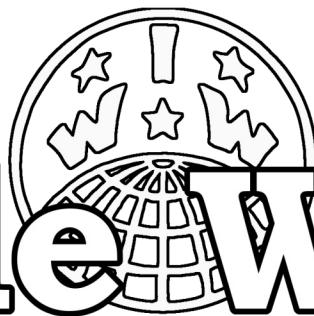


Official publication of the  
Seattle IWW

Price: free for all workers



# Seattle Worker

Jul-Aug 2022

Vol. 5, Iss. 4



# Editor's Desk

Education \* Organization \* Emancipation

Editorial Committee:

Chair: FW Phil  
Editor: FW x348565  
FW Gordon G., Bremerton  
FW Murray Cooper  
FW Red  
FW S.A.

Email: seattleiww@gmail.com  
Social: facebook.com/seattleiww  
twitter.com/seattleiww  
Phone: 206.429.5285  
Mail: 1122 E. Pike Street, #1142  
Seattle, WA 98122  
Website: seattleiww.org

Published every two months

In support of revolutionary industrial unionism, this publication is written and printed by union members.

Produced and edited by the Seattle IWW.  
Articles not so designated do not reflect the  
IWW's official position.

**Submissions welcome! Email  
articles, article ideas, news items,  
editorials, artwork, and  
photographs to:**

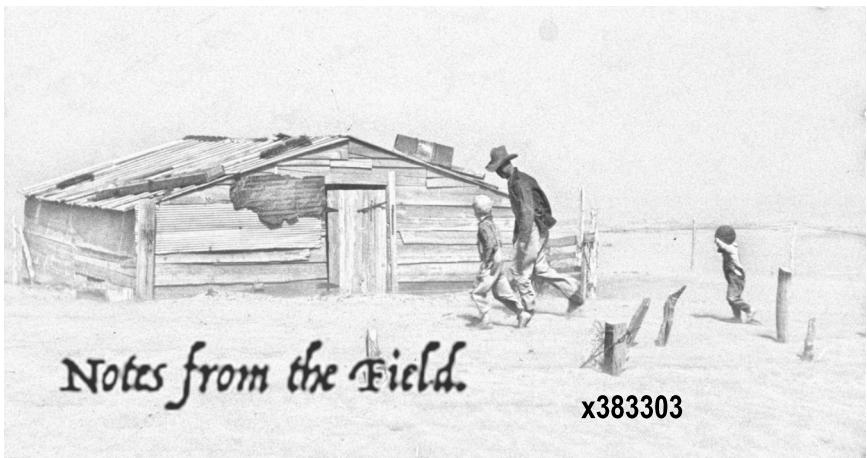
[seattleworkeriww@gmail.com](mailto:seattleworkeriww@gmail.com)

Cover image by John Fleissner, artist,  
organizer, and public school teacher based in  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.  
<https://www.johnfleissner.com/>



Education of the working class, toward our ultimate emancipation, is one of the pillars of the IWW. This issue we look at what a union is, how educators have organized, and how they have won demands.

The Seattle Education Association goes into contract negotiations this fall. Watch the news for updates and support our educators!



Workers are fighting hard for wage gains in a time of inflation and shortages. So, how does the wage market work and what does it look like? How does a worker know if their wage is fair or typical to their industry?

There are many great tools to understand the wage landscape. The Economic Policy Institute's Wage Tracker is possibly the best. Unfortunately, when you look at the tool, you will see the ugly side of our largest and most profitable companies.

For example, Dollar General pays 20% of its workers less than \$10 per hour. McDonald's also pays almost 25% of its workers less than \$10 per hour. The list goes on with almost the same numbers for Wendy's, Arby's, Burger King, Taco Bell, and Pizza Hut. At Sonic, 85% of its workers earn less than \$15 per hour and 20% earn less than \$10 per hour.

If this doesn't upset you, just read some of EPI's other reports. The State of Working America 2021 stands out as a benchmark for our current labor situation. Another article that stood out and hit home for me is

*continued on page 6*

# ***For the Future Workers of the World: An Introduction to Unions***

by FW Noah

Most people have some experience with member-run organizations. If you are a student, you have probably heard of or been a part of a student union at your high school or college. If you participate in a sport, you're probably part of a team with an elected captain, chosen by other players to effectively coordinate plays and maintain morale. If you are part of a club, you probably have commonly agreed bylaws and procedures made by members for meetings along with coordinated activities related to your association.

But whether or not you're in school, your experiences as a worker contradicts these environments in many ways. We cannot elect our bosses. Rules and regulations are passed down from the top of a management chain, not bottom-up, and these rules prioritize profits over the health and welfare of the workers. Funding for your work comes out of your productive activities, and the majority of that value is given to those who do less of the work, not more. The means by which you produce - factories, farmland, a shop or other places of work- are owned by those who work the least and are mostly out of your control. Most importantly, many workplaces are physically made and socially enforced in such a way that collective action on part of the workers for their own betterment is disincentivized or punished.

## What gives?

For many of us, our first explicit interactions with unions don't come about until we either gain a job at a unionized workplace or we campaign to unionize ourselves. The language used to describe unions - depending on who you ask - ranges from derogatory to bureaucratic, along with vague anecdotes about paying dues, stewards in the shop, and contract negotiations. However, the basic fundamentals of unionism – such as cooperation among peers, sharing the duties of labor in a more equitable arrangement, creating a greater solidarity across demographic differences, consensus and negotiation – are all a part of our lives in some way before we even enter the workforce. A union merely applies these fundamentals to our

productive labor and the shops where we work, enshrining them in the form of collective bargaining, direct action to address grievances, and a cooperative community of coworkers.

So, how does a union work exactly? A union, simply put, is a collective of workers who gather together to address grievances within any shop or trade, and who incorporate democratic principles into work itself. A union of workers organizes and acts to fight for better working conditions, wages, benefits, and democratic representation in the workplace. Most people think of the union as an entity that has a contract with management, with negotiations carried out between workers and management through representatives of each. If you are already a member of a union in an organized workplace with a contract, you pay dues to the union in order to pay for labor lawyers, campaign and strike funds, as well as other organs of the union. You can participate in regular contractual negotiations, summon a union rep during performance reviews or disciplinary actions and participate in larger union elections.

However, this is not the only way to organize a union and does have down sides. Contracts often limit the collective power of workers by forbidding strikes or other forms of direct action during future contract negotiations or when grievances on the job are not adequately addressed by management. This kind of unionism allows for an army of bureaucrats on both sides to negotiate - honestly and effectively or otherwise - on the workers' behalf. But workers are the direct victims of poor and stagnating wages, redundant and dangerous working conditions, and the theft of their organized might from the bosses, the strikebreakers, and the politicians, then they should be the ones to lead the organizing and actions necessary to defend the use of their collective, organized power.

The other kind of union, a Solidarity Union, means that workers directly address grievances and act collectively to fix them. If This is what is known as Solidarity Unionism - that workers themselves should take the opportunity to organize and act in the way they see fit, to directly challenge the power of the boss and prevent the limits of bureaucracy from getting in the way of the big win: a union of all workers in any given industry.

Contract unionism has another disadvantage. Unfortunately, as a result of more traditional methods of labor organizing by trade and the restrictions of labor law, many actions taken by workers or negotiations for better working conditions often remain limited to one shop owned by an employer, rather than all shops or the trade as a whole, weakening worker power. This is why the IWW upholds and defends Industrial Unionism rather than contract unionism. Industrial Unionism proposes that the organization of all workers within one industry - under One Big Union of all industries - aims to organize the working class as a whole to gain better working conditions and wages for all workers, and build towards Industrial Democracy. Industrial Democracy is the IWW's vision of the future, of workers sharing power both in the workplace and across society as a whole, of having direct power in how work is conducted and the means of production managed by workers themselves.

If you are not in a union, but want a union in your workplace, the process is more involved. Learning how to organize your coworkers effectively while remaining out of the eye of the boss can be a time consuming and arduous process. It involves

forming better relationships at work, crossing taboos related to discussing pay and benefits, effectively utilizing agitation strategies, evaluating risk, and more. The payoff is worth it of course, but figuring out where to start or how to go about it can be confusing and intimidating. The IWW offers training such as OT101 to provide you and your coworkers with those skill sets, to encourage your organizing activities, and to help you to strategize the best way of going about agitating, educating and organizing your fellow coworkers.

No matter where you work after you graduate, or if you are already in the working world, the IWW will always have your back. A Wobbly takes the union wherever they go, and carries the skills to organize with them as well. We know that the fight ahead can be daunting, but the many challenges we face today can only be overcome through an organized body of workers that can fight effectively and directly against what holds the working people from attaining the full fruits of our labor. We look forward to helping you and your coworkers in the future of your work. We hope that you too can be part of the IWW.

## Caliber Charter Schools UNIONIZE

by FW Noah

Teachers and staff at the Caliber: Beta Academy Charter School in Richmond, California and Caliber: ChangeMakers Academy in Vallejo won recognition of their newly formed union on June 1st. The Caliber Workers Union began when one 3rd and 4th grade teacher, Tyler Powels, reached out to the IWW Organizing Department to learn more about organizing their workplace. The staff faced multiple issues in their schools over the previous year, including communication between bosses and staff, inconsistent schedules with widening hours, and additional responsibilities piled on without compensation. The staff, most of whom are people of color, also had their healthcare benefits cut during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020.

Fed up, the workers got together and decided to organize. After a year of agitating, educating and communicating between both charter school campuses, the union announced in April of 2021 to the administration of Charter Public Schools, a family of



Photo: caliberworkers.org

charter schools in northern California, their intent to unionize. The staff chose the IWW because it aligned with their schools progressive intention to make equitable education accessible to underserved communities in the region, as well as its worker-oriented solidarity unionism compared to the more bureaucratic structures of other unions. Despite pushback and court intervention, the workers filed with the California Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) on April 21st of 2021, and a year

later the PERB ruled in their favor, citing that the union had majority support from its 196 employees. This month, the administration finally recognized the union, and contract negotiations are soon to follow.

Union recognition is one step, but winning power and gains is a long struggle. Keep a lookout for wins and calls to action at <https://caliberworkers.org/>.

Solidarity with the Caliber Workers!

# How Bilingual Educators Won Professional Development Pay

Excerpted from Four Years of Solidarity Unionism at a School

by Anonymous

Overall, what drew me to workplace organizing and what continues to motivate me to do workplace organizing is the idea of dignity. Dignity for myself and my coworkers as education workers, and also dignity for the students and their parents and families. There are all sorts of indignities in the education industry, as there are in any industry under capitalism. For education workers there are issues such as a climate of fear/pressure from administration, a lack of resources for schools, low pay, excessive workloads, top down mandates, etc. For students there are issues like racist/classist curriculum, not enough recess, too much testing, lack of access to elective classes, the school to prison pipeline, etc. For me it's impossible to work in the education industry and see these issues and not try to organize to change them.

I was first driven to organize at my school when our principal denied my coworkers and me, the bilingual educational assistants, the ability to be paid to go to professional development courses. Instead the administration was using the money that was allocated for professional development, to pay for the cost of having us interpret for parent-teacher conferences twice a year. Not only did this practice prevent us from going to the trainings that we wanted to attend, and cause us to miss out on the extra pay for doing so, but it also

communicated a lack of respect by the principal for us as workers. My frustration and anger over this situation drove me to speak up about it.

After I initially spoke up about the issue, multiple coworkers reached out to me saying that they felt the same about it, and we began talking to our other coworkers. This culminated 9 months later when it was time for parent-teacher conferences again. Our principal emailed us instructing us that we were expected to not attend

professional development classes, and instead those hours of pay would be used to pay us to interpret at conferences. We began to organize the roughly 20 bilingual educational assistants at our school to threaten a boycott of parent teacher conferences if we weren't allowed to attend professional development and parent-teacher conferences and be paid for both. In the course of a day, myself and 3 coworkers were able to talk to a majority of the 20 bilingual educational assistants and get them on board with the demand and with the threatened action of refusing to interpret at parent-teacher conferences. The principal identified me as the leader of this organizing effort, and I got called in to the principal's office. The principal clearly wanted me to call off the threatened boycott, and started by trying to guilt me (the school can't afford to pay us, and parents really need us there to interpret), then moved on to threatening me (if we boycotted, we wouldn't get any more professional development for the rest of the school year or that if the principal did pay for us to interpret at conferences, she would have to compensate in the budget by cutting one of our positions), and then the biggest threat (that educational assistants were no longer going to interpret at conferences at all, even for the first night of conferences that had already been budgeted for, and instead the principal was going to bring in "volunteers" and pay them with gift cards to interpret at conferences). I didn't back down, and after leaving the meeting, my coworkers and I organized an emergency meeting right after school for all the bilingual educational assistants where I shared what the principal had told me and asked what people thought we should do next.

It was unanimous, nobody wanted to back down, and we decided to move ahead with the boycott. We started spreading the word to teachers and parents that our principal was planning on using untrained volunteers as interpreters at conferences. By the next afternoon, with parent-teacher conferences fast approaching and administration realizing that they weren't going to have any professional interpreters (and likely very few "volunteer" interpreters on such short notice), they backed down, and announced that they had "found" some money and would pay us to attend both professional development and interpret at conferences. We demanded the guarantee in writing and got it, and we were all in great spirits. Together we had stood up to our feared principal and won!

(continued)



# Bilingual Educators (continued)

This experience brought us all together as coworkers and organizers, and set a strong precedent. In the 3 and a half years since that happened, administration hasn't questioned our right to attend professional development and also be paid to interpret

at conferences. Best of all, we did it ourselves, by organizing each other and threatening direct action, and in a matter of a few days, seriously shifted administration's perception of their ability to push us around. This all happened before I was a member of the IWW, and it's what convinced me completely of the power and efficiency of organizing your coworkers directly at your workplace, and using direct action to win demands.

## Notes from the Field (continued from page 1)

"Wage Growth had been Dampening Inflation" by Josh Bivens.

The first star in the IWW logo is Education. It's always the first step. Educate yourself, educate your fellow workers. The path is: Education \* Organization \* Emancipation

You can follow and read more at: <https://www.epi.org/>

Do you have nightmares about your job? If you do, you're not alone. SleepZoo and others have documented that two-thirds of all workers have nightmares about their job. This robs them of a refreshing sleep and sets them up for problems all day long.

One strategy to fight the stress includes taking a journal to bed. Write about your stress before bed and when you wake up. Just acknowledging your stress will help.

The next step is to carefully open up to your friends and fellow workers. You might be surprised at how common your feelings are. Your co-workers might be working through stress about their job - just like you.

Finally -- take an organizer training 101, either by yourself or – even better – with your co-workers. You and your co-workers might find, for example, that work scheduling is a common source of everyone's stress. Together you can build a strategy to address the problem. You're now on a path to build understanding and solidarity with your fellow workers.

The IWW is a democratic, bottom-up, worker-run Union. We are your neighbors and co-workers. We're here to help. Only by working together can we support each other and build a better future where we don't have nightmares.

An Injury to One is an Injury to All

## Workers Encyclopedia

**Right-to-Work.** noun: Laws that prohibit union security. They prohibit mandatory dues payments to unions, while still requiring a union to bargain and represent those workers. In states that have these laws, unions are prohibited from signing contracts that cover all workers in a workplace. This "open shop" concept has resulted in rapidly declining worker participation in unions in those states.

Right-to-work laws directly target worker solidarity and unionization efforts.

**Historical Notes:** The modern concept was espoused in the 1940's by Vance Muse, a lobbyist and conservative publisher/editor in Texas. The publications were notably anti-black, anti-Semitic, and segregationist in nature.

Muse's anti-union racist attitudes can be easily seen in a quote from him: "From now on, white women and white men will be forced into organizations with black African apes whom they will have to call 'brother' or lose their jobs."

**Example:** 28 states have Right-to-Work laws.

The Illinois Policy Institute reported in 2020 that "After adjusting for cost-of-living differences and other observable factors, we found that "right-to-work" laws are statistically associated with 16% lower wages for police officers and firefighters, 11% lower wages for construction workers, 7% lower wages for registered nurses, 5% lower wages for elementary and secondary school teachers, and 3% lower wages for manufacturing workers."

# A Meaningful May Day

By Fellow Workers EV and G

Comrades and FWs, Greetings: We went up to Mt. Vernon on May Day to march in Solidarity with the independent farm workers' union Familias Unidas por la Justicia, and it was inspirational. Several hundred FUJ members and about 20 IWWs showed up to celebrate in Solidarity, along with many trade unionists, community action groups, DSA members, and other sympathetic outfits.

The Wobblies were asked to lead the attendees in a round of Solidarity Forever before we started marching. We passed out



Photo: x331980

lyrics, pulled out our Little Red Songbooks, and belted it out as best we could. It was certainly a joyful noise and set a vigilant and fun tone for the march.

The Bellingham group C2C (Community to Community), the international Filipinex group BAYAN, and many other local people walked from Edgewater Park in Mt. Vernon four miles to the city of Burlington, picking up other marchers along the way. The organizers of the march ensured that safety monitors and support people kept the walkers out of traffic and supplied with water and light snacks. The union was also proudly demonstrating the power of concluding a successful lightning strike on the flower growers in the area just prior to the opening of the Tulip Festival, winning demands for recognition, updated health and safety standards, and protective equipment while harvesting in the fields.

When this outfit walks a picket, the whole family comes along, living up to their name. Workers bring their children, Grandparents, friends, and family and act together. Babies in



Photo: x331980

strollers and a few pets came along too, and the march itself was an act of Solidarity, people helping each other along to achieve a goal. Seeing children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents marching together gave us hope for the future and pride for our past.



Photo: x331980

After so long in isolation due to Covid and the machinations of misleading politicians it was both invigorating and humbling to see so many people marching together for Labor. Marchers spanned generations, backgrounds, and ideologies, but they marched together.

It was a good May Day.

## 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

**T**he 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."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

## Support the Seattle Worker

You can support the Seattle Worker and the Rain City Wobblies by supporting our official publication on Patreon. All proceeds are kept by the branch and are used to pay for printing and shipping the magazine. Each patron on Patreon is guaranteed to receive every new issue.

### Subscription pricing rates

For as little as \$2 per month, you'll receive every printing of the Seattle Worker.

All prices include shipping and handling.

To subscribe, visit: [patreon.com/seattleworker](https://patreon.com/seattleworker)

