

## **Solidarity**

### The IWW and The Industrial Union Movement in America

#### **How Many Times This Week Have You...**

- Thought your boss was dumb as a post, and wouldn't be able to do your job if he had to?
- Wondered if you were going to make enough in wages to pay your bills and have some left over to enjoy a decent life away from work?
- Wondered why you never have enough time to spend with your kids?
- Worried about the stability of your job?

#### **How Many Times Have You Thought...**

- I feel terrible, but I can't afford to be sick.
- I need to work some overtime so I can pay the bills.
- How much money is my employer making off of my work?

**If to any of those questions you nodded your head, or if you have other questions about your workplace... you might be interested in the IWW's message . . .**

## Solidarity

### When You Need a Labor Union:

Jobs can be hard to find these days. You may have heard some smug employer lecture about how you should be glad to even have a job, and how you shouldn't complain about how you are treated or how poorly you are paid. Even if your boss *acts* as if he cares about you, you only have to look around your place of employment to see that what he really cares about are profits. Money!

In most cases, the profits generated by any business comes primarily from the labor of the workers with little or no actual work from the bosses and owners except the counting of the money. Your boss wants to keep as much money as possible from the earnings of the business, but to do so they have to pay you as little as possible, and spend as little as possible on the business itself.

In order to prevent the slave-like conditions of 19<sup>th</sup> century America and many third world countries, labor laws were passed in the United states, requiring employers to guarantee a minimum wage, provide breaks from work for rest and lunch, and maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Unfortunately, employers often see these guarantees as unnecessary expenses to them, and try to cheat their workers out of what is provided for them by law. Workers who experience such problems as unpaid wages, pay below the minimum wage, non-compensated over-time, denial of time for breaks, unsafe or unhealthy work environments, discrimination, or sexual harassment are often afraid that there is nothing that they can do about these abuses.

Individual workers who try to fight back on the job usually find they are ineffective, and are often subjected to harassment, disciplined without cause, or fired. If you have a problem, you may be afraid to complain. This is why labor unions were first formed. By joining together in a union, such as the IWW, workers are far more powerful when confronting their boss about workplace injustices.

Problems that seem insurmountable to you alone are often easier to correct when you act as part of a group of employees. When you have a group behind you, you have a lot say in the day to day operations of your workplace, as well as more resources to draw upon to help you make things right. It also makes it harder for the boss to get away with things if it is no longer just your word against theirs.

So Union may be your only answer. Unfortunately, if your workplace is not currently organized, many unions will simply not want to get involved. The IWW is different.

### We Fight for Working People:

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) is a different sort of labor union. Believing in the strengths and abilities of average working people, the IWW is controlled by you and me, its members. By understanding how the work places are run and where our power lies as workers, we can develop the tactics to get everything workers deserve.

Any worker in any workplace regardless of size or structure is welcome in the IWW. Only bosses (defined as those with direct power to hire and fire, or who make their money off of the toil of others) are excluded from IWW membership.

The IWW believes that by acting in solidarity, in union, we are building a new world in the shell of the old. Through our union of solidarity we will create a free world with the good things of life available for all.

When you need a friend in the Labor movement, the IWW is ready to help you with your labor problems. We provide free technical assistance, labor counseling, and legal aid assistance to help you to settle your labor disputes.

IWW members are all working people, like you, so we understand the problems you are facing. Our members have a wide variety of skills and personal contacts which can be used to help you win your struggle and make things right in your workplace.

The IWW fights to give workers control over their salaries, working conditions, workplace responsibilities, job training, health care, child care, and in many other areas. Unlike other unions, we do not view these things as "benefits", but as the true cost of doing business which the bosses should be obligated to pay.

### **Tired of Wage Slavery?**

The clearest examples of wage slavery in America today are the minimum wage jobs and sweatshops where workers submit to the most menial, humiliating, and unhealthy work conditions for a salary that won't even pay the rent. When workers on these jobs get sick and can not work, they often lose their jobs, because their bosses don't allow sick time, or provide medical insurance.

Owners and managers get rich from the labor of workers who toil under these conditions because the work relationship is a coercive relationship. The boss can fire or lay-off people at will, with no real cost to him or his company, but his workers must work under the threat of going hungry or homeless, or watching their families suffer if they should lose their jobs and can't find work.

Business likes unemployment and homelessness, because it keeps the cost of labor down. When unemployment is on the rise, and workers complain about wages or conditions, they are told that they should be glad they have a job! Meanwhile, we are not supposed to notice that Corporate America's huge profits have always been stolen from *our* labor!

### **Organize Your Workplace:**

Labor law gives you the opportunity to complain in court, but if you really want to have a say as to how you are treated on the job, you and your fellow workers need to get organized! If you are willing to organize at your job site by talking to co-workers about the issues that effect them, then you can count on your fellow workers in the IWW to lend their full support to your cause.

Remember, the IWW is not like other unions. It is a do-it-yourself union, organized by the workers themselves. The IWW's strength comes from its members, not from some bureaucracy that is more interested in maintaining itself than in fighting for its members' rights!

Our union can provide tangible, community based resources, like low cost printing, speakers, legal advice on tactics, and how-to manuals. With the IWW you have a friend to help you when you need it, but you are always in charge. After all, you do the work and you know what is best for yourself and your fellow workers.

### **The IWW Welcomes All Workers:**

The IWW was the first union to treat all workers equally, regardless of their ethnic ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or physical abilities. Every working person who earns their living with their hands or their mind is welcome in the IWW.

Historically, the Wobblies have always focused on helping organize those workers that the American Federation of Labor (AFL) shunned. In the early 1900s that meant African-Americans, immigrants, women, and unskilled laborers. Today that means curbside recyclers, non-profit staffers, temp workers, sex-industry workers, co-op employees -- in short, any worker in any workplace regardless of size or structure; even those the AFL-CIO considers too small or unimportant to organize. In our modern economy, with its small workplaces, minimum wage jobs, and focus on the service industry, the IWW approach of organizing by industry is the ideal way to insure that all workers are represented, and considered important parts of the union.

### **The IWW is *Truly* Democratic:**

The IWW is the most democratic union in America. Each workplace is organized by its workers, and it is the workers who make all decisions, and have complete autonomy in running the local. There is no main office enforcing an arbitrary organizational structure.

All IWW locals are organized by industry so that no IWW union will compete with another. We believe an injury to one is an injury to all, and that unions need to stick together when one local is in a fight. All locals are further organized internationally as a federation. Each sends recallable delegates to national meetings which advocate the interests of their locals, and report back to the locals regarding the ongoing state of the union at large.

### **Direct Action:**

The IWW believes in using direct action to accomplish its goals. When there are labor laws to protect the workers' rights, we will use the law to prosecute the bosses who violate it. Where there is injustice, we will use whistle blowing, pickets, strikes, work slowdowns, monkey wrenching, and other tactics to punish the bosses in their pocketbooks.

Historically, the labor movement has been most successful when it relied on the direct intervention of the workers to obtain their demands; rather than allowing professional negotiators to speak for them. The IWW has always engaged in those tactics which it could control itself; what some have called sabotage. Sabotage in this context does not mean arson and dynamite, however. It is more properly defined as "the conscious withdrawal of efficiency." Staying at your workstation but reducing your production by half will bring a boss to his knees quicker than a whole team of negotiators.

If the boss tries to turn the government against us with court orders and police harassment, we will defy them. If they use violence, we will resist! We believe that violence is the last resort of cowards, bosses and police states that are losing control. Our response is to break their resolve by not allowing ourselves to be intimidated. Our strength is in our numbers, our solidarity with one another, and our resolve to protect our rights as honest, hardworking people.

The IWW has never advocated violence. By fighting for justice with non-violent tactics, the IWW has often won the support of an initially mistrustful public.

### **Not Political Power:**

The IWW does not support politicians or any political party. Our Constitution explicitly states "the IWW refuses all alliances, direct and indirect, with existing parties and anti-political sects." This policy has helped us avoid the sectarian feuding that can easily destroy a group.

Politicians are too easily led by money, and are thus too easily allied to the bosses. Throughout history, people with money have realized that they have to buy protection and favors from government if they want to maintain their positions and power. Once this was accomplished through bribery; now it is accomplished with campaign contributions, industrial pacs, full-time professional lobbyists, and an army of lawyers that know how to work the professional bureaucracy and massage the rules and regulations to work for them.

It is the government that has carefully crafted the law in such a way as to give "civil rights" to corporations, protect corporate executives from any legal liability for the actions of their companies, and to provide numerous perks and benefits to business at taxpayer expense. Meanwhile this same government as consistently tried to deny workers their Constitutional rights of free speech, assembly, and due process, whenever it threatened the economic ambitions of Capital.

For over 100 years, political parties which have courted Labor and claimed to represent the workers have either turned on us or been ineffective once they found themselves in office. Meanwhile others have steadfastly and openly sided with the corporations against the workers.

The IWW is a labor union, not a political party. We believe that economic justice must be achieved through economic struggle. The institutions of government have always proven themselves to be the allies of Capital, so we do not wait for politicians to free us from wage-slavery. We believe our power lies in the workplace, not in "the vote".

### **Militarism:**

The IWW believes that wars are primarily fought to make the rich richer and weaken the power of workers. Wars between nations have never benefited the working class, and they never will.

Usually ideas like patriotism are a smokescreen exploited by bosses to trick us into cooperating. In some cases, multi-national corporations may even encourage governments to go to war to help them to exploit workers, control natural resources, and monopolize the production of staples such as food and fuel in other countries. War profiteers, safe in their mansions and boardrooms, never consider the human cost of their military adventurism. Working people are mere cannon fodder for their corporate and imperialist ambitions.

Wars force workers of one country to kill the workers of another country and to die to promote the economic ambitions of corporations and bosses that watch from the sidelines. The IWW believes that unions should exist to improve the lives of the workers they represent, and not to help kill off other workers so that the employing class can make greater profits. Real working class solidarity does not recognize the artificial borders erected between nation-states, but instead unites against a common class enemy.

To put an end to war, working people must lay down their arms and refuse to fight for their masters. Unfortunately, many have been brainwashed into thinking that their interests are the same as those of the people in power, so this is easier said than done. Nevertheless, the IWW is committed to fighting patriotic propaganda by educating workers about where their real self-interest lies.

## **Fire Your Boss!**

The IWW believes that the only antidote to wage slavery is the abolition of the wage system itself. By abolition of the wage system, we mean that the workers themselves should own the workplace, operate it democratically, and share the benefits of all they produce. One day, through solidarity, our unions will be so powerful that we will be able to force the bosses to cede control of the workplaces to those who actually do the work.

Historically, employee-owned workplaces have been able to turn out superior product at lower cost, and provide a greater return to their workers than their capitalist counterparts. This is because those who do the work feel a sense of ownership over everything they do. They feel free to put their ideas into motion on how to make a better product, and don't feel they are losing all of the benefits of their labor to bosses and stockholders who produce nothing.

People who work together and exchange their knowledge solve problems easier than those who work in highly regimented workplaces or rigid bureaucracies. People who are working for themselves are more motivated to do the best possible work than they are when they are working for others. That is the situation that is present when workers are paid only a fraction of the value of their work, and bosses take credit for all of their ideas.

Once workers at other workplaces see how good employee owned shops have it, they will want to know how they can join up. The goal of the IWW is for all workers to be unionized and united under a single labor federation that will be able to protect workers from the tactics of bosses, politicians and organized crime, who cooperate to maximize their power and profits at the expense of labor.

## **Join The I.W.W.**

The IWW is only as strong as its membership. We need your help to carry out our work. It's a do-it-yourself sort of organization, working toward a better world and a better life. Join us.