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BEN FLETCHER Marine Transport Workers IU 510

The MTW-IWW introduced non-segregated Union Locals on the Waterfronts of Baltimore, Norfolk and Philadelphia as well as ports on the Gulf. The best Organizer was Ben Fletcher. As an Orator, his ringing voice needed no microphone and his sense of humor got many a heckler on the run.

"What has miscegenation got to do with our Job Conditions? I don't see anyone here as Black as I am. But we all damn well know the reason!"

GATO NEGRO PRESS
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1987

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Letter from the Editor

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Submissions welcome! Email articles, editorials, artwork, and photographs to:

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"Oh, the IWW still exists?" I get this question every so often. Well, yes, we have been here all along. Wobblies have kept the flames alive through thick and thin, staying connected to our vision, regrowing, with concrete tools for workers everywhere.

This issue ties together our past and our present to launch us forward into the future. "Direct Action Keeps us Safe," reprinted from organizing.work, is a firsthand account of workers organizing to win their coronavirus safety demands. In "How I Joined the IWW," a worker tells the story of how he joined the IWW in the middle of a workplace organizing campaign. "How Employers Organize," excerpted from the 9th edition of the One Big Union pamphlet, explores our strategy and vision.

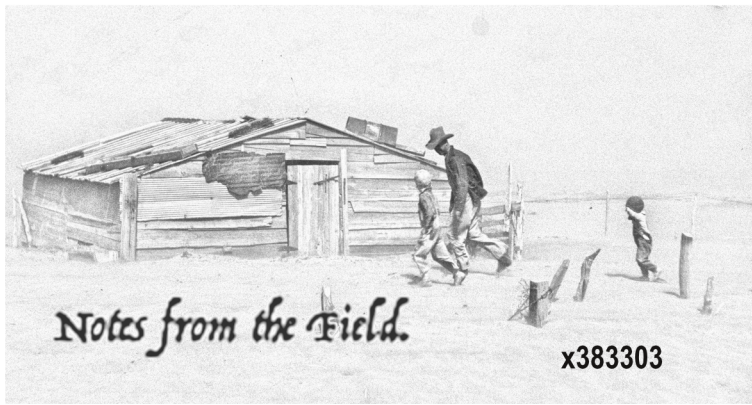
Two book reviews, "Deep River" and "The Red Coast," showcase books that tell the rich and complex story of IWW communities organizing in the Pacific Northwest. This contrasts with a popular Western written by Zane Grey in 1919, which paints Wobblies as terrifying low-lives who burn wheat fields and threaten America's "racial purity."

And the future? That's up to us!



Cover art is by Carlos Cortez Koyokuikatl, a manual laborer, poet, muralist, and graphic artist. He joined the Industrial Workers of the World in 1947, created more than 100 blocks for reprinting art, and drew cartoons for the Industrial Worker for decades. This is his portrait of Ben Fletcher, whose organizing in a non-segregated IWW local became legendary. For more about Carlos Cortez Koyokuikatl, visit:

<https://archive.iww.org/history/biography/CarlosCortez/1/>



In possibly the largest General Strike in history, 250 million people went on strike in India in November. This accounted for about 20% of India's population. The strike coincided with India's Constitution Day, which commemorates the adoption of the constitution in 1949. The strike is prompted by an attack on workers' rights and farmers' protections by the right-wing government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Further details and photos can be found at:

<https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/11/27/250-million-people-participate-in-nationwide-strike-in-india/>

In a case from Yakima, 300 dairy workers have won a dispute with their employer over wages--winning the right for overtime pay. In the case before the Washington Supreme Court (Martinez-Cuevas v. DeRuyter Bros. Dairy, Inc.), the court found that the dairy failed to pay minimum wage to dairy workers, did not provide adequate rest and meal breaks, failed to compensate pre- and post-shift duties, and failed to pay overtime. The workers were working 9 to 12 hours a day, six days a week. Workers asserted that the exemption was racially motivated to impact the Latinx population.

Justice Gonzalez asserted that all workers in dangerous industries have the right to receive workplace health and safety protections. The decision pointed out that unlike most agricultural workers the dairy workers were not seasonal. In only four other states (CA, MN, NY, MD) are overtime protection provided to agricultural workers.

Washington State L&I figures show that in 2015, the injury rate for the Evergreen State's dairy industry was 121% higher than all other state industries combined, and 19% higher than the rest of the agricultural sector.

More details on the fight for overtime pay can be found at:

<https://ufw.org/wavertime/>

While gig workers lost ground in California with the passage of Prop 22, the story is different in Seattle. Last September, gig workers in Seattle pressured the City Council to pass a new Fair Pay Standard, which links gig workers to Seattle's minimum wage regulations. This is the last part of a package that provided sick pay, hazard pay, and minimum wages (AFTER expenses) to gig drivers. Recent Covid-19 regulations allow gig drivers special time allowances to sanitize their vehicles between trips.

A city fact sheet details the companies and workers covered by the regulations. You can access the Seattle Gig Worker Paid Sick and Safe Time Fact Sheet at:

https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/LaborStandards/Fact%20Sheet_GWPSST_v2_08072020.pdf

For complete details go to:

<https://www.seattle.gov/laborstandards/ordinances/covid-19-gig-worker-protections-/gig-worker-paid-sick-and-safe-time-ordinance>

North of Seattle on the west side of the Salish Sea, Snohomish County has strengthened the apprentice program standards for public works and construction projects. The new regulations add tracking metrics to ensure the effectiveness and compliance on county projects. The changes will make apprenticeship programs more accessible to new workers. The ordinance requires a 15 percent apprenticeship utilization rate in the building trades.

Substitute Ordinance 20-028 is expected to go into effect in early November and will apply to all new county public works and construction contracts costing more than \$1 million. More and detailed information can be found at:

<https://www.thestand.org/2020/10/snohomish-co-adopts-states-strongest-apprenticeship-standard/>



Direct Action Keeps Us Safe

by Ed King

Reprinted by permission from Organizing Work
(<https://organizing.work/>)

Ed King describes how he and his coworkers at a diner have kept each other and customers safe during the pandemic. Servers at this restaurant have been organized with the IWW since 2016. They have refused to file for formal recognition. Instead, workers bargain directly with management on an ongoing basis, addressing issues on the job through direct action.

For a while, it seemed like the restaurant would never reopen. When it finally did, it was unclear whether our solidarity union would be able to take any significant action in this unprecedented atmosphere. What was clear, was we were not going to accept any risks to workers' health and safety when operating indoors during a pandemic.

Since they decided to bring back a skeleton crew based on seniority, the restaurant ended up bringing back some of the most radical, active union members. The question was, would this split of the staff (between rehires and those waiting to be rehired) cause a division that would hobble our leverage and ability to act. It turns out it didn't.

During the six plus months of shutdown, we had managed to have regular meetings and keep solidarity high by organizing a GoFundMe campaign to raise money for workers who didn't

qualify for unemployment. We ended up raising over \$28,000. As well as providing much needed relief for struggling employees, this enabled us to keep in communication and create goodwill.

When we returned it became clear that some of the safety protocols were being applied sporadically and we decided to make a formal demand to check the temperatures of workers and ask the legally required health screening questions. We voted on this at a virtual meeting, almost like usual, and then individually informed workers of our plan, to avoid blowback.

The restaurant never replies directly to our demands, but they ended up quietly doing what we asked for right after the demand was made. We knew we still had the power to act to control procedure on the floor.

The restaurant never replies directly to our demands, but they ended up quietly doing what we asked for

Next up we tackled the problem of the restaurant allowing non-customers to use the bathrooms without filling out contact tracing. We authorized this in the same way, with a vote, and decided to do a physical march on the boss on this issue. It actually was easier because of how slow the business was, and how few employees we had on shift. Three of us marched on the boss and he immediately agreed to our demand. Clearly we had as much power as ever.

About a month later, the union learned, through our networking app, that an employee had tested positive for COVID-19. A few hours went by and our employer did not notify us. This infuriated the staff. We sprang into action and formulated an email request for them to let us know about positive COVID tests among staff, and to follow health protocols.

24 servers sent the same email to management. This was a lower-risk technique we had used successfully in the past. Within the hour, management replied that someone had tested positive but had not had extended contact with other employees

and so no further action was legally required. While this may have been true under the law, we are a restaurant where servers sing and are in close contact indoors for up to six hours. We decided that

we needed to ensure our safety and set a precedent for the future.

We decided on a demand to require front of house employees (including managers) that worked with the employee who tested positive to take a paid week off and be tested before returning to work. This was a little more complicated because it necessitated us individually reaching out to workers who would be losing shifts. We also voted to have the union partially reimburse those workers for lost tips. We made the demand with a deadline for response, and an escalation plan of having the next crew refuse to work because of safety concerns. We did not need to exercise this as the restaurant once again gave us what we wanted.

We learned that the same techniques that worked in the past still worked, even though the monetary threat of withholding our labor was not nearly as damaging. We succeeded by making reasonable, clear demands with deadlines and escalation plans. Additionally, this period has made clear that having direct action and solidarity on the shop floor is essential to responding to circumstances that none of us thought we would ever have to face. This type of action can and should be duplicated in shops everywhere.

We succeeded by making reasonable, clear demands with deadlines and escalation plans.



Direct Action Gets the Goods

I.W.W. tactics such as direct action in the workplace are nothing new, and workers take part whether they are part of a legally recognized union or not. These articles highlight actions, large and small, that "get the goods."

In "How to Keep On Keeping On," Ellen David Friedman shares tips for direct action: "Talk with co-workers who also despise this waste of time, and persistently reach out until you have a critical mass—it could be five people or 100, depending on your workplace—who are willing to just stop doing it." (<https://labornotes.org/2021/01/how-keep-keeping>)

In "Bargaining for the Common Good in the Coronavirus Era," Marianne Garneau points to a sick-out waged by Arizona workers and other union actions as a way forward. (<https://organizing.work/2020/08/bargaining-for-the-common-good-in-the-coronavirus-era/>)

In "With Grievance Procedures Suspended, Health Care Workers Turn to Direct Action," an anonymous source tells the story of how workers in Ontario won a demand for Personal Protective Equipment. (<https://organizing.work/2020/04/with-grievance-processes-suspended-health-care-workers-turn-to-direct-action/>)

In "Around the world, platform food couriers are mobilising for basic workers' rights," Marina Watson Peláez reports a global rise in self-organized collective action based on a study of delivery companies Uber Eats, Just Eat, Deliveroo, Foodora, Zomato, and Glovo. (https://www.equaltimes.org/around-the-world-platform-food?lang=en#.X_8LEBa1Y2z)

How I Joined the IWW

by William Clayworth

Coming out of college with a degree, I questioned myself: is this the right degree? I couldn't really find any jobs that made money. Typical millennial problem: you see these generations before you, with your parents doing better than their parents, and you feel this pressure as a millennial to do that. So I found myself a better education. A better education should lead to better money, but that's not exactly what happened. I got summer jobs and internships.

Finally I went to a job fair and got a job in my field, where I started as a contingent person and then got a full time job. It was a weird process that still feels like a mystery, so I had imposter syndrome—I didn't have seniority, and was I really deserving of this?

I decided: yeah, I want this power!

A couple years into the job, my apartment caught on fire. The people at my work were

really supportive of me, and one of my coworkers started a fundraiser. I was blown away! I felt a new appreciation for my coworkers. I had worked with them, bonded with them, and now got all this support. But the whole concept of organizing to better my workplace was not on my mind. I had learned about the IWW in 9th grade history class—the General Strike, the immigrant organizing—but I had forgotten about it.

The solar eclipse, which I didn't get to see, stirred my passion about wanting to learn all about astronomy—black holes, solar systems, planets. I started learning all this stuff I never learned in school and having intellectual conversations with a transgender coworker. That was eye-opening. We started talking about our problems with how the work was being run, and another one of my coworkers, who was talkative and enjoyed working there also, joined in.

Then one time I went into the break room and there was this petition. I was like, okay, petitions, I'd heard of that before, it's democratic, let's do it! I signed it. Around the same time there was a "march on the boss," but I didn't know at the time that's what it was. So there was the petition, and the march on the boss, and I started hearing rumors about this "special book club." I actually believed they were talking about books, but I was starting to put it together that they were doing stuff to make the workplace better. So eventually I decided to just go see what it was all about.

When I finally asked my coworker, she gave me the details of the meeting time and the space they had booked. So I showed up, and there were my two buddies and four other coworkers, and then 3 strangers who turned out to be from the IWW. This meeting had a set agenda, and a chance to speak—nothing like my workplace meetings. I was drawn to it. I ranted, foisted my frustration, stormed off, got water—I was hyped. I found out there was this training taking place in a week or two, and I thought, sure, I'll go to this training! If you join the IWW you don't have to pay the training fee, so I was like, sure, I'll do it, I can afford this, I pulled out a red card and went to the OT101 training. I went there, got free food, and it was very educational.

The training made sense on a deep level, and I took it to be the truth. I had already been dealing with the question of power, and what does that mean, and I had post-traumatic stress from my fire and also from being a millennial, and I decided: yeah, I want this power! It was something that's never been laid out to me, this whole idea of industrial solidarity. The big thing that stuck out to me was the direct action part of it. They also had a graph with a scale of escalation and number of people involved. Some actions might be done by one person and be high escalation, versus a petition takes many people and is low escalation. The strike is the highest escalation with the most people. You don't need to do that necessarily to get your way, but that's your ultimate power card.

I saw that power. If I don't like a job I could quit, or I could keep doing it and I guess if you draw favor with your boss you'll eventually get what you want—maybe—but they'll still have power. This whole idea of rising up against an oppressive boss intrigued me. At the training it didn't click with me immediately, but this is straight out of Karl Marx. It's the story of human history on this planet.

And that's how I joined the IWW!



The ultimate power card.
Image from IWW history

Seattle Campaigns Committee Report

by G. DeJunz

Our elected Campaigns Committee matches organizers with workers interested in organizing their workplace. Each organizer is trained in our Organizer Training 101 (OT101) program and mentored by more experienced organizers. They provide advice and support, walking through the early stages of organizing through building a strong presence that is able to collectively shift the balance of power in the workers' favor.

To minimize risk of employer retaliation, organizing is carried out under the radar as long as feasible, so most of our campaigns will not be publicly identified. All are ongoing campaigns that have been organizing and winning demands with Solidarity Unionism.

We're organizing in these areas:

Foods Product Workers (Industrial Union 460): preparing and distributing food and beverages. At the Central Co-op grocery, the IWW administrative and janitorial bargaining unit has been recognized and under contract with the Seattle IWW since 2002. The last contract was signed in 2016, and it's up for negotiation again this year.

Educational Workers (Industrial Union 620): includes schools, testing, museums, and research institutions. Pandemic mass layoffs earlier in the year were a big setback, but the organizing committee is continuing on and even starting to gain lost ground.

General, Legal, Public Interest and Financial Office

Workers (Industrial Union 650): includes nonprofit service organizations. The organizing committee has grown and is in the process of formalizing the structure into a Job Branch to maintain effectiveness and democratic accountability.

Retail Workers (Industrial Union 660): general distribution facilities, wholesale and retail. Currently continuing with one-on-ones and growing the organizing committee.

OT101 is our program for teaching the nuts and bolts of Solidarity Unionism, a direct action organizing model that wins improvements in working conditions without going the route of NLRB recognition and a contract. This model is based on workers talking to their coworkers one on one and growing an Organizing Committee within the workplace, able to plan and carry out actions to pressure management to address issues identified by the workers.

The full list of Industrial Union classifications and descriptions can be found in the IWW constitution:

<https://iww.org/constitution>

A description and history of the IWW's Organizer Training program:

<https://organizing.work/2020/09/a-history-of-the-iwws-organizer-training-program/>





Out-Organize the Bosses

The following is excerpted from the One Big Union pamphlet, 9th Edition. The full pamphlet is available in a variety of formats at: <https://iww.org/resources/>

How Employers Organize: We Can Do Better

Workers must not simply imitate employer organizations, but from them we can learn some general principles.

Employers organize on an industrial basis, in federations, associations, lobbying groups, and trade organizations to run their industries to get the most out of them. This means running us so that they get the most out of us. They organize to maintain their position over us as our bosses.



Image from IWW history

Employers have many reasons to compete or quarrel with each other, yet they manage to cooperate. They organize special bodies for special purposes, and don't mix these purposes up. For example, they don't split up their trade association or federation over their political differences. There isn't a Republican Chamber of Commerce and a Democratic Chamber of Commerce. Their organizations are based on class interest rather than small political differences.

They have built many intricate financial organizations, including multinational corporations. Through these organizations the capitalists of even supposedly hostile nations work together. Many of their most critical undertakings depend on an unwritten mutual understanding of their collective interest. They make it hard for any employer who does not play along with them. And they have managed to keep on running the world although they have repeatedly made a mess of it.

They organize to maintain their position over us as our bosses.

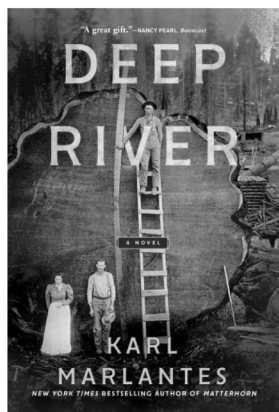
Employers organize so that they can dominate others, so in this critical way we are different from our bosses. As workers, how do we do better? We organize to form bonds of mutual cooperation and mutual aid within and across our industries.

We can:

- cooperate with each other instead of competing;
- organize special bodies for special purposes, and not mix these purposes up;
- remind ourselves of our collective interests;
- make life hard for any employer who does not play along with us.

We can do all these things by organizing as a union.

Book Reviews: Histories of Wobblies in the Northwest



Deep River: An Epic Novel of Wobblies in the Northwest (2019)

by Karl Marlantes

reviewed by FW Murray

Wobbly characters are scattered throughout American literature, including the plays of Eugene O'Neill, the novels of John Dos Passos and Wallace Stegner, and the poetry of Gary Snyder. But probably the first novel to give a sustained and positive life history of a Wobbly is *Deep River* by Karl Marlantes (2019).

Deep River tells the story of Aino, a Wobbly organizer in the logging camps of Southwest Washington in the pre-WWI period. Aino is loosely based on Marlantes' grandmother. She has two brothers: Ilmari, who builds a church for the immigrant Finnish community, and Matti, who starts as a logger but then goes into business as a sawmill operator. But the novel's main focus is on Aino.

Aino had been politicized as a teenager in Finland, where she read radical literature, joined a group fighting the Russian military occupation, and was brutally tortured when caught by the Russian authorities. After coming to America, she works as a cook in Matti's logging camp, finding conditions there intolerable—extremely low pay, exceedingly dangerous work, and terrible living conditions, such as beds of wet hay and rooms filled with vermin. She organizes many of the workers into the IWW and leads them on a partially successful strike for better pay and conditions. Later, she becomes a traveling IWW organizer, participating in free speech fights or strike support in Aberdeen, Portland, and other Northwest cities. She has a brief affair with Joe Hillstrom and participates in the Centralia Tragedy of 1919. Fearing arrest after that event, she goes to Chicago to work at IWW headquarters. After learning she will not be arrested, she returns to the Northwest and takes a major role in organizing a worker-owned cannery for fishers in the lower Columbia area.

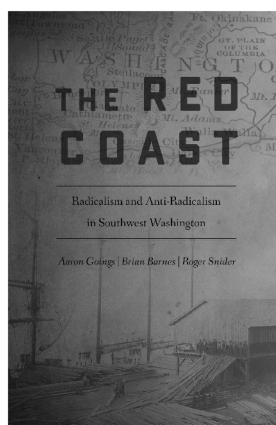
The novel is long (717 pages) and much of the writing is rather formal, with descriptions of nature, explanations of work

processes, and narratives of historical events. I found much of this writing interesting, although others may find it tedious. Any reader will have to be patient.

Although the novel is often expository, there are several scenes of intense drama. In particular, the account of the Centralia Tragedy is quite vivid. Readers can get a good sense of how capitalists and city officials used Red Scare propaganda to attack labor organizers and instill fear in workers throughout the Northwest, leading many to tear up their red cards.

Some readers may find the writing rather didactic. But I didn't mind this at all because the author falls on the side of justice, the dignity of labor, and a broad-minded view of the world. The main characters are not stock figures of good and evil, but complex people who reveal their qualities through their social interactions. Aino in particular comes across as a flawed but admirable person, showing courage and persistence in the face of adversity.

Finally, the author should be commended for highlighting issues and themes relevant to our time. Marlantes portrays a world of intense hostility to immigrants, of vast inequalities of wealth, and of degradation of both nature and human beings. Although the novel is old-fashioned in form and style, the content is often fresh and inspiring, with a heroine who often speaks to our concerns. I recommend *Deep River* to anyone interested in a historically accurate and engaging story about Wobblies in the early 1900s.



The Red Coast: Radicalism and Anti-Radicalism in Southwest Washington (2019)

by Aaron Goings, Brian Barnes, Roger Snider

reviewed by FW Phil

What is the point of reading an old-timey union history? Is there any relevance for today's workers? The goal of this book was to present the social and labor history of Southwest Washington during the previous century. The authors did that and more: through showing us the workers' strong family and social

lives, they point us to a way forward for the revolutionary labor movement of today.

The Red Coast paints a vivid picture of the working class, the employers, the unions, the business clubs, the radicals, and the vigilantes. The bosses try to depict the workers as “commies,” outside agitators, invaders. But most of the workers are locals, building family and community.

We see the lengths that the bosses will go to crush any opposition. An all too familiar recitation of events takes place time and time again—the all too common threads of history. The workers start exercising their rights with direct action. The employers bring in the courts. When that doesn’t work, the bosses escalate to bringing in the police, political organizations, newspapers, and churches. If that doesn’t work, they resort to overt violence by vigilantes or troops to crush strikes.

The workers persist. They go back to work and build families, and social centers—Finn, Socialist, and Union Halls. They face setbacks and go on for small gains. As always, they regroup, rebuild, and remember. Eventually, they win the 8-hour day. Shingle weavers, whose injury rate directly correlates to the number of hours worked, go even farther, down from 60 hours a week to 30!

Over the decades however, the bosses used contracts and no-strike clauses to fracture worker solidarity, encourage complacency, and weaken unions. The struggles in Southwest Washington has become a forgotten local union history, smothered under a blanket of conservatism. However, we will not forget, and The Red Coast helps us to remember.

Ultimately, the authors bring us forward to the future of unions: “To reverse this momentum, workers may need to relearn the lessons of their Red Coast forebears: They are not partners with their bosses on a team; the immigrant is not the enemy; and workers must organize at the point of production if they wish to improve their lives.”

That’s it—plain and simple. Organize!

Fueling Hate: Zane Grey's Desert of Wheat

by FW Tuck

In sharp contrast to Deep River and Red Coast, Zane Grey's *Desert of Wheat* villifies the IWW with a noxious mixture of nationalism, racism, racial purity, melodrama, and exaltation of violence. It isn't worth the read by itself, but it is a window into how popular media of the time fueled hate in the popular imagination.

Set in eastern Washington's Palouse wheat country during World War 1, the novel portrays Wobblies as “foreign, small” with “eyes like a ferret” and a “sallow face.” The union is controlled by German money, and seeks to sabotage the American war effort by “burning our wheat, destroying our lumber and blowing up freight trains...” The unscrupulous IWW threatens men with death if they don't strike. The hero, Karl Dorn, infiltrates the IWW by hopping a freight. “He was importuned for tobacco, drink and money, and he judged that his begging companions consisted of an American tramp, an Austrian, a negro, and a German. Fine society to fall into!” As if that isn't enough to curdle the blood of a true patriot, they kidnap a blonde, blue eyed “pure American girl”!

The IWW is dealt with by the patriotic wheat ranchers through deportation and lynching. Grey glorifies all of the violence, with purple prose and admiration.

Well, at least Grey gets the name of our union right.

Desert of Wheat is now public domain, and can be found at:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/the_Desert_of_Wheat/8WsdFZEKjusC?hl=en&gbpv=1

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Fallen IWW Project

by FW Phil

Throughout the long history of the IWW we have been engaged in a monumental struggle against bosses and capitalism. We have had our victories. To mention only a few: the Lawrence textile strikes, the Spokane free speech fights, the Agricultural Workers Organization, and the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union. However, that history has also been deadly for thousands of our fellow workers. We have statues and memorials in Seattle, Centralia, New Jersey, Chicago, Butte, and Ludlow. But lost to history are hundreds of fallen IWW members that don't have grave markers or memorials.

For many years, some members of the IWW have kept the flame alive by researching and documenting those little known, unidentified, and lost Wobblies. Occasionally, groups are formed to work on placing a grave marker on a particular Wob's behalf. However, if history is to repeat itself, speeches will be made and Wobs will remember, and then we will move on.

Recently, there's grown a new interest in creating a union-wide committee to memorialize fallen workers. In an attempt to build upon this renewed interest, a number of Wobs are forming a new group we are initially calling The Fallen IWW Project.

The intention is to create a framework for an ongoing program to research, document, and ultimately place markers on the graves of fallen fellow workers. Currently we are investigating grants, donation methods, and other avenues to collect funds. We are in the building stage and if you are interested in joining us, stay tuned for updates in the Seattle Worker.

In January, the New York City General Membership Branch created a 3-person committee to assist their ongoing project to create a memorial to FW Ben Fletcher.

Also, there is a wonderful interview by Marianne Garneau where she talks with author Peter Cole about his book "Ben

Fletcher: Life and Times of a Black Wobbly."

Fellow Worker Fletcher helped establish the non-segregated Local 8 of the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union in Philadelphia, 1913. Eventually, the MTWIU IU510 grew to over 100,000 members—about 10% of all IWW membership at the time. He was arrested for treason in 1918 in the targeted Palmer raids along with 187 other IWW leaders. His conviction resulted in him spending three years in federal prison.

The podcast can be accessed at:

[https://organizing.work/2020/12/wobcast-7-peter-cole/Wobcast 7 – Peter Cole](https://organizing.work/2020/12/wobcast-7-peter-cole/Wobcast%207%20-%20Peter%20Cole)

Worker's Encyclopedia

Sickout: ['sɪk-,aʊt] noun. The absence from work by employees on the pretext of sickness, as part of a union campaign in place of a formal strike.

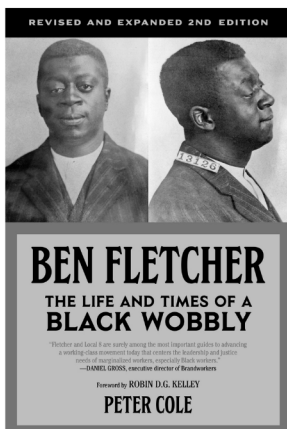
For example, in January 1951, Southern railroad brakemen began a sickout in Alabama. This was followed by yard brakemen in 33 railroads in 21 cities. Interestingly, this type of worker direct action is usually seen by business unions as a threat to their position.

Usage Notes: The informal concept of the sickout may well have its roots well before the Industrial Revolution. However, at least by then, workers were starting to understand that the withdrawal of their labor gave them a small token of power in their struggles with their bosses.

The previous high point for this kind of direct action may have been the 1970's. Inflation so ravaged public-sector workers that they resorted to numerous work stoppages. Teachers got "chalk-dust fever" and firefighters got the "red rash." This last year has seen an almost exponential growth in the number of sickouts across the U.S., often as part of a coronavirus safety campaign.

Examples: Amazon workers protest the coronavirus and environment, April 2020; Target and Walmart staff protest coronavirus safety with sickout, May 2020; Utah teachers protest Covid-19 safety with a "test-out," Nov. 2020; Atlantic City teachers protest the unsafe opening of schools, Nov. 2020.

See also: direct action, sabotage, suspension of service, sick-in, walkout, wildcat strike



About the Seattle IWW

Founded in Chicago in 1905, the IWW is open to all workers. Don't let the "industrial" part fool you: our members include teachers, social workers, retail workers, construction workers, bartenders and computer programmers. Only bosses and cops are not allowed to join. If you are currently unemployed, you can still join. We are a volunteer-driven union, and this means we run the union. Membership dues are used to maintain the union and assist organizing campaigns. As a result, monthly dues are low. To join, visit:

<https://iww.org/membership/>

Take the Organizer Training!

The Organizer Training 101 (OT101) is an intensive, four-day training that teaches you all the basic skills and tools they need to build an organizing committee at your workplace—from the ground up. You will learn what constitutes a union, how to have one-on-one conversations with coworkers, the basics of labor law, and how to organize and carry out a direct action.

The Seattle General Membership Branch holds regular trainings—free during the pandemic. If you'd like to be notified of the time and date, visit:

<https://forms.gle/q9edxoGrEVXhMVd89>

Organize Your Workplace!

The Industrial Workers of the World want to help you improve the conditions of your workplace. If you have questions, or would like to begin organizing your workplace, visit:

<https://seattleiww.org/organize-your-workplace/>

Preamble

to the IWW Constitution

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 the 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 in 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."

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