, on a regular basis, for the committee to function in any meaningful, democratic way.

Without regular participation by all members, it was impossible for the committee to agree on an agenda, rules of procedure, or anything else. Yet the committee had no power to remove inactive members or appoint new ones.

There accordingly need to be criteria for membership on the committee, including reliable access to e-mail on at least a weekly basis, and a requirement for regular reporting to the committee, similar to that in force on the General Executive Board. The committee needs a democratic mechanism by which to remove members who fail to meet these criteria, and to appoint substitutes to take their places.

3. **Rules of Procedure** : Your committee needs the power to adopt rules of procedure suited to the circumstances of a committee that conducts all of its business by e-mail correspondence. A committee has no such power, according to Robert's Rules of Order, unless the authority that appointed the committee specifically grants it.
  
4. **Agenda**: One useful product of this year's committee is a better understanding of the issues that it needs to resolve before it can propose a revised industrial classification system. Your committee needs to adopt an agenda, which should include at least the following items:
  - a. Study and discussion of various basic issues of industrial unionism, including
    - (1.) the proper relationship of various stages of manufacturing to one another (i.e., the "vertical integration" of industry), and the best way for labor organization to reflect those relationships;
    - (2.) the relationship of distribution to production, insofar as it concerns industrial labor organization;
    - (3.) the degree to which related industries ought to be organized together or into separate Industrial Unions, and the criteria on which such decisions should be based; and
    - (4.) effective ways to facilitate cooperation and exchange of information among workers at similar jobs in different industries, and among workers employed by the same company in different industries.
  - b. Research and analysis of the present state of the industries comprised by the several existing Industrial Departments, as well as any new industries not adequately covered by those departments.
  - c. Preparation of a provisional list of Industrial Departments, taking into account the results of the research and analysis conducted under item b.
  - d. Preparation of provisional lists of Industrial Unions to be comprised by each Industrial Department.
  - e. Submission of the complete provisional list to the membership for comment.
  - f. Revision of the provisional list in light of comments from the membership.
  - g. Preparation of a pamphlet explaining the basic concepts of industrial unionism and offering guidance for delegates and organizers in assigning workers to the appropriate Industrial Unions.
  - h. Preparation of a final report to the General Assembly with recommendations.

The General Assembly need not prescribe an agenda for the committee, but it should require the committee to submit an agenda to the General Executive Board, and to keep the Board apprized of changes to that agenda.

5. **The Boston Proposal**: Your committee's mission includes solving the problems which the Boston Proposal is intended to solve. While the proposal has merit, adoption of the Boston Proposal by the General Assembly, pending the committee's final report, would subject the

union to unnecessary expense and trouble to enact a measure that will only be superseded by this committee's recommendations. Its adoption by the membership would also make it virtually impossible for the committee to propose any different arrangement for the workers covered by the proposal. If the General Assembly takes no action on the Boston Proposal until this committee has made its final report, the proposal will remain pending, and can be brought up again if its sponsors find the committee's recommendations unsatisfactory.

**Recommendations**

In light of the foregoing findings, the undersigned makes the following recommendations.

**A. The Boston Proposal**

That the General Assembly take no action on the Boston Proposal until such time as the committee submits its final report.

**B. Membership and Rules**

That the General Assembly adopt the following resolution:

1. *Resolved*, That the Committee on Industrial Classification shall consist of no more than seven, nor fewer than three members, all of whom shall at all times be members in good standing of the Industrial Workers of the World;

2. That the members of the committee be as follows:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Chairman
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. That membership on the committee be restricted to persons who have regular, reliable access to electronic mail, such as will allow them to participate at least weekly in the committee's correspondence; and who are willing and able to devote at least two hours per week to the committee's business;

4. That the committee have the power to adopt by-laws and rules of procedure, consistent with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Industrial Workers of the World, and subject to review

and revision by the General Executive Board upon the request of any two members of the committee;

5. That the committee have the power to select its own chairman from among its members, in the event of the current chairman's resignation or removal from office;
6. That the committee have the power to elect new members and successors for members who resign or are removed;
7. That the chairman of the General Executive Board have the power
  - a. to remove members from the committee for persistent failure to abide by the by-laws and rules of the committee, upon the written request of the committee's chairman or a majority of its members, subject to appeal to the full General Executive Board;
  - b. and to remove the chairman from her or his office upon the written request of a majority of the members of the committee, with or without removing him or her from the committee, subject to appeal to the full General Executive Board; and
8. That the committee, on or before 31 October 2002, adopt an agenda for its work and a timetable for the completion thereof; that it promptly report the same to the chairman of the General Executive Board; that the committee have the power to revise its agenda and timetable from time to time, provided that it report all such revisions to the chairman of the General Executive Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Crutchfield  
Acting Chairman of the  
Committee on Industrial Classification

## APPENDIX

A full record of the committee's proceedings, including proposals and many resource materials, is accessible on the World Wide Web at <http://jdcrotch.home.mindspring.com/i>. Click on "CIC Resources Page" and enter the password ettoriww when prompted.

Fellow Workers interested in joining the committee, or who want to share ideas with the committee, may contact the acting chairman by e-mail at [classify@iww.org](mailto:classify@iww.org).