

Seattle Worker

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Unorganized employees dealing with an abusive boss.



IWW organized employees dealing with an abusive boss.



X390433 - Rain City Wobblies

Your workplace is your workplace. Organize and take control!



ArcelorMittal and US Steel have recently proven once again that no matter how much bosses squeeze us, they will never stop trying to squeeze us more. Despite extracting concessions from their workers for years and having their profits propped up by tariffs, the companies tried to limit pay increases for the United Steelworkers while at the same time forcing the Steelworkers to pay more for their healthcare. The Steelworkers, for their part, voted overwhelmingly for a strike that would have affected the steel industry across the United States, and after standing strong for months, they won. ArcelorMittal and US Steel have agreed to a 14% wage increase and an increase in pension benefits while failing to force the Steelworkers to pay more out-of-pocket for healthcare.

TECT Aerospace in Everett and Affordable Custom Cabinets in Otis Orchards near Spokane have hired union busting firms Kulture Consulting and LRI Consulting Services respectively. Because why spend money to improve the working conditions of your business when you can spend money to make them worse? (Thanks to unionbusteralerts.com for making this information easy to find! Check them out on the web!)

Unemployment is even lower than normal, which is worrisome to our economic overlords. The problem is if the pool of available labor dries up, and employees everywhere start to realize that our bosses need us more than we need them, we might all start demanding raises. There is no way the bosses are going to cut their own pay to increase ours, so if that happens they will jack up prices (i.e. force runaway inflation) to cover the pay increases, which will further break our already broken capitalist system. Don't worry though, the overlords have a solution. In December, the Federal Reserve completed a year of interest rate hikes which should help keep more people unemployed and hungry for work, so those of us fortunate enough to have jobs don't get so comfortable with our positions that we start thinking we deserve a living wage or anything. The interest rate hikes are

expected to continue into next year or until we enter another recession. At which point, layoffs will commence, interest rates will be cut, and we can play this horrible game all over again.

There was an election recently that resulted in all kinds of politicians getting elected to all kinds of seats and some particularly motivated politicians just stealing their seats instead. A lot of those politicians are introducing truly bold proposals to support labor unions, raise the minimum wage, fund a green "new deal," unshackle us from employer provided healthcare, and all kinds of other pro-worker things. It would be exciting if it weren't for the fact that the election resulted in a divided Congress, which means absolutely none of it is going to pass. If history is any guide, these things will suddenly fall off the priorities list once either party actually has enough votes to make them happen. So if you want any of those things, you better get organized, because if we don't get those things for ourselves, we won't get them at all.

Despite earning over \$4.5 billion in net income in their last fiscal year, Seattle's own Starbucks is well underway with a plan to layoff a huge percentage of their corporate workforce, mostly in Seattle. It isn't clear what Starbucks plans to do with the nearly \$9 billion they now have sitting on their books doing nothing. They certainly seem to enjoy sticking it to their employees, so perhaps they're saving up to cover legal fees like the ones they had to pay last summer in California after forcing their employees to work off the clock.

New York has decided to give Seattle's Amazon upwards of \$3 billion in tax breaks, credits, and incentives to build a campus in Long Island City which will "create" up to 25,000 jobs. \$3 billion is enough money to provide completely free housing to all of the more than 15,000 homeless families (which includes over 22,000 children) in New York City for the next three years. And that doesn't include the \$500 million in tax breaks Virginia is going to give to Amazon. Despite this outpouring of public cash, the citizens of New

York and Virginia will have no say in Amazon's management and hiring decisions, no claim to Amazon's profits, no votes in Amazon's board elections, and many of the so-called new jobs created will be given to workers who are not currently residents of either New York or Virginia.

New Seasons Markets, which operates in California, Washington, and Oregon, has had a public unionization effort underway in their stores since the end of 2017. In that time, the New Seasons Workers United suffered through a virulent anti-union effort, which included their employer spending a lot of money on union busting law firm Cruz and Associates. Then the United Food and Commercial Workers, an AFL-affiliated business union, skipped out on them. Despite all that, and operating as an independent union, New Seasons Workers United recently succeeded in forcing New Seasons Markets to give a raise to over 80% of their clerks and to establish a \$15 an hour starting wage for new hires.

After years of Google protecting their abusive managers, the company has finally decided to overturn their long-standing forced arbitration policy in cases of sexual

harassment. CEO Sundar Pichai sent an email to his employees telling them, "...Google's leaders and I have heard your feedback and been moved by the stories you've shared." Of course, they have been hearing the stories for years, or they wouldn't have adopted the policy in the first place. The difference this time is that what the managers heard wasn't individual employees complaining to human resources in ones and twos, but 20,000 Google employees around the globe walking out in solidarity with each other.

In case it wasn't already clear: Human Resources exists to protect your employer from you. Only concerted action can protect you from your employer. So contact your nearest IWW branch and learn how you can get your workplace organized!



106 years ago

From January 11 to March 14 1912, red-card-holding immigrant workers struck at textile mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The workers fought for and won higher wages in what is now commonly known as the Bread and Roses Strike. Workers sang the rallying cry, "give us bread, but give us roses!"

All Quiet on the News Front

Why Your Union is Organizing Underground

by Lindsay Mimir

The Seattle IWW is organizing in no less than seven workplaces in five different industries across the city-- education, food service, retail, tech, and office workers. Our organizers are working diligently to build up their organizing committees, train and recruit their fellow workers, and win gains on the shopfloor. We just held another Organizer Training 101 to help empower our fellow workers to take control of their workplaces. Every day, our fellow workers are creating better lives for themselves and their coworkers. I wish I could share the details of some of the victories we've had recently, but none of our current campaigns are in a position to go public.

Going public means openly declaring the union to the boss. Business unions typically "go public" by filing for a

Through solidarity, they can then take the actions necessary to improve their lives.

National Labor Relations Board election. Other ways IWW unions have gone public include picketing or going on strike, demanding recognition, delivering a set of

demands, or all the workers showing up in an IWW shirt, hat, or wearing buttons.

Our current campaigns are still underground and our organizers are still operating without alerting their bosses to the union's presence. Of course, once a boss knows there is a union forming, they will often take action to stamp it out, so we will normally put off going public as long as possible. This doesn't mean we can't win gains, however. The solidarity unionism model the IWW follows allows us to achieve victories without the need to invite unwanted attention from the bosses.

Solidarity unionism is distinct from business unionism because members in the IWW take action for themselves rather than relying on bureaucrats and negotiators to take action for them. That keeps the power in the hands of the workers themselves--in the hands of the people directly affected by the conditions in their workplaces. In order to build up our organizing campaigns, the workers have to build

power by convincing their coworkers to join in the effort. Through solidarity, they can then take the actions necessary to improve their lives.

We teach these strategies in our Organizer Training. Our entire model is built on forming real, personal relationships between coworkers. We have to unite as the working class against oppression, but we have to meet our coworkers where they are and go from there. We're building bonds of solidarity and friendship, which take time. People are rightfully afraid to join unions, to engage in the fight against bosses, to put their jobs on the line. So to organize people, we start with small tasks and build outward, all the while building solidarity and personal connections, and growing the organizing capabilities and skills of each worker in the shop. We take our time at this stage because not only is it vitally important to reach out to every worker in the workplace and build up the organizing abilities of as many as possible, but because personal relationships and solidarity take time to grow.

And there are too many tangible benefits to staying underground for us to risk exposing our campaigns too early. As Marianne Garneau and MK Lees argue convincingly on organizing.work in their essay "Do Solidarity Unions Need to 'Go Public'?", going public can be disastrous for a campaign, even one that might have a good organizing culture and strong shopfloor presence. The one thing going public is absolutely guaranteed to do is start the boss' anti-union efforts--retaliation and firings, hiring a union-busting lawyer or consultant, lobbying workers to sabotage the union, etc.

It's also clear that we can win significant gains without ever telling the bosses that there is a bona fide union in their shop, as Garneau and Lees also argue. Most bosses tend to think that unions are one thing--an outside presence that shows up and files for an election, and the workers accept or

There is no easy way to build solidarity or fend off a union-busting campaign. It can take years for unions to build...

reject it, and then there's a contract. In the IWW, we know that unions are (or should be) far more than the limited vision of bureaucratic contractualism. Solidarity unionism means the workers fight for themselves inside the shop, taking direct action against policies that make work hard or intolerable.

Groups of workers routinely take collective action without telling the boss that it's a union action. Gathering together and taking a demand to a boss is a common tactic and often succeeds in changing specific conditions. We know it's the union bringing people together to change the power dynamics of the workplace, but the bosses don't see it that way. As long as the union can keep winning gains without exposing itself to the inevitable anti-union campaign, then it should keep doing that. The risks associated with going public—especially going public too early when those critical relationships and bonds of solidarity haven't formed yet—are simply too great when the union can continue to win and organize under the radar.

For us, we are encouraging our campaigns to stay hidden for as long as possible. There is no easy way to build solidarity or fend off a union-busting campaign. It can take years for unions to build enough support to go public. But we take this approach because we care about our fellow workers, and we care about winning both in the short and long terms. We care about confronting the bosses strategically and patiently to protect our fellow workers from retaliation.

And if our campaigns continue to progress as they are, then we will have news soon about their successes.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

January

- 1/2 - General Organizing Committee
- 1/16 - General Membership Branch meeting
- 1/26 - Introduction to the IWW

February

- 2/6 - General Organizing Committee
- 2/20 - General Membership Branch meeting
- 2/23 & 2/24 - Organizer Training 101

March

- 3/5 - General Organizing Committee
- 3/20 - General Membership Branch Meeting

ARE YOU A WORKER INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR WORKPLACE STORY?

We want to hear from you. The
Seattle Worker is gathering
interviews with workers about your
life and conditions on the job.

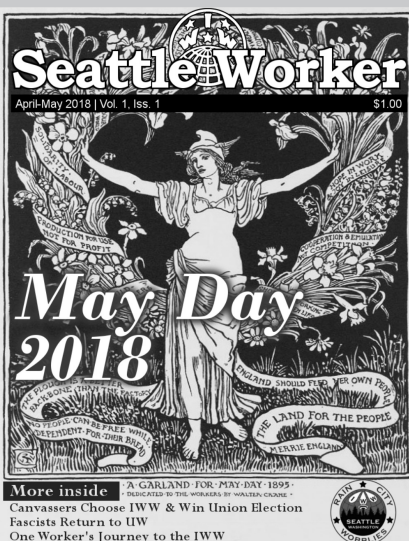
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REVOLUTIONARY UNIONISM

There are many ways to effect positive change in the world (activism, electoral politics, legal action, changes in individual behavior, etc.), and all of them have been used with various levels of success in addressing the acute problems caused by our economic system. But any attempt to effect real, permanent, systemic change while avoiding the depredations of the power-hungry, will require organizational action that is geographically broad, self-perpetuating, and--most importantly--radically democratic. Workplace organizing has always been, and will continue to be, the most effective form of this action.

Workplace organizing has brought us the forty hour week, freedom of speech, social security, and many other social, political, and economic gains. Martin Luther King Jr. and many other civil rights activists were often bailed out of jail by labor unions. The Women's Trade Union League helped win women the right to vote. The Industrial Workers of the World was one of the first US organizations of any kind to advocate for racial equality. More recently, the National Nurses United are one of the biggest forces pushing for universal health care. The fight for 15 is fighting to raise the minimum wage. And nearly every union everywhere helps reduce gender and racial income disparities while promoting health and wellbeing.

There are several distinct advantages that workplace organizing has over other forms of organizing and activism. First, it operates at the point of production, which is the source of all power in our current political and economic system. The oligarchs can't do anything without money, and their money is generated at the point of production, so putting our workplaces under democratic control is not much different than putting the oligarchy under democratic control.

Second, workplace organizing provides something concrete to organize around. People must understand they are all members of some community of interest if they are to get organized, and one of the most common and obvious communities of interest is the workplace. Regardless of gender, race, religion, political affiliation, or anything else, everyone that is employed in a given workplace, and all those peoples' dependents, are automatically a community of interest. They all have an interest in making their workplace a safe, stable, and lucrative place to work.

The third advantage of workplace organizing is that it operates at both the micro level (the individual workplace) and macro level (the whole economy) without contradiction. Every win for an individual workplace, or even an individual worker, raises the expectations of everyone (workers and bosses alike). These wins also weaken the capitalists' collective ability to fight against

systemic change by siphoning off financial resources that would otherwise be used to defend the entrenched power structure. And wins in individual workplaces will not completely deflate the will of the workers to see those wins applied to the economy as a whole, because making gains universal relieves the workers of the burden of fighting to keep them at their individual workplaces.

As an example of these three advantage and their effects, consider health care. If the workers at some company come together, fight for, and win a health insurance plan, the benefit to themselves is obvious. What is less obvious, is their win has also benefited the rest of us. Because of their efforts, next time there is a proposal to implement universal health care, the company that is paying for the newly won health benefits will have both a reduced ability and a reduced will to fight against having their taxes raised to pay for it. The ability is reduced, because the company's employees have done us all the favor of redistributing some of the company's funds away from the capitalists and toward themselves where the funds can't be used to buy politicians. The company's will to fight is reduced because the company is now already making health care payments, so it just becomes an issue of shifting those payments from a private to a public provider, which is an easier lift than trying to force payments that currently aren't being made at all. Meanwhile, the employees that gained the health care will still have reason to fight for universal health care, so they don't have to go without should they lose their jobs in the future.

This same logic applies to increased wages, shortened work weeks, health and safety, management and ownership of capital, and nearly every other issue that affects the businesses we work for, which are most of the issues that affect anyone or anything at all.

For this reason, everyone should support the labor movement. Even if you aren't interested in social, environmental, or economic progress, you love your comfortable job, your pay is high, your boss is the nicest person on the planet, you can't fathom ever being laid off, and you have doubts about unions' ability to win systemic changes, you should still support the union movement. Because on the micro level, the improvement of conditions in any workplace in your community almost by definition improves the community as a whole even if your cushy job is otherwise totally unaffected.

Business vs Revolutionary Unions

In general, there are two models for workplace organizing: business unions and revolutionary (or radical) unions. Everything

Workplace organizing has always been, and will continue to be, the most effective form of revolutionary action.

By Maria Garcia.

up to this point can apply equally well to business unions as it can to revolutionary unions, but there are significant differences between the two.

While business unions can and do effect all the positive changes listed above, their core function is that of contract negotiators. If a majority of the workers at some business vote for union representation, the union will negotiate a contract for them. As payment for services rendered, the workers have dues deducted from their paycheck. If a worker leaves the company they work for, and hence is no longer a party to the contract, they also leave the union. Since the union is now no longer providing them with any personal service, the worker no longer has to pay dues. This business model creates a lot of problems that prevent business unions from unlocking the full potential of their membership, not the least of which is the fact that they are a business model. As such, the union administrators often treat their members not like fellow workers but paying customers.

Business unions tend to be very possessive of their members as their members are not only their clients but their income stream. This impedes the ability of workers to support one another across businesses and across industries. Also, the success of the union administrators' revenue gathering efforts depend on the success of the companies that employ their members, so they tend to be very accommodating to those companies. If necessary, business unions will resort to strikes to maintain their bargaining position, but being essentially paid agents for their members, they tend to look at their members' interests as being aligned with the employers' success. Simply put, in the business union model, well-paid business leaders of the union negotiate with well-paid bosses of the company. Worker solidarity too often becomes just a vehicle for these negotiations.

These conflicts of interest between union members and union administrators are not insurmountable. The United Electrical Workers union mostly resolves this problem by specifying in their constitution that no union officer shall get paid more than the highest paid worker in the union. The IWW constitution also has this clause, but takes it even further by refusing to use paid organizers. And the IWW currently has only one paid officer and two paid staffers in all of North America. All the IWW membership branches are fully staffed by unpaid volunteers, which completely removes financial motives.

Outside of the perverse incentives that are a consequence of high officer pay, business unions also tend to hamstring themselves with their membership restrictions. Members must be employed by a company that the union represents in order to be

eligible for enrollment in that union. Needless to say, this restricts the overall size of union membership. While membership restriction doesn't eliminate the union's effectiveness, it certainly retards it. There is after all strength in numbers.

In contrast, business associations like the Chamber of Commerce, one of several virulently anti-union organizations of the employing class, are way more inclusive than any of the business unions. The Chamber of Commerce is happy to enroll any capitalist from any industry as a member, which gives it obvious advantages in numbers, money, and influence over the business unions they oppose.

Of course, the most important aspect of revolutionary unions that separates them from business unions is that while the business unions can and do improve the working conditions of their members, they have no incentive to fully liberate their members from the wage system. Like any business, the business unions want to continue operating as long as they can, and since they primarily function as contract negotiators, they can't continue to operate if they don't have a counterparty to negotiate with. This means that the best case scenario for the business unions is a state where all the workers are clumped into disconnected unions working under contracts that allow them to keep much, but certainly not all, of the value they produce, with the remainder going to the capitalist bosses. This would be a definite improvement over the current state of things, but it would still leave us in a precarious situation.

As long as the capitalist bosses maintain ownership of businesses, they will fight to remove any and all democracy from the workplace. The only way to make sure the threat from the owning class is permanently eliminated is to take full democratic control of all the wealth flowing out of the businesses we work for and direct it back into our own pockets where it might be used to support our families, our communities, and our environment.

So if you want to take the fight against the abuses of the wage system from a specific grievance at your workplace all the way to complete democratic control of all workplaces, and you want to do so in the most efficient and effective way possible, then you should support the organizations that are in the best position to do so: revolutionary labor unions. The best way to support a revolutionary labor union is to join one. There is only one left in the United States. We are the Industrial Workers of the World.

History Corner: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

THE LABOR ORGANIZER, WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATE, AND FEARLESS DEFENDER OF THE WORKING CLASS VISITED SEATTLE IN 1917.

By Hannah Hopkins



Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn is pictured here standing on a soapbox on the right side of the image above the two large umbrellas. She is addressing a crowd of people in Seattle in 1917 at a rally in defense of IWW prisoners who were imprisoned following the Everett Massacre. At this time, Flynn worked full-time as an organizer for the IWW and was a key figure in the Spokane, Washington free speech fight, the Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and often made trips west to sites of labor struggles like Seattle when she was needed. She defined herself first by her status as a working-class person, and she committed herself to workers' emancipation as well as for women's rights and birth control. And because of her intimate knowledge of the intersections between labor rights and women's rights, she often criticized the bourgeois women who stood up for women's suffrage while turning their backs on women laborers. Flynn wrote in 1915, "I have seen prosperous, polite, daintily-gowned ladies become indignant over police brutality in the Spokane free speech fight of 1909, and lose all interest—even refuse to put up bail for pregnant women—when they realized that the IWW intended to organize the lumber, mining and farming industries, whence the golden stream flowed to pay for their comfort and leisure." A firebrand, a dedicated organizer, and a lifelong advocate for working people, Flynn reminds us why women have always been such an important part of the IWW: "The IWW has been accused of pushing women to the front. This is not true. Rather, the women have not been kept in back, and so they have naturally moved to the front."

If you're interested in learning more about the history of women and the IWW in the Pacific Northwest, check out the recently published *Beyond the Rebel Girl* by Heather Mayer from the Oregon State University Press (2018).

THE UNION WILL MAKE YOU GO ON STRIKE!

REFUTING MYTHS ABOUT UNIONS TO ENCOURAGE SOLIDARITY IN THE WORKING CLASS

Bosses love to tell half-truths and say that if the workers join a union, the union will force them to go on strike. But our union is completely democratic. No decision can be made without the workers' consent. Workers will go on strike because **they decide** to go on strike. By Lexi Owens.

Applebee's restaurants' parent company Gulf Coast Restaurants Inc. sent a letter to employees in 1998 in an attempt to undermine the IWW's organizing efforts, declaring, "The only weapon the Union has is a strike. The only way that the Union could try to force the Company to give in would be to call you out on strike. It would be you who would go without work and without your pay and benefits to try and get the things that the Union wants. You and your family would suffer, but the Union organizers would not be hurt at all."

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation outlines on its website all the ways a union can punish workers who work during strikes, cross picket lines, or leave the union. The NRWLDf is implicitly stating that a union can force you to go on strike by fining and bullying you.

When the IWW was organizing at Jimmy John's in the early 2010s, the owners sent out fliers saying "Wobblies want to abolish capitalism. We're proud to be American!" implying that the IWW is both anti-American and will force you to be anti-American too, if you become a member.

Behind each of these examples is the big lie: the union is an outside entity that will force you to do things you don't want to do. And while that is arguably true when it comes to business unions run by paid bureaucrats, the IWW fundamentally disproves this big lie every time we start an organizing campaign.

In order to scare workers into not organizing, employers will often tell their workers that unions will force them to go on strike without the input or approval of the membership. It's a pervasive myth about unions. Employers claim that the union doesn't care about the members' livelihoods. And while the union bosses profit from dues, the workers suffer. All the while, the company is forced to bargain away its rights and profits and give in to what the union wants.

The IWW can't force you to do anything you don't want to do. Our dues are voluntary, for example. Our assessments--extra money that goes to the union or the branch for various projects--are always voluntary, even for members. The IWW can't force you to attend meetings or trainings, hold certain political beliefs, or do anything illegal.

And here's the big one. Can the IWW force you to go on strike? Absolutely not. This principle of freedom and democracy is enshrined in our Constitution in Article IV "Union Democracy": "Workers at a workplace have exclusive

rights to collectively engage in decision making related to that workplace." No union bureaucrat, committee, officer, or body can compel any workers at a workplace to take an action such as a strike, slowdown, or other industrial disruption. Every action must be approved democratically by the workers in the shop themselves.

The IWW cannot be an outside entity. Our model simply does not function like the service model employed by other unions. We can't (and don't) swoop into a workplace and declare to the workers that they should all join the IWW now! Our campaigns begin with individual members who decide they want to organize at their workplaces. They then painstakingly build personal relationships with their coworkers.

We organize this way because we care about workers. We care about ending exploitation. We care about the people who are affected by capitalism. And we care because we take the time to build relationships within our workplaces and learn about how capitalism and exploitation make us all miserable together. The IWW isn't an outside force that invades a workplace. We are the workers themselves and we decide how we want to organize our workplaces. Once we build those relationships, we can bring our coworkers together in one union that practices solidarity and fights to make the lives of each member better.

But we can only fight for each worker when we are standing beside them. In the workshop, the office, the field, the factory, that's where the IWW is.

Check out Lexi Owens's post on itsgoingdown.org about building a better IWW culture.



Want to become a member? Fill out this form and send it to us:
1122 E. Pike St. #1142
Seattle WA 98122

Application for Membership Aplicación para Membresía

☐ I affirm that I am a worker and that I am not an employer. [Afirmo que soy trabajador/a y no soy empleador.]

☐ I agree to abide by the constitution and regulations of this organization, and will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes. [Pacto de obedecer a la constitución y las reglas de esta organización, y estudiaré sus principios, y me informaré de sus objetivos.]

Name/Nombre: _____

Address/Dirección: _____

City/Ciudad: _____ State/Estado: _____

ZIP: _____ Country/ País : _____

Email: _____

Telephone/Teléfono: _____

Employer/Empleador: _____

Occupation/Ocupación: _____

☐ I would prefer to receive copies of the IWW's General Organization Bulletin in paper form, by mail (Default is electronic, by email).

[Prefiero recibir copias del Boletín General por correo. (No sobre e-mail)]

☐ I would like information about the IWW's General Defense Committee. [Me gustaría recibir más información sobre el Comité de Defensa General.]

Dues Rate Based on Monthly Income

Under \$2,000 = \$11 per month

\$2,000 – 3,500 = \$22 per month

Over \$3,500 = \$33 per month

Initiation fee is equal to one month's dues.

Cuota Dependiente de Paga Mensual

Menos que \$2,000 = \$11 por mes

\$2,000 a 3,500 = \$22 por mes

Mas que \$3,500 = \$33 por mes

Iniciación = cuota de un mes

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month /mes day/día year/año

Member No. / Número de Miembro/a: X

Industrial Union No. / Número de Sindicato Industrial:

Delegate/ Delegado/a: _____

Delegate No. / Número de Delegado/a:

Initiation/Iniciación: \$ _____ + Dues/Cuota: \$ _____ + Ass'ts/Tasa: \$ _____ = Total \$ _____

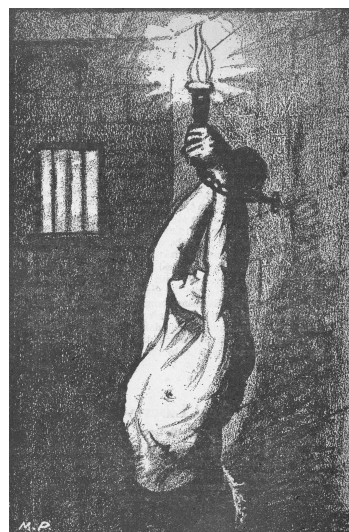
Please Return this Page to General Headquarters

What is the I.W.W.?

The **Industrial Workers of the World** is a radical, democratic, member-run labor union. We are committed to the liberation of the working class from the tyranny of capitalism. We believe that in our current economic system, wages are determined by a small number of elites who belong to the ownership class and we can no longer allow these people to determine our standard of living.

The IWW began in 1905 in Chicago, making it one of the oldest unions in the US. Seattle has a long history with the IWW, going all the way back to 1905. Wobblies--as members of the IWW are known--helped organize the Seattle General Strike of 1919.

We must unite together as workers into a single movement. Only through unity can we hope to revolutionize the economic system which strips away our freedom, our wealth, and our lives. Together, we can fight for what we deserve. But only if we act as one.



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